

Jobless youth in Rangpur becomes self-reliant by papaya cultivation

He earns Tk 3,000 per day by selling 700 pieces of ripe papaya

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A jobless youth here has become self-reliant by cultivating papaya in an extensive scale.

Jobless Jahangir Alam was passing a miserable life eight years back after getting the graduation degree from Rajshahi University.

He invested money in different kinds of business but incurred a huge loss. At last fortune smiled on him when he decided to cultivate papaya. Now he is the most successful papaya farmer in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur districts.

At first he got a good profit by cultivating papaya on two and a half acres of land. From then on he became more wealthy by cultivating papaya.

Now he earns at least 3,000 taka per day by selling 700 pieces of ripe papaya per day. He has become a model farmer. Other farmers got the inspiration to be self-sufficient by papaya farming from him. He has also employed 23 labourers in his farm.

An Indian variety named 'Shahi' variety of seed suited the soil and climate of Rangpur.

Using this variety of seed he achieved good yield of papaya.

Gradually Jahangir Alam expanded his papaya farm land at Sheikhpura under Sader upzila to six acres.

Now he has decided to expand his farm on 100 acres of land.

According to him extensive training is a must to become a successful papaya cultivator.

So, he urged the government to establish a papaya research centre in Rangpur to provide training to prospective cultivators.

A few banks in Rangpur assured him financial support when he will bring 100 acres of land under papaya cultivation.

He believes that the country may fetch a huge amount of forex by exporting papaya to Europe and America. He also suggested to set up cold storages in Rangpur and Dinajpur region for preservation of the fruit.

He has evolved his own variety of papaya seed which suits most for Rangpur and Dinajpur region. The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Rangpur made an order of five lakh taka to supply one lakh seedlings from his farm, he revealed this correspondent. The DAE will supply the seedlings to farmers in eight upazilas of Rangpur district, he further disclosed.



A model papaya farm of Jahangir Alam, inset.

PHOTO: STAR

4-km canal being filled up to build 'model village' in Gaibandha

Aman, boro farming on 6,400 hectares likely to be hampered



PHOTO: STAR

A good portion of the BWDB canal at Damodorepur in Sadullapur upazila, Gaibandha has been filled up to build a model village there.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A four-kilometre (KM) canal at Damodorepur in Sadullapur upazila is being filled up for building a 'model village' ignoring local people's hopes and aspirations.

The Bangladsh Water Development Board (BWDB) excavated the canal to remove stagnant water from 6,400 hectares of marshy land. An embankment was also constructed along the canal from Kathaler hat to Baniyer Jan for removal of floodwater. Ultimately the vast area was brought under aman and boro cultivation.

At present Damodorepur Union Parishad (UP) chairman Saidur Rahman took an initiative to set up a model village there under a government proposal. Ninety metric tons of rice were also allocated. Finding no khas land to set up the model village he started implementation of the model village project occupying the BWDB embankment and attached canal. He started the earth-filling work and already filled up a good portion of the canal.

Local people apprehended that if the canal is filled up completely there

will be no outlet of stagnant water during the rainy season. As a result the cultivation of aman and boro crops will be affected adversely, Gaibandha BWDB executive engineer told this correspondent.

In 1937 BWDB undertook the 5-year Sat Damua Katler Beel Project at a cost of five crore 11 lakh taka under the financial assistance of the Netherlands. The project was aimed at providing irrigation facilities on marshy lands in three unions of Damodorepur, Kamarpara and Naldanga in Sadullapur upazila.

Katler beel, Nowshir beel, Forier Damua, Sholgari beel, Hat Bamunia beel, Chalker beel, Chotto Kacher beel, Chander Doba, Digderir beel and Darer beel are also situated under the project area. Previously the marshy lands under the project area remained under water round the year. After construction of the embankment and the canal the marshy areas were brought under cultivation.

People of the three unions urged the Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Gaibandha to stop building the ideal village filling up the canal immediately.

People of Teknaf yet to be brought under sanitation coverage

BSS, Teknaf (Cox's Bazar)

People of Teknaf are yet to be brought under sanitary coverage.

This is because most families in this coastal upazila still use open space or 'kutcha' latrines, health workers and NGO activists told this on Thursday.

"Many people in the area suffer from various diseases including diarrhoea due to this phenomenon," Abdul Malek, a schoolteacher of Hoaikong village told journalists at his hilltop house here.

Malek is, however, a bit lucky than others because he has an alternative source of safe drinking water and a sanitary latrine. A local non-government organisation named ISHDO (Ideal Society for Health and Development Organisation) provided him the water plant and the sanitary latrine.

ISHDO, a partner organisation of NGO Forum for Safe Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation, along with two other organisations provides technical and logistic support to villagers to get access to safe drinking water and hygienic latrines under a cost sharing system.

Under the system, a villager has to bear 20 percent of the cost to set up a water plant or a sanitary latrine, while the NGOs share 80 per cent cost. A sanitary latrine costs 540 taka, while a rainwater harvesting system (RHS) of 3,200-litre capacity involves an amount of 10,000 taka.

But, this initiative has a little impact on the vast population of the area, where 85 percent people still do not have access to better living. The

ISHDO has a target to bring only 300 families under 70 villages of Hoaikong by next year, but even then majority will remain out of the programme.

"We have limitations in terms of capacity and resources. But the government should intervene to solve the problems," ISHDO executive director Ahmadullah Faruki said.

He, however, said the people are also very reluctant to introduce hygienic system at their houses.

"So motivation is the most for them," he said, adding that poverty coupled with illiteracy has been barring all initiatives from improving the quality of life in Teknaf, a major land port and gateway to Saint Martin Island in the Bay of Bengal.

Bangladesh has launched a national campaign to bring the entire population under hundred percent sanitation coverage by the year 2010.

Eye camp ends

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

One hundred and thirty cataract eye patients were operated upon and 672 others treated free of cost at a week long eye camp held at Kulaura Model Girls' High School recently.

MM Shaheen, an independent MP from Moulvibazar-2 constituency opened the eye camp organised by the Moulvibazar Eye Hospital of the Bangladesh National Society for Blinds (BNSB).

Polls campaign on in Syedpur Pourasabha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The election campaign has started in Syedpur Pourasabha following announcement of the polls date on May 6.

Earlier, there was a complexity in holding of the municipality election here over attachment of a part of Kamarpukur union with Ward No 6 of Syedpur Pourasabha. A case was pending in the court. Ultimately the case was settled and the report was sent to the higher authorities on April 1. The higher authorities earmarked April 7 as the last date for inclusion of name of people of the new area in the new voter list and amendment of the April 7 deadline, the people of the new area enlisted their names in the voter list.

At present a new enthusiasm has been created all over the municipality area centering the pourasabha election.

... to get rid of curse of poverty

A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A young man at Koraitola village under Senbagh upazila in Noakhali took his life on Sunday to get rid of the curse of poverty.

Senbagh police said the 22-year-old youth named Harun, son of a poor shallow pump driver Solaiman became sentimental after being failed to bring rice from market when his mother Monwira Begum asked for it.

He felt a pang of guilt and at once swallowed poison. His near and dear ones rushed him to Noakhali General Hospital where the on-duty doctor declared him dead. Later, the dead was sent to the hospital morgue.

Concern over academic atmosphere in Nilphamari school

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The academic atmosphere of Nilphamari Government Girls' High School has become uncertain as four 'controversial teachers' of the school stage a comeback soon.

Headmistress Jahanara Begum of the school expressed her great concern to this correspondent over the issue. She told this correspondent that the discipline of the school will be at stake as soon as the four so-called teachers rejoin here. The teachers, students and guardians of the school also expressed their strong displeasure hearing return of the 'group of four' to the school.

Four aforesaid teachers of the nationalised school were transferred from here in April last year after being accused of various charges.

The guardians alleged that instead of teaching students in classroom they started a coaching centre named 'Ekra' beside the school. They exerted pressure on students to get themselves admitted in the coaching centre and pay each student 300 taka per month. Many students also alleged that they leaked question papers in exchange of money. The 'group of four' also beat a protesting teacher named Abdur Razzak in the headmistress's office despite her objection. The so-called teachers used to give high marks to the students of their choice.

State Minister for Education and Minister-in-Charge of Nilphamari district ANM Ehsanul Haque Milon is also aware about their misdeeds. After their transfer from here the 'group of four' organised a procession and took a bid to meet the state

minister at Nilphamari circuit house. But the state minister did not pay heed to their unjust demand.

On April 1 this year one of the four teachers came to the Government Girls' School and declared their return to the school soon.

On contact, the Deputy Director of Education, Rangpur region confirmed it.

In such a situation a teacher of the school who fear harassment by them told this correspondent that he would take transfer from this school.

Widows, elderly people lay siege to RAKUB

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Distressed widows and elderly people on Monday laid siege to a branch of the Rajshahi Krishi Unnayan Bank (RAKUB) in Domar upazila after being 'harassed' by its manager.

They also confined the bank manager and other employees for more than two hours.

Fifty-four distressed widows and 91 elderly people of Panga Motukpur union in Domar upazila were asked by the RAKUB manager to receive their allowances on Monday morning. Accordingly they came and waited till noon in vain. The bank manager told them to go home. At this the widows and elderly people were annoyed and laid siege to the bank.