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ELECTRONICS

Meagre allocation for agri rehab in 10 north dists

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU,
back from Sirajganj

A paltry sum of Tk 672 has been allocated for each hectare under the government's post-flood agriculture rehabilitation programme in ten northern districts while official statistics show that Aman cultivation costs Tk 5,600 on an average.

The farmers, however, put the figure at Tk 13,000 to Tk 15,000 for a hectare of land as the cost has greatly increased, especially after the flood.

The government has allocated Tk 7.75 crore for cultivating paddy and other seasonal crops on 1,15,238 hectares of flood-affected

land in the northern districts whereas Tk 64.53 crore is required for the task, officials of Agriculture Extension Department (AED) said referring to government statistics.

At least three lakh farmers in the northern districts have become empty-handed due to the flood this year, AED sources said.

Failing to get monetary assistance from the government, many farmers in the region are now forced to borrow money to begin cultivation once again.

"I have spent Tk 15,000 to plant Aman saplings worth Tk 8,400 on a hectare of land after the floodwater receded," Md Mahbubur Rahman, a farmer in Dhunat upazila under Bogra district said.

"Those who have managed to grow saplings have less cultivation cost. Even then they need at least Tk 13,000 for cultivating a hectare of land," he said, adding that it would cost Tk 7,000 before the floods.

The Tk 7.75 crore allocation is for flood-affected districts of Sirajganj, Pabna, Natore, Rangpur, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Bogra and Rajshahi while no rehabilitation allowances were given for six other flood-hit northern districts including Dinajpur.

Flood-related loss in agriculture sector excluding production loss in Sirajganj district was shown to be Tk 72 crore but only Tk 2 crore has been given for agriculture rehabilitation in the area.

Another allocation of Tk 2 crore will be spent for cultivation in winter season as Aman production will suffer if the sowing of Aman paddy cannot be completed in ten days.

Like Bera in Pabna, thousands of hectares of land in Sirajganj are still underwater.

The farmers of Kurigram, who had planted Aman saplings on loan after the floods, incurred huge losses as their cultivated lands went under water again due to onrush of water from the hills. Besides, a large area of cropland is facing erosion by Dharla river.

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Nephew of MP Shahidul held in Bheramara

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Police arrested a nephew of former BNP lawmaker Shahidul Islam on Thursday night.

According to police, the arrestee, Rannan, is accused in six criminal cases including two for murder. He had been absconding since January 20, they added.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Bheramara police raided the house of Ishak Malitha, brother of Shahidul Islam, at Cholodag village under Bheramara upazila at around 11.00pm and arrested Ishak's son Rannan Malitha.

Police said Rannan was involved in various crimes in the upazila during the tenure of BNP-led alliance government.

The law enforcers were quizzing him at Bheramara Police Station as of 6:00pm yesterday.

Guard stabbed to death in Mirpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extortionists stabbed a security guard to death at West Kazipara in the city's Mirpur area yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Abbas Ali Sohel, 25, security guard of Napier Homes Ltd.

Sources said a gang of three to four came to an under-construction building at Kazipara at around 3:00pm and was looking for contractor Abdur Rauf.

As security guard Sohel challenged the gang, they stabbed him in the chest and fled the scene blasting bombs.

Sohel was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

Police quoting the construction workers said the gang members demanded Tk 1 lakh from the contractor and gave a cellphone number to communicate with them on Wednesday.

They came to the site yesterday to take the money, the workers said.

Bush urges allies to keep troops in Iraq

AP, *Sydney*

President Bush said in an interview broadcast yesterday that he would be concerned about China's military if the country ever turned hostile, and he urged allied countries to keep their troops in Iraq.

Speaking to Australia's Sky News network in Washington ahead of a visit to Australia an annual meeting of Pacific Rim leaders, Bush addressed China's growing economy and military.

"My view of China is that they're internally focused to the extent that they want economic growth

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Fresh flood grips new areas in Chandpur, Nilphamari

STAR REPORT

New areas of Chandpur, Matlab South and Matlab North, Haimchar, Hajiganj, Kochua, Faridganj and Sharasti upazillas were inundated yesterday with fresh rise of water in Meghna river and its tributaries Dakatia and Dhomagoda, reports a correspondent from Chandpur.

The Meghna, which had been flowing below danger levels for ten days in Chandpur belt, started flowing above the danger level yesterday, said officials of Water Development Board in the district.

Thousands of people in 25 char areas of Haimchar and Matlab North are still marooned and in serious need of food, water and

medicines.

Around 100 patients with eye infection got admitted to government and private hospitals, while patients with diarrhoeal diseases were also on the rise in the area, said eye specialist Dr Shafiqul Alam.

A flash flood caused by heavy rainfall in the last couple of days and onrush of water from the Indian territories affected more than 2,000 people of five unions under Dimla upazila in Nilphamari district on Thursday, reports our correspondent.

The Teesta was flowing 34cm above the danger level at 2:00am on Thursday, said officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) at Dalia division.

Erosion has taken a serious turn at Purba Kharibari and Tapurchar

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

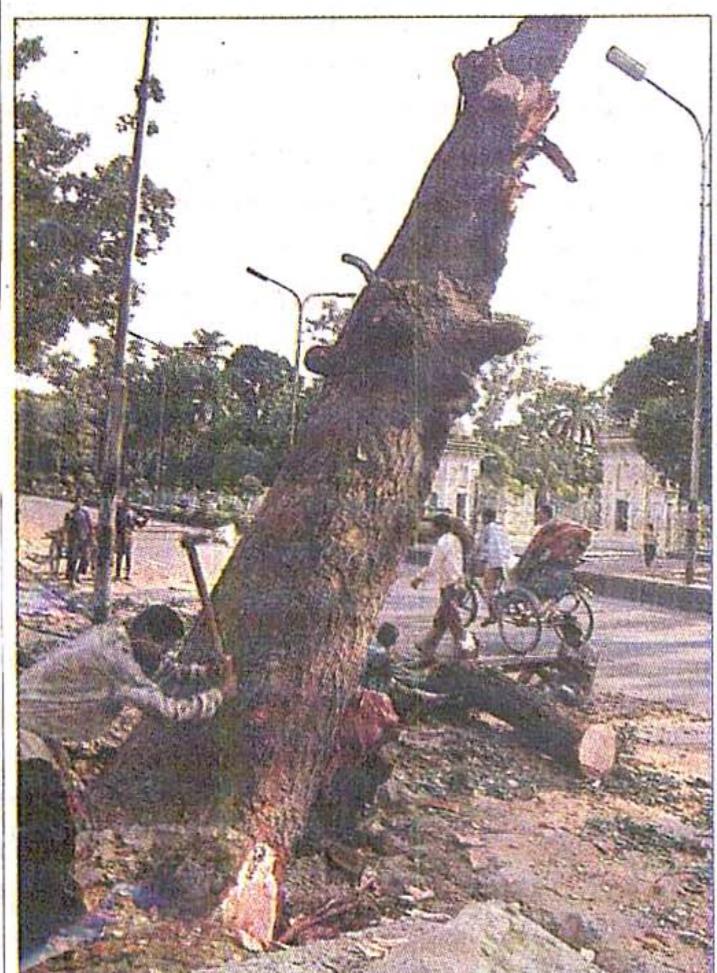


PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka City Corporation workers yesterday felling this truncated tree that tilted precariously on the road beside the Supreme Court.

However, the situation improved as the water started receding and was flowing below the danger level at 4:00pm yesterday, Executive Engineer of Dalia division of BWDB Atiqur Rahman said.

Indian authorities opened all the gates of Gojal Doba barrage on Thursday, contributing to the rise of water level in Teesta river.

Most houses in Char Kharibari, Purba Kharibari, Kishamotter Char, Bhasanir Char, Tapurchar, Char Jharsingeswar, Baishupukur, Vendabari, Khogarchar, Fakrater Char and Sadur Bazar villages -- all in Dimla upazila -- are under two to three feet water.

The Teesta was flowing 34cm above the danger level at 2:00am on Thursday, said officials of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) at Dalia division.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Cholera death toll in India jumps to 166

AFP, *Bhubaneswar*

The death toll from an outbreak of cholera in eastern India has jumped by over 50 percent in two days to 166 with many more people being treated for the disease, officials said yesterday.

Government administrators in the four affected districts in the poverty-stricken state of Orissa supplied the cholera death toll, which stood at 105 on Wednesday, to AFP.

But the opposition said around 500 people have died from cholera and attacked the government for not declaring an epidemic.

Officials denied they were facing a cholera epidemic and insisted that the situation was under control.

"We have no epidemic," Orissa health secretary Chinty Basu said in state capital Bhubaneswar.

The health control room in Bhubaneswar set up to monitor the outbreak of the disease said over 6,000 people were being treated for cholera and dysentery. Authorities could supply no break-up of the figures.

The victims contracted the illness from drinking dirty water and contaminated food, officials said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Four of a bridal party killed in road mishap

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Bogra*

Four members of a bridal party were killed and 30 others injured in road accident on the Bogra-Rangpur highway yesterday.

The dead were identified as Sakhina, 50, Ferdous, 8, Hosneara, 17, and Rozina, 52. Hosneara died on way to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital.

Witnesses said the accident occurred at around 4:00pm when a bus carrying a bridal party from Rangpur collided head-on with a speeding truck at Baropur under Bogra Sadar upazila, killing three members of the party on the spot and injuring 31 others.

Of the injured, 15 were admitted to the hospital, while the rest given first aid.

The drivers and helpers of the bus and truck fled the scene.

Militants to set free 120 Pak soldiers

AP, *Dera Ismail Khan*

More than 120 Pakistani soldiers seized by Islamic militants near the Afghan border soon will be released after the intervention of local tribal elders, an official said yesterday.

However, a militant leader said nearly 300 soldiers were being held, a claim that could not be independently verified, and that there had been no decision on whether to release them.

The troops were travelling in a 16-vehicle convoy providing security for trucks hauling food Thursday in the South Waziristan tribal area when bad weather forced them to stop and set up camp, a security official said on condition of anonymity because of department policy.

The soldiers who were travelling between Wana, the main town in South Waziristan and Ladda, another town in the region were surrounded by militants who believed they were conducting a military operation.

The incident came two days after militants freed 18 soldiers and a Pakistani government official who were kidnapped in the region earlier this month. It also occurred

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

Sharp fall in jute prices in Rangpur, adjacent districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

Jute farmers in Rangpur and adjacent districts have been incurring heavy losses -- around Tk 100 to Tk 150 a maund, as demand for the fibre saw a sharp fall.

After surveying different markets in the region, it was found that a maund of the finest quality tosso jute (golden) is now selling at only Tk 550 to Tk 600 while the local variety (white) is selling at Tk 400 to 440.

"I sold 33 maunds of jute for Tk 17,160, when my cost of production was Tk 19,730," lamented Momin Ali, a farmer from West Khashbagh in Rangpur sadar upazila.

Another farmer from Joyrampur of Mithapukur upazila in Rangpur,

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Coming out tomorrow - Star Campus

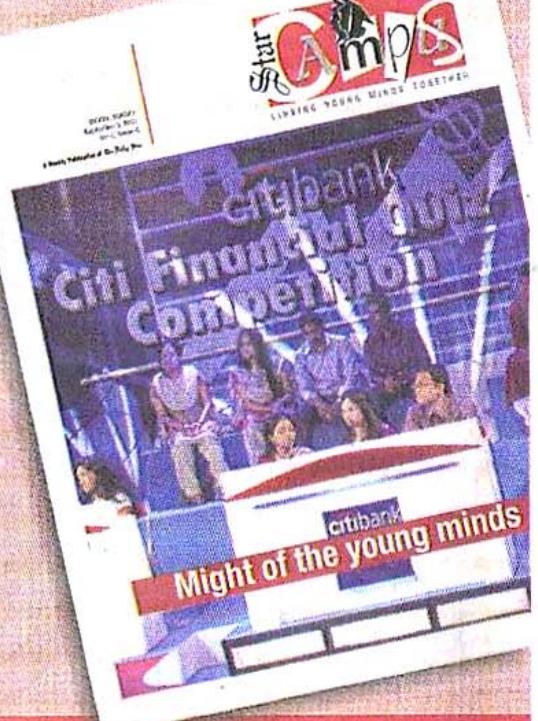
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Star Campus is an endeavour to bring into the center stage the visionary aspects of our college and university students, alongside their lifestyle, cultural trends and their multidimensional talents.

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Star Campus helps link young minds together.



Prayer Timing

September 1

| | Azan | Jamaat |
|---------|-------|--------|
| Fajr | 4-30 | 5-05 |
| Zohr | 12-45 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-45 | 5-00 |
| Maghrib | 6-23 | 6-26 |
| Isha | 7-45 | 8-15 |

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