



Pre-Reading Activities

A: Discussion

Work in pairs. Take turns to ask your partner the questions below.

1. Do you know anyone who has lost their home? If you do, how did it happen? How did they feel?
2. How would you feel if you lost your home? (*If it were destroyed, for example, in a fire or collapsed during an earthquake.*)
3. How would you feel if this happened to you more than one time? Would you change your life in any way?

B: Brainstorming

Work in groups of three or four students.

Answer these questions by sharing any information you know with other students.



Look at this map of Bangladesh.
What do you know about...

1. *the climate of Bangladesh?*
How warm is it?
What is the weather like?
Is the weather like this all year round?
2. *people's lives there?*
Where do most people in Bangladesh live?

Reading Activities

A: Matching Headlines

The article's headline and two sub-headlines have been removed from the article on the following page. Skim the article on the next page and choose where they should go. Be careful, there is one extra headline.

- i. Waste, Garbage**
- ii. Success with Flood Shelters**
- iii. Taming The Rivers**
- iv. Bangladesh's rivers are both curse and lifeline**



1.

BY ANIS AHMED

GANGACHARA, Bangladesh Fri Nov 18 (Reuters) - The mighty Teesta river that has swept away farm laborer Mohammad Taheruddin's home 10 times in the past five decades is now a picture of calm.

At the end of the monsoon season, the river that brings misery to thousands of Bangladeshis almost every year looks more like a big canal, with people and cattle walking across through knee-deep water.

Children cast nets for fish to add to their meager food or to sell in the nearby market.

But barely two months ago the Teesta, like many other rivers in the low-lying South Asian country, was in full spate. It burst its banks, destroying flood shelters the government built five years ago for people including Taheruddin, 65, and washing away a stretch of highway.

"The river has stripped me of everything, my home and land," said Taheruddin, now camped out in the open on a raised stretch of highway in Gangachara, 230 miles north of the capital, Dhaka, along with his wife and three children.

The Teesta is one of more than 150 rivers that criss-cross densely populated Bangladesh, affecting the lives of millions.

More than 50,000 people on average lose their homes every year by flooding of the rivers, most of which flow from the Himalayas through India before emptying in the Bay of Bengal.

But the rivers are also a lifeline for the impoverished nation of 140 million people.

"We cannot live without the rivers," said Nasimun Nahar, 55. "They give us our sources of living -- fishing, sailing and ferrying merchandise," she said. "Otherwise, we wouldn't have even a single meal."

For most Bangladeshis, the rivers provide the only valid mode of transport across the country, although this too is hazardous, as seen by the high rate of ferry accidents.

2.

In recent years, the government has been trying to tame the rivers by building cross dams or dumping concrete slabs along the banks. Some \$600 million has been spent but it has barely made a dent in the problem.

"The currents in the rivers are often too strong," said one official in the northern district of Rangpur, of which Gangachara is a part.

Authorities say they are planning to build a cross dam on the Teesta at Gangachara that should help reduce the flood threat.

The government should also carry out extensive dredging of the river where it has become silted, said Syed Ahmed, chief engineer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board. "But it depends on the availability of funds," he said.

Bangladesh's rivers carry a huge mass of soil and sand as they flow from the Himalayas across India. While the waters eventually reach the Bay of Bengal, most of the silt settles on the river beds.

"The rivers in our country are silted every year and they need to be dredged every four or five years. But this is a very expensive and difficult process," said Selim Bhuiyan, an engineer at the government-run Flood Forecasting Center.

3.

The rivers are also choked with industrial waste and garbage.

Bhuiyan said dredging of the rivers would allow them to hold more water during the monsoon season and reduce the intensity of floods. "But the problem is we don't have enough money to do the job in one go or on all the rivers," he said.

Flood survivor Taheruddin blames politicians, saying they have been promising for years to save people like him from the rivers but it has made no difference in their lives.

"Politicians come and visit us every time before an election and make lofty promises to build us a heaven on earth," he said. "But they disappear once the vote is over."

The administration had failed even to build proper flood shelters for the most vulnerable, Taheruddin said. Several of the structures put up around Gangachara were washed away in the recent floods because they were not built on higher land.

"This is an unending cycle of destruction," he lamented.

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B: True or False

Read the whole article and decide whether these statements are **T** true or **F** false.

- One farmworker has had his home destroyed by the Teesta River a number of times in the last fifty years.
- For 12 months of the year, the Teesta River in Bangladesh is too deep for people or animals to wade through.
- Flood shelters built for people by the Teesta River have not been successful.
- Most rivers in Bangladesh have their source in the Himalayas.
- The government has done a large amount of dredging of the Teesta River.
- A huge amount of money has been spent on trying to stop rivers from flooding but there has been little success.
- River dredging is expensive and will not remove silt from the rivers.
- Taheruddin thought that the government could do more to help Bangladeshis who live near rivers.

C: Reading And Notetaking

Use the article to make notes to answer the questions below.

- * What are some of the benefits of living near a river in Bangladesh that the article mentions?
- * What are some of the disadvantages?

D: Reading Carefully

Here are three ideas from the article.

However, the article also explains why there is a **problem** with each one of the three ideas.

Look in the article and explain what the problem or difficulty is for each of the ideas.

1. *Constructing concrete slabs along the sides of a river help to decrease its strength.*
2. *Catching a ferry is an excellent way to travel in Bangladesh.*
3. *Dredging of rivers will help the rivers to carry more water in the wettest time of the year.*

Post-Reading Activities

You may do one or more of these.

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A: Say It!

Work in groups of three. Take one of the roles below, reread the article quickly, thinking about what your character would think. Then talk to your group for two minutes about what you think should happen to solve the problem of rivers flooding and how the flooding affects you:

1. **A farm laborer living near the Teesta River.**
2. **An engineer working for the government on the flooding problem.**
3. **A politician in the Gangachara Region.**

When each of you has spoken for about two minutes, swap roles and repeat the activity.

B: Language

The present perfect continuous (**have/has + been + active participle**) focuses on the **length** of an action.

It looks at how long an action has been going on for.

* *In recent years, the government **has been trying** to tame the rivers by building cross dams or dumping concrete slabs along the banks.*

* *Flood survivor Taheruddin blames politicians, saying they **have been promising** for years to save people like him from the rivers.*

The present perfect continuous focuses on the activity **in progress** and for repeated actions **up to now**.

* *We **have been dredging** the river and hope to finish the process soon.*

* *We **have been holding** meetings with villagers.*

* *I've **been looking** on the Internet to find out what to do.*

Since and **for** are often used with the present perfect continuous.

* *I've **been waiting** for the flood waters to go down now for the last three weeks.*

The present perfect continuous looks at the activity in progress, while the present perfect simple looks at the result.

* *I've **been drawing** up a plan of what to do.*

* *I've **drawn** up a plan of what to do. Do you like it? (In this sentence, it is clear that the action has finished.)*

It may depend on how the speaker sees the situation: i.e. whether or not they want to focus on the action going on, or the result.

State verbs (e.g. verbs like **know, love, like, own** and **want**) do not usually take the continuous:

* *We **have known** about this problem for months. NOT ~~We have been knowing about this problem for months.~~*

* *I **have had** this house by the river for three months. NOT ~~I have been having this house by the river for three months.~~*

1. Choose the correct alternative in these sentences:

1. I'm so tired. I've **worried** / I've **been worrying** about this problem all night.
2. We've **worked**/we've **been working** on the new dam. We hope to finish it by the end of the year.
3. I've **always hated**/I've **always been hating** the idea of dredging the river. It'll be bad for wildlife.
4. The river looks a bit deeper than before! Yes, it's **rained**/ it's **been raining** all morning.
5. The new dam looks great! Yes, they've **done**/they've **been doing** a great job.

2. Look at other news articles. Find examples of the present perfect continuous. Talk about why it is used in these examples.

TEACHERS' NOTES AND ANSWER KEY

Reading Activities

A: Matching Headlines - Answers

1. iv, 2. iii, 3. i. (ii. is the extra headline.)

B: True or False - Answers

1. T, 2. F (At the end of monsoon season, people are able to walk across it and it looks like a big canal.) 3. T, 4. T, 5. F (the chief engineer says it should be done, but the article does not say it HAS been done.), 6. T, 7. F (It is expensive but it will remove silt. "The rivers in our country are silted every year and they need to be dredged every four or five years."), 8. T.

C: Reading And Notetaking - Sample Answers

Benefits - can catch fish to eat or sell, help people to travel (going by ferry) or transport goods,

Disadvantages - washes away people's homes and land, is a dangerous form of travel (because there are a large number of accidents)

D: Reading Carefully - Answers

1. The river currents are too strong. It is also very expensive.
2. It is a very dangerous way to travel as there is a high number of accidents.
3. There is not enough money to dredge all the rivers at one time.

Post-Reading Activities

B: Language - Answers

i. 1. I've been worrying, 2. we've been working, 3. I've always hated, 4. it's been raining, 5. they've done.

For some more information on the Teesta River, try http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teesta_River.

