

Farmers in hills gain at cost of environment

Vegetable cultivation causes massive soil erosion in Khagrachhai hills

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

Farmers in Khagrachhari 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 Manikchhari 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 upazil.

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

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 Manikchhari upazila and talked to farmers.

Farmers said they get Tk 600 per mound 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 Gachchhabili in Manikchhari upazila in Khagrachhari 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 Mmakinchharu upazila alone.

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

Last year, the prices were far lower and huge quantities were rotten due to bad communication system and lack of storages facilities.

This correspondent asked some farmers whether they know about soil erosion due to vegetable cultivation on hill slopes. They said they never thought about it and its possible environmental problem.

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 Khagrachhari AED, said they are trying to evolve alternatives for farmers that will not cause soil erosion.

BANGABANDHU'S DEATH ANNIVERSARY RU student held for wearing black badge

RU CORRESPONDENT

Motihor 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 Motihor police.

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

In another raid yesterday, police tried to arrest the university unit organising secretary of Chhatra League, Tuhin Reza from his house in Talaimari 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

Nagarbari-Aricha ferry service remained suspended for the last two weeks following damage to Nagarbari ghat by floodwaters.

Many goods laden trucks and other vehicles have been stranded near the ferry ghat causing damage to goods, specially perishable ones.

The government is being deprived of between Tk 40,000 to 50,000 everyday, official sources said. On an average, 50 vehicles, mostly goods laden trucks, ply along the river route everyday, they said.

Workers are now engaged in shifting the ferry ghat to Pratappur point, 1.5 kilometre (KM) away Nagarbari ghat following its damage by floodwaters, said Md Abdur Rahman, a BIWTC official.

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) workers are also repairing Nagarbari-Pratappur link road which was damaged by flood, said the BIWTC official.

On completion of shifting of the pontoon, ferry services will resume to and from Pratappur, the official said.

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, Kaliganj Upazila Nirbhai Officer (UNO) Shashank Shekhor 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 Sultana, 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 Afroza intervened on orders from the UNO.

Razia is daughter of Salim Proddhan 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

Biswas of Kharika Danga village. Moni Mia is son of Rawsan Ali of Vikshar village in the same upazila.

Earlier in the week, marriages of Reshma Khatun, 13 and Latifa Khatun, 13 were stopped at Dadpur and Ful Bari villages in the upazila, the officials said. Both the girls were students, hey said.

Contacted, UNO Shashank Shekhor Bhaumik said conscious people in the society should come forward to stop marriage of under-age girls.



PHOTO: STAR

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

13 held on Dinajpur border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Bangladesh Rifled yesterday took into custody 13 people including nine women and children when they were entering Bangladesh illegally through the Chowtha border in Birampur upazila in the district.

The details of the arrestees could not be known till the evening as they were being interrogated jointly by BDR and police at Birampur police station, BDR sources said.

According to officials of 15 Rifles Battalion in Dinajpur, the 13 people were roaming suspiciously about 200 meters inside Bangladesh territory between main pillar No. 291 and sub pillar No. 21 on Chowtha border.

BDR personnel arrested and took them to Birampur police station.

During primary interrogation, the arrestees told BDR and police that they all hailed from Palashpur in Barisal Sadar upazila and were trafficked about three month ago, luring them with jobs. As they were cheated, they were returning home.

Birampur police said they have recorded a case.

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

owners of the structures did not remove those within the time specified by it, sources said yesterday.

In last three days, SCC demolished such unapproved structures in about 10 markets, they said. Acting Mayor Azam Khan and Chief Engineer-in-charge Nur Aziz said

the drive will continue as per the earlier decision.

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 con-compliance.

The meeting with the acting mayor in the chair was attended by city corporation officials, leaders of Sylhet Chamber of Commerce and Industries, owners of markets and shopping malls and joint forces officials.

SCC sources said over 100 city markets do not have parking arrangement. In rest of the markers, 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.

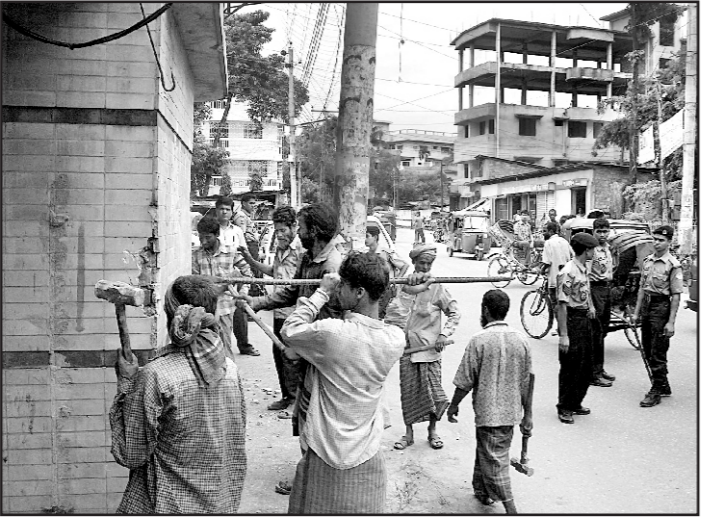


PHOTO: STAR

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. Musharaf 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.

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