



Proper maintenance and repair of such embankments are crucial for protecting paddy fields in haor areas of Sunamganj that sees largescale cultivation of the food crop every year.

PHOTO: SHEIKHNASIR



Govt to repair 1000 km dyke on Sunamganj haors

Locals urge forming project committees with competent, honest members

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

The authorities concerned are going to repair around 1000 kilometres of embankments, out of a total 1500 kilometres, in 36 haor (large wetland) areas of Sunamganj to protect Boro cultivation from possible flash floods during early rains next year.

The repair and maintenance of embankments on haors assumed greater importance when flash floods in 2017 destroyed Boro plants in vast areas and the country saw shortfall in rice production.

As negligence of contractors and Project Implementation Committees (PIC) were found, the government initiated reformed 'Kabita (Kajer Binimoye Taka) Rules 2017, which stated that government officials will

preside over the PICs and no contractor will be awarded any work for embankment construction in the haor areas.

It also stipulates that all PICs must be formed by November 30, work must start before December 15 and be completed by February 28.

For the first phase, the government allotted Tk 68 crore but the administration is yet to form PICs as the survey work at the embankments is still going on.

Md Sabibur Rahman, executive engineer of Bangladesh Water Development Board in Sunamganj, said, "The survey work got a little delayed due to slow recession of water after heavy rainfall under the impact of cyclone Bulbul increased water level in the haors. The survey will be complete within a couple of days and the PICs will

be formed promptly according to the initial plan."

This year, Boro paddy will be cultivated on 219,450 hectares of land in the district while last year's cultivation area was 228,440 hectares, said Mohammad Sofor Uddin, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Sunamganj.

Last year, 572 projects were completed by as many PICs and 450 kilometres of embankment was repaired spending Tk 80 crore.

There were allegations of involving corrupt people in the PICs and listing of unnecessary projects with the scheme last year.

"Accountability and clarity must be ensured in construction and repair works

of the embankments and PICs must be formed with arrangement for public hearing so that no corrupt people are involved with the committees," said Bazlul Majid Choudhury, president of Haor Bachao, Sunamganj Bachao movement.

Abdul Ahad, deputy commissioner of Sunamganj, said, "Preparatory work for the embankment repair has already started and all the PICs will be formed carefully as per the rules soon after the survey is completed."

"The primary focus is to repair the existing embankments. If needed, we will construct new embankments in the haor areas and we are hopeful to complete all works by the deadline stipulated by the rules," he said.

College boy murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Unidentified criminals stabbed a college student to death allegedly over a trifling matter in Adampur area of Bhanga upazila on Wednesday evening.

The deceased, Tuhin Bapari, 21, son of Nazrul Bapari of Atrash village in Sadarpur upazila, was an Intermediate second-year student at Sadarpur Government College.

Meanwhile, victim's uncle filed a case with Bhanga Police Station in this regard yesterday accusing 12 people.

According to the case statement, on Wednesday afternoon Tuhin went to attend a religious function in Manikdaha area of Bhanga upazila, where he had an altercation with some youths over a trivial matter.

Later, a gang stabbed Tuhin with sharp weapons while he was returning home around 6:30pm.

Locals took him to Sadarpur Bishwa Zaker Monzil Hospital, where the doctors declared him dead.

Sub Inspector of Bhanga Police Station Nikhil Adhikari said, being informed, they recovered the body and sent it to Faridpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Nilphamari AL's council held after 13 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The triannual conference of Nilphamari district unit of Awami League (AL) was held at Central Shaheed Minar in the district town yesterday after 13 years.

Incumbent committee's president Dewan Kamal Ahmed and secretary advocate Momtazul Huque were made president and secretary again in the council at the directive of party President Sheikh Hasina over cellphone.

As chief guest AL central committee's presidium member Ramesh Chandra Sen inaugurated the conference around 11:00am.

Party central committee's joint secretary Jahangir Kabir Nanak was present there as key speaker. Local lawmaker Asaduzzaman Noor was also present at the council as special guest.

Incumbent district unit president Dewan Kamal Ahmed presided over the inaugural session.

Nanak in his speech said as a vested quarter, led by BNP-Jamaat, is still active to hinder country's development, party activists should remain vigilant.

It is mentioned that the last council of district Awami League was held on July 16 in 2006.

LAND DISPUTE

Man killed by rivals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A man was killed in an attack by his rivals allegedly over a disputed land in Amnura bypass area of Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Robiul Islam Robi, 40, son of Abdul Bari, was a resident of Colony Para village in the upazila.

Quoting locals, Officer in Charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station Ziaur Rahman said there had been a longstanding rivalry between Robiul and his neighbours -- Ansar Ali and Shabana Begum -- over the ownership of 16 decimals land.

As a sequel to the conflict, a group, allegedly loyal to Ansar and Shabana, intercepted Robiul near Amnura bypass area around 11:30am, while he was going to Godagari on a motorcycle, and stabbed him indiscriminately with sharp weapons, leaving him critically injured.

Locals rescued injured Robiul and took him to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

ASSAULT ON FF

UP member held, BCL leader expelled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A union parishd (UP) member was arrested on charge of assaulting a freedom fighter (FF) in Phulbaria upazila on Wednesday.

The arrestee is Mofazzel Hossain, 60, a member of Radhakana UP in the upazila.

A local Chhatra League leader was also expelled from the organisation in connection with the incident.

A group of some five people, allegedly led by Mofazzel, collected money from locals for new power connection in the area.

When freedom fighter Osman Gani Chowdhury, 86, a retired schoolteacher, protested the incident, they beat up him, said Officer-in-Charge of Phulbaria Police Station Md Firoz Talukder.

Later, the victim's son Md Golam Rabbani lodged a case with Phulbaria Police Station, accusing some five persons including the UP member Mofazzel Hossain and BCL leader of Phulbaria Degree College unit Mazharul Islam Baitullah, said the OC.

Soon after filing the case, police arrested

Mofazzel, the prime accused, from adjacent Trishal upazila.

Later, the arrestee was produced before a court that sent him to jail yesterday.

Police drives are on to arrest the other accused, said the police official.

On Wednesday evening, BCL Phulbaria upazila unit at an emergency meeting expelled Mazharul Islam Baitullah from the organisation as he was found involved in the attack, said its secretary Md Sarwar Hossain.

Meanwhile, protesting the attack on the freedom fighter, Muktiyuddho Moncha central unit formed a human chain at Phulbaria upazila headquarters yesterday noon.

The speakers at the programme demanded exemplary punishment of the attackers of Osman Gain.

Freedom fighters and local people also joined the programme. Central leaders of the forum Aminul Islam Bulbul, Iftekhar Alam Risad Ahmed, Imran Hossain and Sohel Ahmed addressed the programme, among others.

Housewife found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A young housewife was found dead at her bed room in Kharki Pirbari area of Jashore town early yesterday.

The deceased, Pinki Khatun, 19, was wife of Ziarul Islam of the area.

Sub Inspector (SI) of Jashore Kotwali Police Station Saiful Malek said family members first spotted Rinki's body her hanging from the ceiling of her room early yesterday and informed the police, who recovered the body and sent it to Jashore General Hospital for autopsy.

An unnatural death (UID) case was filed with the police station in this regard, the SI said, adding that after getting the autopsy report it will be clear whether it is suicide or murder.



Two female farm labourers tend chilli plants at a char land under Badamer Char area in Gaibandha's Sundarganj upazila. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

TEESTA RIVER BASIN

Gaibandha char lands flourish with vegetables

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Residents of char areas in Gaibandha are now witnessing what they dared to dream five years ago.

The sandy shoals that were nowhere near fertility, are now yielding different kinds of vegetables and Robi crops (crops that are sown in winter and harvested in spring).

The change is visible in 70 percent of the shoals in six unions under Sundarganj upazila, according to the district agriculture department.

"Alluvial soil flow from the upstream with flood water and deposit on the shoals during rainy season. As a result, the shoals no longer go under Teesta river and become fertile instead," explained Sundarganj Upazila Agriculture Officer (UAO) Syed Reza-e-Mahmud.

Hashem Ali grows chilli and maize on his five bigha land in Lalchamar char. Last year he earned Tk 27,000 through maize cultivation and this year he is looking forward to earning profit

particularly from the chillies.

"Five years ago, it was unimaginable that crops and vegetables will grow here. The residents used to rear cattle, do fishing or other petty jobs but now the situation has drastically changed," Ali told this paper.

During monsoons, the char dwellers have no option but to leave their homes with cattle and little belongings.

But unlike before, now they get back in dry season to take up contractual works in croplands.

Three years ago, Mottaleb Ali left Badamer char due to river erosion. But he returned after hearing about the changes in the quality of soil and now works as a labourer at a maize field.

In 2012, an international Non-Government Organisation (NGO) started growing pumpkins on the sandy chars of Gaibandha. They filled up sacks with fertile soil and buried those under the sands. The success of the project encouraged locals.

"Living standard of people in these

chars have gone high with cultivation of Rabi crops," said Sundarganj UAO Mahmud.

Rafiqul Islam, a landless farmer of Madaripara char, earned Tk 45,000 last year by cultivating pumpkin on two bighas of land. This year, he ploughed three bighas under sharecropping.

Winter vegetables mostly grow in these chars during dry season. Boro paddy, wheat, maize, pulse, chilli, and pumpkin are among other produces.

"I have cultivated chillies on one-and-a-half-bigha land. Last year I had earned Tk 35,000 by cultivating chillies on one bigha land. This year I am expecting more profit," said Khaiber Hossain of Putimari char.

"Char people used to grow millet grains like kaon, cheena, teel, and Boro paddy in small scale. They never thought of cultivating anything else. It was the pumpkin farming that showed them the way," said Belka Union Council Chairman Md Ibrahim.



A section of residents of Habiganj town under the banner "Sammilito Nagorik Andolon" organised a human chain yesterday in front of the premises of Sheikh Hasina Medical College, protesting corruption in purchase of various medical equipment for the institution. They earlier held a rally and brought out a procession in the town.

PHOTO: COLLECTED