



A recent view of the 91-meter-long Buri Teesta barrage and a section of the 1,200-acre water reservoir, which are integral parts of the newly revived irrigation scheme on the Buri Teesta river. The scheme will initially facilitate irrigation facilities for four thousand acres of croplands in Jaldhaka and Dimla upazilas of Nilphamari.

PHOTO: EAM ASADUZZAMAN

RESTORATION OF BURI TEESTA IRRIGATION SCHEME

Hope revives in Jaldhaka, Dimla

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

In a positive development amid the ongoing drought-like situation in the North, the Buri Teesta irrigation project has resumed operations in Jaldhaka and Dimla upazilas under the coverage of a decade.

Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) hopes to bring around four thousand acres of croplands in Jaldhaka and Dimla upazilas under the coverage of the irrigation network initially.

BWDB officials said that after recording only 824 millimetres of rainfall in April-July, as opposed to 1,881 millimetres during the same period last year, they decided to expedite the restoration work of the decades-old project with the help of local farmers in order to save drought-stricken Aman paddy fields in the region.

The farmers voluntarily joined hands with the BWDB to repair breaches in the banks of canals, dig earthen channels and

level out uneven or raised canal beds.

Despite unavailability of funds for the project's rehabilitation work and limited work force, the BWDB made a whole-hearted effort in reviving the much-needed irrigation scheme in the area.

Implemented in 1968 at Kaliganj village, the irrigation scheme has a 91-meter-long barrage, a water reservoir on 1,200 acres of land and a 30-kilometre-long network of canals to irrigate 5,500 acres of cropland.

The project, however, got sidetracked in 1998 when the Teesta irrigation project, the largest of its kind in the country, was launched in Dimla upazila.

Eventually, pieces of land belonging to the Buri Teesta irrigation project started to go in the possession of land grabbers. The final blow to the project came in 2010 when the then BWDB authorities leased out its reservoir to fish farmers.

Locals took the matter to the High Court, which issued a stay order on fish

farming or irrigation operations in the project area.

After ten long years, in 2020, the High Court cancelled the lease and lifted the stay order. But the irrigation project by this time became almost non-functional.

SR Shafiq Sadik, president of Buri Teesta irrigation management committee of farmers, said, "We demanded water for irrigation so that poor rainfall cannot hamper Aman cultivation amid Covid-19 situation. We assured the BWDB that we would repair the canals by ourselves and despite their limitations, the BWDB extended their cooperation."

BWDB Sub-divisional Engineer Abdul Hannan Prodhan said, "We started discharging irrigation water from 28 July, although most of the project's infrastructure was vulnerable and [we had] no fund available."

The BWDB arranged money for major repair work from its general maintenance

fund and the farmers built channels to bring water to about four thousand acres of cropland.

The coverage area is increasing gradually, he added.

Birendranath Roy, a farmer from Rashidpur village, said, "We made earthen channels, repaired breaches in the banks [of canals] on our own to bring water in to our land."

The production cost will now go down and proper irrigation will ultimately result in better yield of crops, hoped Ashraf Islam, another farmer from Taluk Golna village.

Abdullah Al Mamun, executive engineer of BWDB in Nilphamari, said, "In Covid-19 times, it was a challenge to ensure irrigation through a project that had been inoperative for ten years. But we have succeeded."

"We are likely to expand it in future as a new project is underway," he added.

Man held for raping Gyr-old in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Tuesday arrested a young man from Gaibandha in connection with a case for raping a minor girl in Rangpur's Pargachha upazila.

The arrestee, Tushar Imran, a resident of Norsingha village in Pargachha upazila, was produced before a court yesterday that sent him to jail.

Rab officials said father of the six-year-old victim filed a case with Pargachha Police Station accusing Tushar on August 8, but the culprit went into hiding since the incident occurred on July 28, Commander of Rab-13 in Rangpur Reza Ahmed Ferdous said at a press conference held at Rab-13 Headquarters in Rangpur yesterday.

Based on secret information, a team of Rab-13 arrested Tushar from one of his relatives' house in Gaibandha Sadar upazila on Tuesday afternoon, the official said, adding that the arrestee was handed over to Pargachha Police Station.

According to the case statements, the minor victim was playing nearby her house on July 28 afternoon.

At one stage, neighbouring Tushar suddenly appeared on the scene, lured the girl to his house and raped her there.

When the victim cried for help, people nearby rushed to the spot, rescued her and rushed her to Pargachha Upazila Health Complex, from where she was later shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for better treatment.

Neo JMB member held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Police claimed to have arrested an active member of militant group "Neo JMB" from the capital on Tuesday.

The arrested, Nazmus Shakib, is son of Korban Ali of Tangbhangra village in Lalmonirhat's Hatibandha upazila.

Officer in Charge (OC) of Hatibandha Police Station Ershadul Alam said Shakib is accused in a case filed with the police station for injuring a policeman and involved in anti-government activities.

A team of Hatibandha police with the help of Anti-Terrorism Unit members arrested Shakib from Dhaka's Khilgaon area on Tuesday night, the OC said.

The arrestee was produced before a Lalmonirhat court yesterday that sent him to jail, he added.

Hindu idol vandalised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Unidentified criminals damaged an idol of Hindu Goddess Kali at a temple in Sherpur upazila yesterday.

The incident took place at Chandizang village around midnight, villagers said.

One of the villagers Gosai Chanda Das, 60, said the temple is very old and locals have been worshipping the Goddess Kali here since the British era.

On Monday midnight, some unidentified criminals entered the Kali Mandir, vandalised the idol, and threw the idol some 150 meters away from the temple.

Ripon Kumar, a local youth, first saw the broken idol and informed them, he said.

Resumption from next week

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India, sources at the CAAB said.

Millions of people including patients, businessmen and students used to visit India every year while many Indians used to visit Bangladesh for various purposes.

Bangladesh suspended operating all international flights on April 14 after the start of the second wave of coronavirus in the country.

After being closed for 16 days, the operation of international flights resumed from May 1 except for 12 countries including India.

CAAB later added and deducted names of different countries from the list.

In its latest circular on July 5, CAAB made a fresh list of eight countries including India from where no passengers were allowed to enter Bangladesh.

Earlier, when coronavirus infection started in the country last year, air communication with India was closed for several months.

The flight started between Bangladesh and India on October 28 last year under the air bubble agreement.

All Indian Visa Application Centres (VACs) in Bangladesh already resumed

operations from Wednesday as the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions have been eased.

A Facebook post from the Indian High Commission in Dhaka on Tuesday said all applications except for tourist visas will be accepted.

CAAB in its letter to the Director General of Civil Aviation of India on August 4 had proposed 21 air bubble flights per week for both countries. It also said the air bubble flight may resume from August 11.

The letter also said which categories of passengers could be flown.

Besides, for the mandatory Covid-19 test and negative certificate, the test must be done within 72 hours of flight departure.

Regarding capacity restrictions on flights, CAAB said a maximum of 140 passengers in the narrow-bodied (single-aisle) aircraft and 200 passengers in the wide-bodied (twin-aisle) aircraft can be carried.

Apart from Biman Bangladesh Airlines, Novo Air and US Bangla, and 5 Indian airlines used to operate flights from Bangladesh on various routes to India during normal time.

Indian airlines include Air India, Indigo, Spicejet, Vistara and GoAir.

BFIU seeks

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The cases were filed with Banani, Bhatara, Gulshan and Khilkhet police stations under the Narcotics Control Act, Pornographic Control Act, Arms Act, Special Powers Act and Digital Security Act, CID's Additional Superintendent of Police Azad Rahman told The Daily Star.

So far, 15 cases have been filed in these connections, of which CID is investigating 14 cases against the film actor Pori Moni, her associate Ashraf Islam Dipu, models Faria Mahbub Piyasha and Moriom Akter Mou, their associates Mishu Hasan, Masudul Hasan Jisan, film producer Nazrul Islam Raz, his associate Sabuj and sacked Awami League leader Helena Jahangir.

Herd immunity

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Pollard explained that one of the strongest arguments for vaccinating children is to protect adults, reports Politico.

However, he said that vaccinating children wouldn't completely stop transmission and that there was an urgent need to ensure adults are vaccinated the world over. Countries around Europe are currently discussing whether to offer a vaccine to all teenagers — with varying decisions being made.

The coronavirus pandemic has killed at least 4,314,196 people worldwide since the virus first emerged in late 2019, according to an AFP compilation of official data yesterday. "DISGRACEFUL" The World Health Organization on Tuesday urged the 20 leaders with the power to overturn the "disgraceful" global imbalance in access to Covid-19 vaccines to reverse the tide before October.

The WHO's Bruce Aylward said the world should be "disgusted" — and asked whether the situation could have been any worse had there been an active effort to block the planet's poor from getting vaccinated.

HC issues contempt rule

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for violating its directive by allowing Indo-Bangla Pharmaceuticals Limited to produce antibiotics.

The five officials against whom the contempt of court rule was issued are Health Secretary Lokman Hossain Miah; Director General of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) Prof Dr ABM Khurshid Alam; Director General of Drug Administration (DGDA) Major General Md Mahbubur Rahman; Director General of Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP) Babul Kumar Shaha and Managing Director of Indo-Bangla Pharmaceuticals Limited AFM Anwarul Haque.

The HC bench of Justice Mamnoon Rahman and Justice Khandaker Diliruzzaman issued the rule following a contempt of court petition filed by Ripan Barai on behalf of rights organisation Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB).

During hearing on the contempt of court petition yesterday, HRPB's lawyer Manzill Murshid told the court that antibiotics are life-saving medicines.

Taking that into consideration, the

HC on February 13, 2017 had delivered a verdict directing officials concerned of the government to take necessary steps so that 14 pharmaceutical companies including Indo-Bangla Pharmaceuticals Limited cannot produce antibiotics, as their products were below par.

Delivering the verdict on a writ petition filed by HRPB, the HC on that day asked the DG of DGDA to monitor the activities of drug companies and see that the orders are implemented.

The HC had also formed a five-member committee to ensure that the companies do not produce antibiotics without having received a Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP) recommendation from the World Health Organization (WHO).

But, Indo-Bangla Pharmaceuticals Limited are causing damage to people by producing and selling antibiotics in violation of the directives issued by the HC in 2017, the lawyer said.

Manzill Murshid also said the officials concerned, including the DG of DGDA, are not taking any steps against Indo-Bangla Pharmaceuticals, which is disrespectful to the HC directives and also contempt of court, and a punishable offence.

Five out of 20 gold bars still

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charge of Feni DB police, sub-inspectors Mizanur Rahman, Motaher Hossain and Nurul Haque and assistant sub-inspectors Avijit Roy and Masud Rana for robbing 20 gold bars, worth Tk 1.27 crore, from a businessman.

Khandakar Nur-Un-Nabi, superintendent of Feni police, said Gopal Kanti Das, a Chattogram-based gold businessman, complained to him against six DB personnel about looting of his gold bars on Monday.

Gopal alleged that on Sunday, he was travelling to Dhaka from the port city and was stopped at the DB police check point on Dhaka-Chittagong highway near Star Line Filling Station at Fatehpur of Feni. The police officers forcibly took away 20 gold bars from him.

Following the complaint, the SP started

investigation. On Tuesday, Gopal identified four out of six police officers.

After interrogation, the four officers and the rest two were found involved in the robbery incident.

Later, the Chattogram-based businessman lodged a robbery case against the six DB men with Feni Model Police Station on Tuesday night.

Police arrested the DB officials.

Out of 20 gold bars, 15 were recovered from the possession of Inspector Saiful. Police are trying to recover the rest, the SP added.

Aminul Islam Sumon, a lawyer of the complainant, said, "We prayed to the court to issue remand order for further interrogation to recover the rest gold bars."

It should be investigated whether DB Inspector Saiful was involved in other crimes, he told the court.

Upazila chairman gets jab

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prohibited.

He said he issued a show-cause notice yesterday, asking Tanore Upazila Health Officer Barnabas Hasda to explain in three days why the chairman was vaccinated in his home.

"People wait in queues for hours in the vaccination centres to take Covid shots and you are having it at your home. This is not ethical at all," he said.

He also accused the upazila chairman of misusing his power for taking the vaccine.

Health officials confirmed that the man seen in the photo administering the dose on the chairman was Nishan Mandal, a porter who works to transport vaccines from government stores to vaccination centres.

Contacted by The Daily Star, Nishan

admitted jabbing the chairman and said he learnt the job by "observing health staffers".

The upazila parishad chairman said he asked health staffers to vaccinate him at his home because it "would save his time".

"I had to go to Dhaka for an emergency. So I requested them to come to my home and give me the shot."

Barnabas Hasda, the upazila health officer, said he only cooperated with the chairman by acting on his request. He, however, acknowledged that sending vaccines outside vaccination centres was illegal.

But Tanore UNO Pankaj Chandra Devnath described the incident as a "minor" one. "I don't see anything wrong here. It can happen during emergencies," he said.

Migration to South Korea

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Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL).

The countries are China, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Mongolia, Cambodia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Uzbekistan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Kyrgyzstan and Laos, says EPS' official website.

BOESL, owned by the government, is the lone agency sending workers from Bangladesh to South Korea under EPS.

Billal Hossain, BOESL's managing director, on Monday said the visa embargo put by South Korea on new EPS workers is still in place.

However, following negotiations, the Bangladesh government was able to resume re-entry of some old workers, he told this newspaper over the phone.

He said they held a meeting with the director of the Human Resources Department of South Korea recently to get the visa embargo lifted. Besides, they were negotiating through the Bangladesh foreign ministry.

If necessary, the BOESL MD said, they are ready to intensify any measures including a quarantine facility, which is already in place.

The overall visa embargo that South Korea put on Bangladesh was due to the Covid-19 situation while BOESL's concern

is regarding the migrant workers under the EPS, he further said.

Mokima Begum, first secretary at the labour wing of the Bangladesh Embassy in Seoul, recently said they have kept all sorts of efforts ongoing to have the visa embargo lifted.

She said the embassy has already sent a note verbale to the South Korean authorities concerned for withdrawal of the embargo.

As workers are unable to get jobs due to the visa embargo at present, this has left many of them in frustration, Mokima told this newspaper via WhatsApp.

According to BOESL's 2019-2020 annual report, Bangladesh signed a memorandum of understanding with South Korea in 2007 for the recruitment of Bangladeshi workers under EPS and started sending workers through BOESL the next year.

The age range for workers wanting to migrate under EPS is 18-39 years while the total migration cost is \$1,115 including airfare, states the report.

Such workers usually earn about Tk 2 lakh a month, including overtime. Sometimes, employers provide free accommodation and food for workers, it also states.

Before 2006, Bangladeshi workers migrated to South Korea under the Industrial Trainee Scheme (ITS) at a higher migration cost.

Terrifying 'dragon'

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Researchers including Tim Richards, a University of Queensland postdoctoral student in the School of Biological Sciences' Dinosaur Lab, analyzed a jaw fossil from the pterosaur. It was originally discovered in a quarry just

northwest of Richmond in northwest Queensland in June 2011 by fossicker Len Shaw. Fossickers search for gold and fossils.

Richards said that the pterosaur would have been a "fearsome beast" that likely snacked on juvenile dinosaurs.

The fate

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At an interview he said the entire South-East Asia faces a serious crisis if anything untoward happens to Bangabandhu.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, known as Lion of Kashmir, joined the chorus of appeals to save Bangabandhu's life. He sent a telegram to Pakistan President Yahya Khan today asking the latter to withdraw prosecution of Bangabandhu and enter into fruitful negotiations with him to identify a political settlement.

Sheikh Abdullah, who had broken his long silence over the development in Bangladesh, said in his telegram: "The unfortunate developments in East Pakistan constitute basically a human and not a law and order problem. A broad-minded liberal policy is therefore called for to bring about a lasting solution."

Meanwhile, a UN spokesman raised the possibility today that the UN Secretary General U Thant was using his good offices to intercede with the Pakistan government on behalf of Bangabandhu. "Whatever the secretary general is doing on this question is being done privately," the spokesman said.

The Rev Dr Eugene Carson Blake, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, said today that the secret military trial of Bangabandhu "may invite wider conflict". In an appeal to Yahya, Dr Blake also said such a trial was "likely to increase animosity, suspicion and human suffering".

INDO-SOVIET PACT CRITICISED

Atal Behari Vajpayee, leader of the right-wing Jana Sangha party, today accused his country and the Soviet Union of stabbing Bangladesh. He charged at a rally that there was no mention of Bangladesh in a Soviet-Indian communiqué issued yesterday.

"On the contrary, it discussed the interests of the entire people of Pakistan," Vaipayee declared. "This is a stab in the back of Bangladesh and amounts to support for the indivisibility of Pakistan."

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