

When 79 years is not enough

AZIBOR RAHMAN WITH FIROZ A MUZAHID

How long does it take to solve a trivial problem at a school where hundreds of youngsters take their first lessons to be good human beings and responsible citizens of the country?

If one is asking about Bezra Narandia Government Primary School, on 83 decimals of land in Magura's Mohammadpur upazila, the answer is apparently more than 79 years!

Since its inception in 1941 in Nohata union of the upazila, the school somewhat remained waterlogged for most part of the year, usually from June to December.

All through those years, the school witnessed fall and rise of many political powers and governments during three different eras -- the British, the Pakistani and the Bangladeshi.

But no department official of any of the governments or public representatives took notice of the children's plight, nor did they consider the negative physiological or psychological impact the prolonged loss of physical activity might have on the school's children.

The school currently has 353 students and 9 teachers. Its students have been doing well in the Primary Education Completion examinations every year, with 100 percent pass rate in most years. Out of the students who passed, two secured Talent Pool last year and five secured the same the year before.

When the school's playground is submerged in water, the children have no other option but to take part in the school assembly in the hallway, in front of their classrooms, said Nahid Sultana, the head teacher of the school.

Had they not faced the adverse situation for most part of the year, their results might have been better, she also said.

Raghendra Mohan Das, an



A team of ducks frolic in the water logged playground of Bezra Narandia Government Primary School in Magura's Nohata union under Mohammadpur upazila. The photo was taken recently.

assistant teacher at the school, said although physical education and outdoor sports are essential for a child's physical and mental wellbeing, they have been unable to provide them with such activities during the months when the playground remains under water.

Fifth grader Nusrat Jahan Munira said she and her classmates get bored during breaks when they are not able to play outside due to the water logging.

During those days, attending school and remaining stuck in the classrooms are quite difficult, said Fahim Hossain, a fourth grader.

Denying any responsibility and jurisdiction over the school, Nohata Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Mohammad Ali Mia

said especially in the last 10 to 15 years, the system of natural drainage around the school has been obstructed by unplanned

construction of structures, such as houses and ponds, with elevated foundations and banks.

Construction of a drainage network around the school compound and connecting it with the nearby Ichhamoti Beel could be a probable solution to the problem, he added.

Noor Mohammad, education officer in Mohammadpur upazila, claimed ignorance over the situation and also passed the responsibility onto others. He said, "Why didn't the head teacher tell me about it before she told you?"

He, however, said that since he was made aware of the water logging situation by this correspondent, he would now do the due diligence before taking steps to rectify the problem at the school.

School managing committee chairman Mohammad Ali Mia (not the UP chairman) said after

they contacted the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Mohammadpur upazila and sought his assistance in resolving the school's longstanding water logging problem, the UNO has assured him of taking all necessary steps after paying a visit to the school at the soonest.

Nahid Sultana, the head teacher, said, being advised by Wahiduzzaman, assistant education officer in the upazila, she already wrote a letter to the UNO and the UP chairman, seeking support in resolving the water logging problem at the school.

Contacted, UNO Mizanur Rahman said he was not aware that the situation at the school had been prevailing for such a long time.

He would visit the school within two to three days and take all steps necessary to resolve the problem once and for all, he added.

MADDHAPARA GRANITE MINING Rock production resumes after 5 months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Rock production at Maddhapara Granite Mining Company Limited (MGMCL) has resumed on Thursday after 140 days of closure due to the hit of Covid-19 infections across the country.

The authorities shut down the production of the mine on March 24 due to the coronavirus pandemic, said officials of MGMCL, a company of Petrobangla in Parbatipur upazila of the district.

Around 261 tonnes of rock have been produced in 24 hours after the resumption of the mine activities, they said.

It was learnt that the overall production was around 600 tonnes as of Saturday night, said the officials.

ABM Kamruzzaman, managing director (MD) of MGMCL, on Saturday said they started a test run on Thursday night as the mine remained shut down for nearly five months.

However, it would take more one month to start full speed production, operating three production shifts, he added.

Germania Trest Consortium (GTC) is the contracted company of the mine, said Kamruzzaman.

The mine has 800 local miners recruited by GTC, who returned to their work after 132 days on August 8. The miners were unpaid due to the production suspension.

The MD further said that Covid-19 test of the miners is going on, which is a lengthy process.

One hundred and sixty out of 800

miners joined in the production, he said. More 150 local miners can join their work if their Covid-19 test reports come to hand, said the official.

It is possible to produce 5,500 tonnes of rock operating three shifts, said the officials of GTC and MGMCL.

Around 7.50 lakh tonnes of rock had been at the yard in March. MGMCL sold around 6.50 tonnes of rock till the date. The stock of the rock at the yard is now around 100,000 tonnes.

North Korean Company Namnam had developed the mine, spending Tk 1275 crore. It was started in 1994. With the end of development, the company started production in 2007.

Namnam was supposed to produce around 5,500 tonnes of rock daily, but the company never could attain the target. Later, MGMCL picked up GTC in September 2013 by floating tender and signed a contract. As per the contract with GTC, the company has to produce 9.2 million tonnes of rock in 6 years.

MGMCL handed over the mine to GTC on February 20 in 2014.

GTC even failed to produce half of 9.2 million tonnes in the last six years. The contract ended on February 20 this year.

The officials of MGMCL have given a one-year contract extension to GTC to keep smooth production. Meantime, MGMCL has floated tender to pick up a new company for mine's operation, maintenance and production.



MGMCL in Dinajpur's Parbatipur upazila resumes operations on Thursday after 140 days of closure due to the hit of coronavirus.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Farmers buy Aman saplings for high prices

A section of traders doing brisk business taking advantage of floods

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A section of traders are doing brisk business by selling Aman saplings at high rates in the local markets of Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts taking advantage of prolonged floods, much to the worry of the farmers.

Farmers are compelled to buy the saplings for high prices as it is the peak cultivation season.

Local farmers said lately prepared many seedbeds and seedlings in the river basin areas of Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dharla and Dudhkumar in the two districts were damaged due to the month-long flood in July.

Taking the advantage of sapling crisis, the traders are doing brisk business by selling seedlings for high prices to cash in amid the flood situation, the growers alleged.

A large number of farmers are facing trouble as they are not getting enough seedlings for farming, they said.

Flood-hit farmer Zahir Ali, 62, of Brahmaputra river basin in Jorgachh area of Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, said poor and marginal farmers bear the brunt as a bundle of 200 seedlings is being sold at Tk 18-20 against Tk 5 last year.

However, the production cost of



Farmers plant Aman seedlings in a flood affected land at Rajpur village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

two bundles of seedlings is not more than Tk 3 to Tk 4, he said.

At least 150 bundles of seedlings are needed to cultivate one bigha of land (30 decimal), said paddy grower Mantaz Ali, 58, of the same area.

Another flood-hit farmer Azgar Ali, 57, of Teesta river basin village Rajpur in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said seedling crisis has made his Aman cultivation uncertain. He is trying to manage seedlings from his relatives.

Protap Chandra Barman, 65, of the same area, said "I prepared Boro

seedbeds on 20 decimals of land this current season but 70 percent seedlings were damaged due to severe flood. So I have to purchase seedlings from the local market for high prices."

Anu Hossain, 45, a seedling trader at Brahmaputra river basin Jatrapur Haat (market) in Kurigram Sadar upazila, said due to the prolonged floods in different districts, they have to spend additional money for purchasing seedlings from flood free different districts.

"As we purchased seedlings at high rate, we are selling it at high rates," he said.

According to the sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat, farmers of the two districts have lost their seedlings on 2,300 hectares of land due to floods this year.

Kurigram DAE Deputy Director Dr Mostafizur Rahman Proddhan said a good number of flood-hit farmers are facing seedlings crisis. They have been managing seedlings from their relatives and many of them are purchasing seedlings.

The DAE official hopes that all farmers will complete Aman farming in their lands by managing seedlings somehow.

2 siblings electrocuted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Two siblings died from electrocution in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Partha Pal, 10, and Protio Pal, 5, were sons of Porimal Pal of Palpara village.

Quoting the victims' family members, police said Partha, a Class V student at Baroghoria Government Primary School, came in contact with live electricity while trying to switch on a fan at their house. His younger brother Protio also got electrocuted when he tried to save him.



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