

AL vigilance foiled BNP's attempt to create chaos

Says info minister on Dec 10 rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud said that BNP-Jamaat had attempted to create a chaos in Dhaka on December 10 in the name of mass procession but it was foiled by the Awami League's leaders and supporters' vigilance.

Hasan, also Awami League joint general secretary, said despite that, Jamaat, the BNP's main ally, carried out attacks on the police, which were thwarted by the force.

The minister made the remarks while talking to reporters at his residence at Dewanji Pukur Par in Chattogram city yesterday.

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A man lifts stones from the Dharla river at Kawamari village in Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

The daily grind of stone collectors

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Nur Mohammad goes down to the river with a net in hand, stays underwater for two to three minutes and emerges with some small and big stones.

Nur, now in his 40s, does this for four to five hours every day to make a living out of stone lifting.

Like him, more than 200 people of seven villages in Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila lift stones from Dharla river to earn a living, as this is the only source of their livelihood.

"I can lift 12 to 15 cubic feet of stones from the river every day," Nur said, adding that his father and grandfather used to collect stones from this very river using such nets, and now, has entered the profession.

Nur, a resident of Kawamari village and a father of two, said he sells each cubic feet for Tk 40 to 45 and earns up to Tk 500 to 600 daily. "I don't look for fish under the water but rather search for stones."

Sakkul Miah, another stone collector of the village, said they have been collecting stones from the riverbed with nets for many years.

During heavy current, water from the upstream bring in huge numbers of small and big stones into Dharla river, he said. "Although collecting stones from the riverbed is a hard job, the riverside people here have no other alternative."

Jannu Mia of Shrirampur village said after collecting the stones, they bring those to the shore on small boats.

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STRANDED IN INDIA 23 fishers return via Benapole

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Twenty-three Bangladeshi fishermen, who were stranded at India's West Bengal for nearly four months, were allowed to enter the country through the Benapole border in Jashore on Friday night.

The Indian police handed them over to Benapole Immigration Police through "special travel permit".

Confirming the development, Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Benapole Check-post Immigration Police, told our local correspondent that on August 18 this year, 90 Bangladeshi fishermen were caught in a sea storm while fishing in the Bay of Bengal. Indian Coast Guard police later rescued them from the sea.

The fishermen were under custody of Buddha Pur flood centre in Kakkdip in India.

After confirming the citizenship of 23 rescued fishermen, the deputy high commission of Bangladesh in Kolkata took the initiative to bring them back to the country, said the OC. Among the 23 fishermen, one is from Bagerhat, one from Chandpur and 21 from Bhola.

Muhit Hossain, senior

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PROTECTING 3 MOULVIBAZAR UPAZILAS FROM FLOOD Tk 996cr project in limbo



The river protection dam on the bank of Moulvibazar's Monu river remains unrepaired, as a project worth Tk 996.3 crore to protect three upazilas of the district from flooding is in limbo due to financial crisis. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

MINTU DESHWARA

In 2021, Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) approved a mega project worth Tk 996.30 crore in 2021 to permanently free three upazilas of Moulvibazar from flood.

Fifty-three contractors were selected for the project, which was scheduled to be completed by 2023. There were 76 work packages based on which the authorities planned to approach the project.

But due to an apparent fund crisis, no visible work has been completed so far.

Out of the 72 work packages, 26 have already been abandoned. Work on the remaining 46 packages is continuing at a snail's pace. The projects it could be stopped anytime due to a lack of funds, said representatives of the Water Development Board and the contractors, seeking anonymity.

The most important works, including dredging of rivers and

construction of river protection dams have not even started in most of these sites.

Repairing an embankment of the Manu river, and dredging the waterbody was part of this project. However, these works have completely stopped.

Manu river, which descends from Tripura state of India, has completely been filled with silt a long time ago. However, the river was not dredged for a single time since independence.

As a result, every year during monsoon, the river overflows and breaks the defense dam, flooding the three upazilas - Moulvibazar Sadar, Rajnagar and Kulaura. Houses and crops worth crores of taka get damaged during this time as well.

Sundar Ali, a resident of Manumukh area in Kulaura upazila in the district, said, "At first I thought this project was a blessing for us. But now I am afraid. If the project isn't completed before the next monsoon, we will

be in danger all over again."

According to WDB sources, only Tk 75 crore of the allocated Tk 996 crore has been handed over to them so far.

Moulvibazar WDB sub-divisional engineer Rakhil Raihan said the contractor companies are showing reluctance to work due to the financial crisis.

Moulvibazar WDB executive engineer Muhammad Akhtaruzzaman said they have requested the higher authorities to formally extend the deadline of the project and hand over the remaining allocated money.

"If the deadline is extended, the contractors will be directed to complete the remaining work quickly," he added.

Contacted, several contractor companies said they were forced to stop the majority works of the flood protection project due to unavailability of allocated money.

The rising price of construction materials didn't help either, they added.

PM is working to turn crisis into possibility Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister



Obaidul Quader yesterday said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is working to turn the ongoing crisis into a possibility.

"The global recession brought a negative impact around the world. As a result, the crisis is now prevalent in many countries. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is working to turn this crisis into a possibility," he said while talking to the journalists on the Feni Girls Cadet College premises in Feni.

Noting that Pakistan's reserve has come down to 9 billion dollars, the veteran AL leader said, "We are better than that. We did not lose our track even in the crisis and we have started to turn around."

He said the extreme right and extreme left-leaning political parties have united ahead of the election and their target is Sheikh Hasina.

"But the government has brought the country to a sustainable level. The people are in favour of the government," he added.

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DAULATDIA-PATURIA Fog disrupts ferry services

UNB, Manikganj

Ferry services on Paturia-Daulatdia route remain suspended since yesterday morning due to poor visibility caused by fog.

Mahiuddin Russel, manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation at Aricha point, said the ferry services remained halted since 3:00am. Three ferries got stuck in the middle of the Padma and operation of 11 more ferries were cancelled.

Several vehicles also got stuck on both sides of the river due to the suspension of the ferry services, he said. "The services will resume once visibility improves," he added.



PADMA RIVER Measurement of water level begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Monitoring of water level at different points of the Padma and Ganges, the two major rivers of the neighbouring countries, starts today by Bangladesh and India under the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty 1996.

Water Development Board (WDB) sources said the flow of water in the mighty Padma is much better than that of the previous years.

Two Indian experts Voshonto Kumar

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Tk 95 lakh washing away Sandbags to protect erosion vanishing into Karkhana river

Sandbags to protect erosion vanishing into Karkhana river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

In September, geo bags were placed within 300 metres of Karkhana river in Patuakhali's Baulfal upazila to protect from river erosion.



Water Development Board (WDB) implemented the project at a cost of Tk 95 lakh, through an agency named Messers Lutfar Rahman. Almost Tk 1 crore of public money were used for this project, which WDB claimed will protect villagers from river erosion.

But barely a month after, these sand bags are disappearing into the river, washing away the tall claims of the WDB authorities.

After visiting Kachipara union of Baulfal upazila, this correspondent saw that most of the geo bags were devoured by the river, while the rest were severely damaged.

Sand was coming out from some bags.

Saidul, a local resident, alleged that sand was not properly filled in the bags.

"A geo bag needs at least 150kg of sand. But most of these bags had a maximum of 120kg of sand in it," he claimed.

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Many memorabilia of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani are in a dilapidated condition due to sheer negligence of the authorities concerned. These pictures were taken from Tangail's Santosh area recently.

PHOTO: STAR



Bhasani memorabilia in disarray

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

With the passage of time, many institutions established by Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani are decaying due to a lack of proper care and preservation.

Besides, many memorabilia of the veteran leader at Bhasani Museum in Santosh are also in bad condition, thanks to the negligence of the authorities concerned.

Meanwhile, the development works of a number of schools and colleges, established by Maulana Bhasani, are currently stalled due to land related complications.

The country observed the 46th death anniversary of the legendary political leader in November this year.

In 1957, the historic "Kagmari Conference" was held in Santosh, where renowned poets, writers,

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