

Farmers in hills gain at cost of environment

Vegetable cultivation causes massive soil erosion in Khagrachhali hills

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhali

Farmers in Khagrachhali are making hefty gains by cultivating vegetables on slopes of hill, but at the cost of environment.

Tilling the hill slopes cause massive soil erosion, that may cause environmental disaster.

Officials of the department of agriculture extension said they are trying to make farmers aware of the problem, but they pay little heed to their advice. The officials however said farmers have not yet been provided with alternatives.

Vegetable cultivation on hill slopes is increasing rapidly as those are flood-free and brings lucrative profit for farmers, particularly in the rainy season, the officials said.

Sources at Manikchhali upazila agriculture extension department (AED) office said, due to favorable weather, farmers brought 2451 hectares of fertile lands on hill slopes under vegetable cultivation in the current season in the upazila.

District AED officials said summer and winter vegetables are cultivated on 3,723 and 6,000 hectares respectively in Khagrachhali.

After meeting the local demand, vegetables are sent to other districts, they told this correspondent. The current prices of vegetables are very lucrative for farmers, they said.

It is difficult to dissuade them from growing vegetables on hill slopes as they are now selling seasonal vegetables at high prices, the sources said.

The Daily Star correspondent visited at least 10 villages in Manikchhali upazila and talked to farmers.

Farmers said they get Tk 600 per month of Kakrol against Tk 300 earlier, Tk 1800 for long beans against Tk 1200, Tk 1700 for snake



PHOTO: STAR

Vegetable gardens on slopes of hills at Gachchhabill in Manikchhali upazila in Khagrachhali district.

gourd against Tk 12,00 and Tk 2000 for ladies finger against Tk 1000. Other summer vegetables are also sold at exorbitant prices, they said.

The AED officials said at least 15,000 farmers are involved in vegetable cultivation in Manikchhali upazila alone.

Farmer Abdul Karim in Gachchhabill village said, they are getting good prices this year due to flood elsewhere in the country.

Upazila Agriculture Officer

Mohammad Zahedul Islam said they are trying to make farmers aware of the problem and advise them to think alternatives like raising orchards and timber gardens.

T M Monjurul Islam, Deputy Director (DD) of Khagrachhali AED, said they are trying to evolve alternatives for farmers that will not cause soil erosion.

SCC removes 10 'illegal' structures

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) has started demolishing 'unapproved' structures on parking places of shopping malls and multi storied markets in the city.

The SCC launched the drive as



PHOTO: STAR

Labourers engaged by SCC demolishing an unauthorised structure built on a parking lot of a shopping mall in Sylhet.

BAU founding anniversary begins tomorrow

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) in Mymensingh has chalked out a two-day programme beginning tomorrow to celebrate its 47th founding anniversary.

The programme includes a colorful rally on the BAU campus by students, teachers, officials and employees and other socio-cultural organisations, children's painting, essay competition, voluntary blood donation program to be organised by Bandhon, tree plantation, releasing fish fry and BAU First Gate foundation laying ceremony.

The university authorities will also distribute relief materials and food among flood victims, according to a press release in Dhaka.

The programme was taken at a meeting held at the BAU with Vice Chancellor Prof Dr. Mosharaf Hossain Mian in the chair.

Besides, seedlings will be distributed to flood affected farmers by the university authorities.

Special prayers will be offered in mosques and other places of worship seeking blessings for the university and flood affected people.

Agricultural education began in the country when the then veterinary college, set up in 1957, was turned into BAU on August 18, 1961.

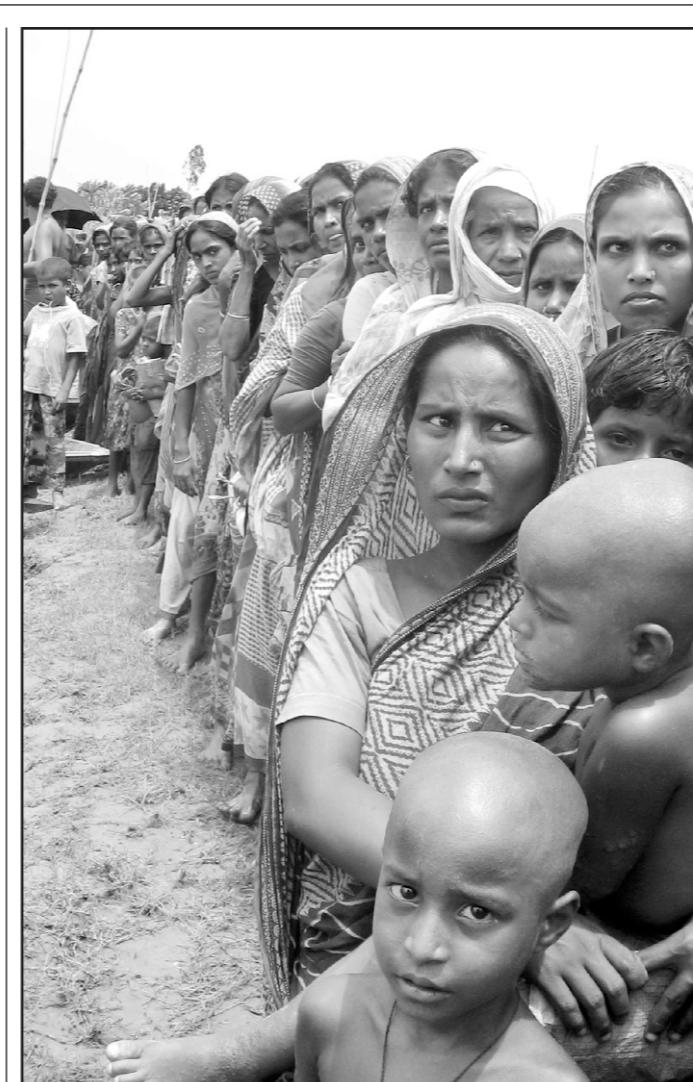


PHOTO: STAR

Hundreds of flood victims wait for hours in a long queue for relief at Shivalaya in Manikganj yesterday.

BANGABANDHU'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY

RU student held for wearing black badge

RU CORRESPONDENT

Mother Police yesterday arrested a Rajshahi University (RU) unit activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) on charge of wearing black badge to observe the 32nd death anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, campus sources said.

Police arrested BCL activist Depayan Sarker Deep, a BBA student from the campus as per directive of the university proctor, they said.

Wearing a black badge, Deep was working with a computer at a shop on the campus at around 12pm. At that time, a group of policemen picked him up and went to the proctor office.

Proctor Enamul Haque confined him for two hours at his room and interrogated him about the BCL programme. Later, Deep was handed over to Mother police.

RU BCL general secretary Ayeen Uddin, in a statement, demanded immediate removal of the pro-Jamat proctor Enamul Haque.

In another raid yesterday, police tried to arrest the university unit organisaing secretary of Chhatra League, Tuhin Reza from his house in Talaipuri area in Rajshahi city but failed.

Meanwhile, the Awami League (AL) backed Progressive Teachers' Society (PTS) could not observe the death anniversary of Bangabandhu in face of resistance by the law enforcers. PTS observed the day by organising a milad mahfil at the university central mosque.

Earlier, hundreds of policemen were seen posted around the central Shaheed Minar in the morning.

PTS convener also a Syndicate member, Prof Abdus Sobhan demanded immediate release of the arrested BCL activist.

When contacted, the university proctor said all political activities have been banned on the campus following promulgation of the state of emergency across the country on January 11.

Nagarbari-Aricha ferry service suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The SCC at a meeting on August 2 asked owners of 139 multistoried markets and shopping malls to arrange parking places in front of their complexes immediately and said their trade licenses would be cancelled and legal measures taken for non-compliance.

SCC sources said over 100 city markets do not have parking arrangement. In rest of the markets, the parking places were rented for shops or restaurants, violating the approved plans.

Although several notices were issued by SCC earlier for freeing parking places, the market owners ignored those, the SCC sources said.

The August 2 meeting also decided to shift wholesale markets for fish and vegetables and the cattle market outside the city areas to ease the traffic jam.

The ferry service was suspended on July 30.

5 child marriages stopped in a week in Jhenidah

Vigilance by Kaliganj upazila admin

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Kaliganj upazila administration stopped five child marriages in a week.

The latest incident took place yesterday when marriage of a 13 year-old girl was stopped at Arpara village.

Rupa, a student of class eight at Salimunnesa Girls School, was going to be married at around 11 am. She is the daughter of Prasanto Kumar Shil. The bridegroom was Shamol Kumar Biswas, son of Mukundo Kumar Biswas of Azmari Pur village in Bagher Para upazila in Jessore district.

On information, Kaligonj Upazila Nirbhay Officer (UNO) Shashank Shekhar Bhaumik sent a police team led by upazila election officer Rokonuzzaman Khan, women affair officer Anis Afroz and education officer Abdul Bari.

They reached Prasanto's house a short while before the scheduled time and stopped the marriage. The officials also took an undertaking from Rupa's parents that they would allow their daughter to continue studies and not arrange her marriage before she attains marriageable age.

Earlier, on August 13, marriage of 12 year-old Razia Sultan, a student of class seven at Mobarakgonj Suger Mill Secondary High School,

with Masud Rana was stopped by the upazila administration, the officials said.

This time also, Anis Afroz intervened on orders from the UNO.

Razia is daughter of Salim Prodhan of Mouchak Colony. Masud Rana is son of Atiar Rahman of the same area.

On the same day, marriage of Aduri Khatun, 12, a student of class six at Bethuli Secondary High School, with Moni Mian was stopped in the same way.

Aduri is daughter of Mongol



PHOTO: STAR

Kaliganj upazila administration officials accompanied by some NGO men talking to Rupa and her parents after stopping her marriage.

ALIM JUTE MILL

'En masse resignation won't be accepted'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Project Director Monowar Hossain of state owned Alim Jute Mill in Khulna yesterday said that he would not accept applications of workers and staff who offered to resign en masse to take advantage of Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS).

Because, there is no possibility of closure of the jute mill as Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) chairman has assured of allocation of funds required to buy raw materials and pay arrear wages and salaries of workers and staff, he said.

President of Alim Jute Mill (AJM) Workers' Union Abdus Salam said workers submitted resign letters under the VRS but they have not stopped work. Workers are hoping for the best and also preparing for the worst, he said.

CHILD IRA MURDER CASE

Arrest warrant against

SBMCH forensic expert

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

An arrest warrant has been issued against the forensic expert of Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital (SBMCH) here for his failure to appear before a court in connection with murder case of 5-year-old child Ira.

Divisional speedy trial tribunal judge of Barisal Rabiul Hassan issued the warrant order against forensic expert Dr Habibur Rahman as he failed to appear before the tribunal to give witness twice regarding postmortem of victim child Ira previously. The next date for examining witnesses was fixed

on August 20.

Ira came to her grandmother's house with her parents to observe the Eid-ul-Fitr. But he went missing on December 18, 2000. Her body was recovered from a bush of a nearby pond of the house on December 21.

Victim's father Iqbal Kabir lodged a murder case on December 27 without naming any accused. Later, the case was transferred to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

CID inspector Bimal Krishna, also investigation officer (IO) of the case framed charges against six accused in March, 2005.

Pabna anti-graft body formed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A 57-member anti-corruption committee has been formed here with Captain (retd) Dr Sarwar Jahan Faize and freedom fighter Md Ismat as its president and secretary.

Conscious citizens of the district formed the committee at a meeting held here on Monday. It was aimed at creating awareness among people for uprooting corruption from the society once for all.

In a statement issued by the office secretary of the newly formed committee, Golam Sarwar Khan Jewel said the names of the executives of the committee were sent to the Anti Corruption Commission (ACC).

3 get 10 yrs RI for extortion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Three persons including a union parishad (UP) chairman were sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment for extortion in Satkhira yesterday.

The convicts are chairman of Kalia Union Parishad Asadul Haque, his brother Shamim and his son Reja Babu of Bahera village of Debhata upazila.

The case statement in brief is that the accused demanded Tk 5 lakh as toll to one Monindra Nath Dhal of Subarnabad village on January and threatened him to face dire consequences for non-compliance.

He paid them Tk 2 lakh and finding no other alternative filed a case with Debhata thana accusing them.

Additional District and Session Judge Mahbub-ul-Alam found the guilty and handed down the verdict.

6X3

6X2