



Phul Mia is seen at his papaya garden at Baghirkull in Tungipara upazila, Gopalganj. He wants to expand his papaya farm on 100 acres of land if he gets bank loan

SNAPS

Diarrhoea: 2 more die in Gaibandha
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Diarrhoea death toll rose to 13 here after death of two more patients on Sunday. About 2,000 people were attacked with the disease anew.

The two dead victims are Khadem Ali, 6, of Bahanipur village and Abdul Majid, 35, of Jamalpur village in Palashbari upazila.

Everyday, at least 20 to 30 diarrhoea patients are being rushed to different health complexes. Many of them cannot move from remote areas due to communication problem.

Tk 10 lakh raw hide recovered
OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Members of 9 Rifles Battalion here on Friday recovered raw hide worth Tk 10 lakh from Chilmari border point in Daulatpur upazila. The goods were being smuggled into Bangladesh from India at that time.

BDR sources told smuggled goods include 335 pieces of cowhide and 200 pieces of buffalo hide. The goods were owned by Abdul Kader in Chilmari area and Rahman in Udaynagar area, the sources added.

Fortune from papaya

Phul Mia earns Tk 9,000 each day sending papaya to Dhaka, Barisal and other dists

ALIMUZZAMAN MIA, Gopalganj

Once jobless Phul Mia, 45, is now a self-reliant farmer. He earns Tk 9,000 each day by sending 150 maunds of green and ripe papaya to Dhaka, Barisal and other districts after meeting local demand.

Initially he began cultivation of papaya on two and a half acres of land only in 2001. He has become a model to other fellow cultivators also. Following his example they too became self-sufficient.

After passing the HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) examination in 1994, Phul Mian was searching for jobs, but became frustrated. Life was miserable to him. Then he started doing business. He invested a good amount of money in his business, but he incurred loss.

At this stage he decided to cultivate papaya. Fortune favoured him by using High Yielding Variety (HYV) of Thai and Malaysian seeds. The soil and climate of Gopalganj are suitable for papaya cultivation. Gradually he

expanded his farm on 2.50 acres of land. He employed seven labourers in his farm, situated at Baghirkull in Tungipara upazila. Recently he added two more acres of land in his farm.

He cherishes a dream to bring 100 acres of land under papaya cultivation. If any bank extends financial assistance to him as loan then he will be able to fulfill his cherished dream, he told The Daily Star.

As a good quantity of papaya is damaged every year for lack of preservation, he urged the government to establish a cold storage in Gopalganj.

He also urged the administration to set up a Papaya Research Institute here for research purposes. Moreover, many educated young people can also get training on papaya cultivation which will ultimately help them establish in life.

Phul Mia told this correspondent papaya cultivation is a profitable one. Only Tk 25 is spent on care of a papaya plant which yields a good profit, he added.

Water scarcity turns hospital into hell in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Acute scarcity of water for the last four days turned a hospital here into hell.

The environment of Nilphamari 50-bed Hospital became unhealthy due to stinking smell all around. The operation theatre might be infected as toilets and floors of the hospital remained dirty for the last few days.

Water-borne diseases might break out any moment as patients were seen using 'unsafe water' brought from outside by their relatives and attendants.

The situation was created with damage of the water pump of the hospital due to short circuit on Thursday.

A tug of war over repair of the pump between two government offices, PWD (Public Works Department) and CMMU (Construction and Maintenance of Medical Unit) aggravated the situation. Poor patients fell victims of their whim as the water supply came to a halt.

When the hospital authorities brought the matter to the notice of local PWD authorities they refused to repair the water pump. They showed a lame excuse that they are entitled to do repair work in 100-bed or greater hospitals.

At this stage the hospital authorities sought help of the concerned engineer of CMMU Department based in Rangpur. But he too regretted saying it to be the responsibility of the PWD as the hospital turned into 100-bed one.

When this correspondent contacted the RMO (Residential Medical officer) of the hospital on Sunday, he said the government decision to turn the hospital into 100-bed one is yet to be implemented. It is still a 50-bed hospital, he said. He further said he had already engaged a technician from his own capacity.



Prices of fuel wood have sharply risen in the flood-hit areas in Sirajganj. The wood is being sold in a market on the main Nagarbari road near Balshabari in Ullapara upazila.

Floodwaters submerge new areas in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Flash flood inundated 17 unions in Gobindaganj upazila following incessant rainfalls and onrush of water from upstream of the Karotoa during the last few days.

Fresh areas in Sundarganj and Sadar upazila also went under water.

Gaibandha Town Protection Embankment along the Ghagot at David Company Para is being threatened. It might collapse any time.

A 22-year-old housewife, Jamila of Cheragpur village in Sadullapur upazila died from snakebite.

Standing crops on 15,000 hectare of land in Gobindaganj upazila went under water.

Over 10,000 people were marooned in different areas. Many of them were shifted to safer place including embankment and schools. Road communication between Gobindaganj and Dinajpur is being threatened at Tarafmanu on the highway due to overflowing of floodwaters.

Almost all the houses in the upazila went under knee to waist deep water. The worst-affected areas are Gunaigach, Kaiyaganj, Phulbari and Kamdia unions.

Gobindaganj Health Complex went under knee-deep water. Patients are being shifted to elsewhere by as over 200 yards area made of banana plants.

Business came to a halt at Kaiyaganj bazaar.

Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) told that flood had damaged standing crops on 60,000 hectare of land in the district.

'Peace is more important in a criminal-ruled union'

Bhalakut UP chairperson Hena Begum thinks improved communication helps solve local problems

Z A M KHAIRUZZAMAN

Bhalakut, a remote union of Nasirnagar upazila (UZ) in Brahmanbaria was a den of criminals even a few years ago. Former chairperson of the union, Dhonu Mia subdued criminal activities with iron hand. At this the criminals were annoyed with him. They were waiting for an opportunity to kill him. Finally they got it and killed him brutally at night on March 15 in 2002.

Dhonu Mia's widow Hena Begum was shocked deeply at the premature demise of her illustrated husband. But she turned grief into strength. She vowed to take revenge of murder of her husband by uprooting criminal activities from the union. She decided to contend the UP election. People in the area stood by her side and she won the election easily scoring a thumping victory. She got double the vote of her nearest rival. Ultimately she emerged as the first UP chairperson in this far-flung union, detached from the district town. Criminals rule the union due to its obsolete communication system.

According to Hena, peaceful living condition is much more important to the inhabitants in Bhalakut union than development. She works relentlessly so that people can sleep peacefully in her union. She became successful to a great extent in her mission. The law and order improved significantly although incidents of petty theft and cow lifting occur. Besides an organised gang of criminals still exists who killed her husband. Although they have no courage to face her openly,



Hena Begum

yet they named her 'a terror chairman'.

Despite being a woman, Hena possesses all the qualities to become a chairperson, locals think. She earned the leadership qualities from her family. Because her father Delwar Ali was also a former chairperson in the union. She followed both her father and husband closely. Local people and administration officials are also cooperative.

Hena identified the undeveloped communication system to be the main hindrance in public service. As all the roads in the union are kutcha, she has aimed at development of the roads. She also wants to extend the area of power supply which stretches along seven square kilometre area only.

The number of educational institutions in the area is 57. Of those 12 are primary schools, one secondary school, two madrassas and 42 educa-

tional institutes run by NGOs.

Nine NGOs are working here. Their main focus is on women's empowerment besides micro credit, education, pisciculture and sanitation system. The NGOs are BRAC, Proshika, Save the Children, Asha, Projukti Pith, NGO Forum, Samaj Unnayan, Gano Kalyan and Bharasa.

Economy of the area is dependent on agriculture. In various seasons paddy, wheat, mustard, potato, chilly, pulse and vegetables are cultivated. Foreign remittance also plays a major role in development of the area. About 200 people work abroad including Saudi Arab, Maldives, Kuwait, Qatar, Singapore, Dubai, Malaysia, Japan and Pakistan. The amount of foreign remittance stands at Tk 75 lakh.

Hena feels that solution to the problems becomes easier as soon as the communication system improves.

However, the UP has constructed four box culverts including seven kilometre kutcha roads.

Income from local source is very small. Monthly salaries of chowkidars (Gram Policemen) can be met with the income. Adequate government allotment is necessary for development of the union.

Hena believes that the economic condition can be improved by empowering the UP so that it can lease out ponds, water bodies and bazaars independently.