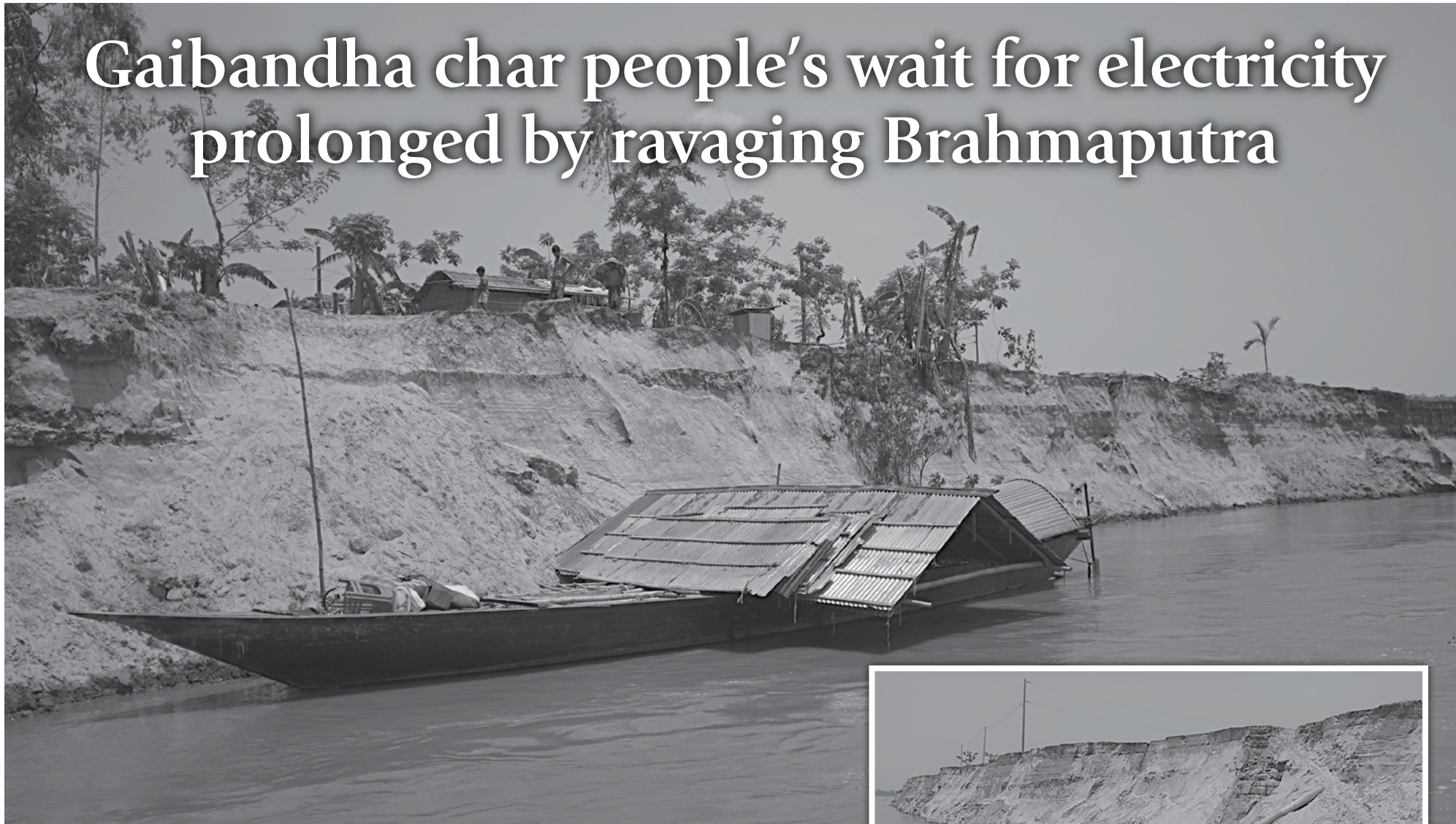


Gaibandha char people's wait for electricity prolonged by ravaging Brahmaputra



A displaced family of a char area under Gaibandha Sadar shifting to other char areas with their belongings on a boat while an electric pole lying at the edge of the Brahmaputra River after it collapsed due to erosion metaphorical to a sunken dream.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

MOSTAFA SHABUJ

The long wait of the char people for electricity in Gaibandha's four upazilas has just prolonged as many electric poles set up by the district palli bidyut samity (rural electrification board) have been engulfed by furious Brahmaputra. The river erosion has taken a serious turn in the district since last month.

In a recent visit, it was found that many electric polls set up by the Gaibandha Palli Bidyut Samity in Kharzani char under Sadar upazila, Kunderpara, Kochkhali and Galnar chars under Fulchari upazila have collapsed in the river.

Farid Mia, 26, of Kharzani Char said, "The authority laid the

electricity lines six months before in Satkatha area of Kharzani char but the river erosion has already devoured four electric poles in last week."

Abdul Mazid, 50, of the same char said, "We have been waiting for long for electricity. The line was set up almost a year ago but the authority did not give us the connection. As the river started eroding, I have shifted my house in another char of the river. My dream of electricity has been washed away," said Abdul Mozid.

According to the Gaibandha Palli Bidyut Samity, 692 kilometers of electric lines were supposed to be laid in Gibandha's Sadar, Fulchari upazila, Saghata and some char

areas in Jamalpur district for 40,000 subscribers since June, 2019.

The 100 percent electrification project was being implemented by the Gaibandha Palli Bidyut Samity under the government project 'Distribution Network expansion (DNE)', said Habibur Rahman, executive engineer of the Bangladesh rural electrification Board (BREB), Gaibandha.

Due to the river erosion, we could not draw the lines in 190 km char areas which have already been engulfed, said Habibur Rahma.

"Since the start of the project, we have drawn 390 km of lines so far," he added.

Sirajul Islam, project consultant said, "We have already recovered

some of the polls from the river water and many of which are under serious threat of the erosion."

When asked if feasibility study was conducted before running the project, the executive engineer said, "Before the project, we conducted a survey and promised to provide electricity into the char areas by submarine cables."

"We could have already provided connection but the char people did not complete mandatory wiring of their houses. However, we have decided to wire their houses for a minimum charge and will launch the service by end of this years," said Habibur Rahman.

Meanwhile, around 200 hundred families have been displaced from

Kharzani char because of erosion last one year.

Among them, 100 families of the Kharzani char have shifted to various places during the last one month.

"We have lost around 1000 acres of crop land and 200 homestead due to the river erosion in the last 10 months," said Ashadul Islam, 26, a farmer of the Kharzani.

Contacted, Mokhlesur Rahman, executive engineer of the Gaibandha water development board said, "We do not work for the erosion in the char areas. We only work for the mainland erosion."

The government is planning to form char development board and we have to wait for that in order to find a solution to it, he added.

Dengue fear creeping

FROM PAGE 12

situation is good so far, but if dengue patients increase by four to five times in June compared to the number in May (43), it will signal a sharp rise in infections. He said even moderate dengue infections will heighten the risk due to the pandemic.

Authorities will have to take necessary steps to raise awareness that Aedes breeds in clean water, and so people will have to clear water from all kinds of containers once a week, Manzur said.

June is a critical month for dengue as the number of dengue patients starts increasing from this month, he said.

If the trend of increasing dengue cases continues then it will be a cause for concern, he added.

Apart from the initiative from the city corporations and the government, every person will have to come forward to destroy all breeding sources of the Aedes mosquito, he said.

Prof Kabirul Bashar, an entomologist of Jahangirnagar University, said they did field work from JU this month in Dhaka and found substantial numbers of larvae in every positive container.

Bashar said they however found fewer Aedes larvae in under-construction buildings due to the drives of the two city corporations after the pre-monsoon survey of the DGHS.

City corporations will also have to inform people about the Aedes mosquitoes and have to encourage them to destroy all breeding sources, he said.

HM Nazmul Ahsan, associate professor at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital, said if a person is infected with both dengue and Covid-19, the situation may turn critical. Doctors will also struggle to handle patients.

It is therefore very important to pay full attention to destroying all sources of Aedes mosquitoes, he said.

Chief Health Officer of Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Brig Gen Md Zobaidur Rahman said since April they have been issuing letters to all government, semi-

government, autonomous, private organisations and educational institutions to take necessary steps so that Aedes larvae do not get any suitable place to breed.

He said they also issued 1,700 text messages to owners of houses where Aedes larvae was detected last year, asking them to take necessary steps to destroy breeding sources or face stern action.

They also held a road show on May 22 in the presence of the LGRD minister, DNCC mayor, TV artists and local prominent persons to raise awareness among the people and did road shows simultaneously in all 10 zones of the DNCC.

Zobaidur said they also conducted combing operations in all the houses in DNCC areas to stop breeding of Aedes mosquitoes and took action against owners of establishments where larvae were found. The corporation will conduct the drive again and will also continue the awareness programme.

He said they are also conducting their regular anti-mosquito drives across the DNCC areas and also conducting a special anti-mosquito drive to different hospitals.

Md Abu Nasher, public relations officer and spokesperson of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), said they are continuing their routine spraying of larvicide and adulticide.

Apart from this, they are conducting mobile court drives in government buildings, colonies and under-construction buildings and imposing fines if they find any dengue larvae there, he said.

"We are also conducting drives at different houses in the DSCC areas," he said.

Since April 1 this year, they visited 699 buildings and found mosquito larvae in 92.

"We have filed 92 cases and fined the [buildings] owners Tk 13.58 lakh," Naser said.

Apart from the awareness campaign, he said they are also giving special attention to some areas as per the instruction of the DGHS, as density of Aedes mosquitoes was higher in those areas.

Bangladesh govt tells Nixon

FROM PAGE 12

carried on relentlessly whatever be the aid to Pakistan.

GRAIN SHORTAGE EXPECTED TO HIT EAST PAKISTAN

An impending crisis in grain distribution was expected to grip East Pakistan soon, further sapping the health and resistance of much of the war-torn nation's population.

Experts on food aid in Dhaka and visiting teams of specialists said the shortages, expected to begin appearing in the next three months, would claim most of their victims from among poor rural people.

The shortages would affect even those parts of the country normally considered food-surplus areas, the experts agreed.

The huge problem facing the government and the foreign relief aid teams was partly one of shipping in enough grain. The two ports, Chittagong and Khulna, had a limited capacity. In normal times their best processing rate had been 1,70,000 tonnes of aid food grains a month. Some experts believed that

even if the ports, now hit by labour shortages and storage problems, could reach this top capacity, it might not be enough.

But the crux of the problem was the distribution of the grain. Officials were less worried about physical damage to the communications network or shortages of ships, boats and road vehicles than they are about the capacity of the administrative machinery.

MEMORANDUM TO PRESIDENT NIXON

The US President's Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs Alexander Haig sent a memorandum to President Nixon on military supply for Pakistan and recommended to suspend all shipments temporarily while the government reviews items still in the pipeline.

The purpose, said Haig, would be to screen out those items which could have military significance in East Pakistan. This might result in a decision to release some innocuous spare parts while withholding

ammunition.

The advantage of this approach, according to the memorandum, would be that it would tighten control and permit the US government to be selective in what goes without imposing an embargo. **PAKISTAN CLAIMS CONTACT WITH MUSHTAQUE**

An Associated Press report from Dhaka quoted "informed Pakistani government sources" as saying that "Martial Law authorities have been in contact with Khondaker Mushtaque Ahmed, Vice President of Bangladesh Awami League and the officially designated foreign minister of secessionist Bangladesh government".

Sources close to the exiled Bangladesh government described as a blatant lie the statement reportedly made by the Martial Law authorities in Dhaka. There had been absolutely no contact, the sources said.

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Two staffers 'ask for bribe' from DAG

FROM PAGE 12

office after they demanded the bribe. My elder brother advocate Golam Rosul eventually gave them Tk 10,000 and completed the deed on Tuesday," DAG Rafel said.

"The sub-registrar later called me over the phone and requested to take back the money. I replied that I didn't give the money as a bribe and therefore, I will not go to his office to take it back," he added.

The DAG said he along with his elder brother went to the office for the registry of a bank's mortgage paper so that he could take a bank

loan through mortgaging a land.

Some officials of a government bank were also accompanying him.

After the DAG made a Facebook post, narrating the incident, officials of the sub-registrar's office and deed writers held a meeting. They called the DAG and apologised for the incident, said sources.

According to sources at the sub-registrar's office, it was a bank's mortgage deeds that were supposed to be handled by the bank officials. So, the office was not supposed to demand any money for that.

"It was a government office.

They demanded the money even after I introduced myself. I was very disappointed," the DAG said.

Contacted, Sub-Registrar Subrata Kumar Singha said he knew nothing about the incident. He said he completed the deeds within the shortest time.

They are looking into the matter, he said, adding, "Necessary actions will be taken if the allegation is found to be true."

Later he informed that Rafiqul Islam Mukul, an office assistant, has been suspended following this bribe-taking incident.

New variant rings alarm

FROM PAGE 12

infectious disease expert, warned that the US could be following the UK's course, where the variant has become the dominant strain due to its rapid spread among youth.

Fauci said indications are that the Covid-19 vaccines remain effective against the variant.

The variant is accounting for half of new infections in US regions including Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming.

The Delta variant currently represents 9-10% of confirmed new cases in France, government spokesman Gabriel Attal said yesterday. Last week, French Health

Minister Olivier Veran said the Delta variant represented 2-4% of cases in France.

VACCINES EFFECTIVE

Covid-19 vaccines made by AstraZeneca and the Pfizer-BioNTech alliance remain broadly effective against Delta and Kappa variants of the Covid-19 causing virus, according to a scientific study, underpinning a continued push to deliver the shots.

The study by Oxford University researchers, published in the journal Cell, investigated the ability of antibodies in the blood from people, who were vaccinated with the two-shot regimens, to neutralize the highly contagious Delta and Kappa variants, a statement said.

"There is no evidence of widespread escape suggesting that the current generation of vaccines will provide protection against the B.1.617 lineage," the paper said, referring to the Delta and Kappa variants by a commonly used code.

However, the concentration of neutralising antibodies in the blood was somewhat reduced, which may lead to some breakthrough infections, they cautioned.

Last week, an analysis by the Public Health England (PHE) showed that vaccines made by Pfizer Inc and AstraZeneca offer high protection of more than 90% against hospitalization from the Delta variant.

NEWS IN brief

Polls violence claims Sramik League leader's life

A leader of Sramik League died on Tuesday night from stab injuries he had sustained during violence over Madaberchar Union Parishad election, held on June 21, in Shibchar upazila of Madaripur.

The deceased, Abu Bakar Fakir, 46, was the president of Madaberchar union unit of Sramik League.

Son of late Abul Khalek Fakir of Daiyachar area in the upazila, Abu Bakar was undergoing treatment at a hospital in Dhaka.

After his rivals stabbed him critically during a pre-polls campaigning in Sare Saterorashi area of Madaberchar on Sunday night, he was initially taken to Shibchar Upazila Health Complex and then to Faridpur Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital. He was later taken to Dhaka as his condition deteriorated.

Father kills teenage son in Barguna

A 14-year-old boy died yesterday when his father hacked him with a sharp weapon.

The incident took place in their house on T&T Road in Barguna's Taltoli upazila town around 11:00am when Sumon, a 10th grader at Taltoli Government Secondary School, tried to stop his father from hitting his mother with sharp weapon.

The accused, Asadul Khan, fled the scene after the incident.

Asadul and his wife Selina Begum often engaged in family squabbles. During one such occurrence that morning, when he attempted to attack his wife with a sharp weapon, their son took the hit when the latter tried to protect his mother, according to locals and police.

The boy was pronounced dead when locals took him to Taltoli Upazila Health Complex.

Taltoli police said they sent the body to Barguna General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Kamruzzaman Mia, OC of the police station, said they were conducting raids to arrest Asadul and a process was underway to file a murder case.

SOURCE: OUR CORRESPONDENTS IN FARIDPUR AND PATUAKHALI

Woman raped

FROM PAGE 12

out of suspicion. Police then tried to intercept the truck at the west zone of Bangabandhu Bridge, but it sped away, said the OC.

Law enforcers later put up a barricade in Koddar area and stopped the truck around 8:00pm.

The father of the victim filed a case with Bangabandhu Bridge West Zone Police Station over the incident, accusing the driver and his helper.

Yesterday, a Sirajganj court sent the two arrestees to jail after police produced them before it.

The victim was sent to Sirajganj General Hospital for medical examinations.

Earlier in March, police arrested a bus driver's helper and the supervisor of the bus over the attempted rape of a college girl on board the vehicle in Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj.

In another incident in January, police picked up a driver in a case filed over the attempted rape of a college student in a moving bus in Sunamganj.

Chinese engr goes

FROM PAGE 12

working in the security team of the project were conducting a rescue operation, but there was no trace of him as of yesterday evening.

An engineer of the project, seeking anonymity, said Jha was working on the barge in the night shift and he was last seen close to the guard rails.

Local and foreign engineers working on the barge could not say what had happened.

Dewan Azad, station officer of Srinagar Fire Service, said a team of six divers from Dhaka joined the rescue operations around 5:00am.

Md Fakhru, an officer of Mawa Coast Guard Station, said four of their divers were in the rescue operation.

Sirajul Kabir, in-charge of Mawa river police, said they came to know about the incident from 999.

They rushed to the spot and joined the rescue operation around 9:00pm, he said.

Scientists recreate

FROM PAGE 12

According to archaeologists, including M Angeles Medina Alcaide from the University of Cantabria in Spain, each of the different lighting systems had diverse features, and their use was a crucial resource for expanding the social and economic behaviour in prehistoric people hundreds of thousands of years ago.

In the study, published in the journal PLOS ONE, scientists analysed archaeological evidence of lighting remains such as combustion residues found across several Paleolithic caves featuring cave art in southwest Europe.

Based on the findings, they experimentally replicated the lighting systems likely used by the original cave dwellers at Isuntza 1 Cave in the Basque region of Spain.

Outcry as HK's Apple Daily

FROM PAGE 12

popular tabloid, which mixes pro-democracy views with racy celebrity gossip and investigations of those in power, marks the end of an era for media freedom in the Chinese-ruled city, critics said.

"Thank you to all readers, subscribers, ad clients and Hong Kongers for 26 years of immense love

and support. Here we say goodbye, take care of yourselves," Apple Daily said in an online article.

Apple Daily's support for democratic rights and freedoms has made it a thorn in Beijing's side since owner Jimmy Lai, a self-made tycoon who was smuggled from mainland China into Hong Kong on a fishing boat at the age of 12, started it in 1995.