

Job scheme for ultra poor yet to start in 2 Nilphamari UZs

Anomalies in other areas as rich men on beneficiaries' list

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The government's 40-day programme meant to provide employment to ultra poor people in the lean period could not yet start in Jaldhaka and Kishoreganj upazilas even after expiry of the earlier scheduled period of March 10 - April 20.

The situation has arisen due to dispute among the project committee members, mostly belonging to the ruling party members, over inclusion of their 'own men' in the list of beneficiaries.

With expiry of the original project period, many locals fear that scheme may remain elusive to about 15,000 prospective beneficiaries in those two upazilas.

In different unions of Nilphamari Sadar upazila, the programme started much later than March 10.

It started on April 6 in Shongolshi union of the upazila.

Surprisingly, an expatriate living in Dubai and some other wealthy people in Sangolshi union have been enrolled as day labourers in the list of government's 40-day work generating programme for the extreme poor.

"I and councillors of the UP have nothing to do with the list of beneficiaries under the project as the ruling party men are making the lists," said Sangolshi union parishad Chairman Tikendra Nath Roy.

Solvent people, even owners of build-

ings, have been included in the list of 660 beneficiaries in the union, he said, adding that ruling party men are responsible for the 'gross irregularities'.

An expatriate in Dubai, Kazi Jewel of Kazipara village in Shongolshi union has been included (serial No 367) in the list of beneficiaries.

"I have heard that the name of my elder brother Kazi Jewel, who went to Dubai for work seven years ago, was included in the list of beneficiaries," Kazi Mithu, brother of the expatriate, told this correspondent.

Another beneficiary of the project Akbar Hossain, 65, of the same village is a rich farmer and owner of a brick-built house.

"I do not know how my name was included in the list," he told this correspondent yesterday.

The name of Sahimuddin, 70, of Dolapara village of the union was also included in the list. Visiting his residence yesterday, this correspondent found that construction work of his brick built house was going on in full swing.

On condition of anonymity, a concerned UP councillor said names of people having enough landed property or well furnished house had been included in the list in exchange of bribe.

"I am extremely poor but my name was not included in the list of beneficiaries. But names of land owners and brick

built house owners have been included in the list," said Abdul Hamid, 40, a day labourer of Kazipara village.

Rafina Aktar of the same village said her ailing husband pulls rickshaw van to maintain family but her name is out of the list.

A number of extremely poor people alleged that they were kept out of the list despite requesting the project committee members frequently.

Mostafizar Rahman, an influential member of the project committee of Shongolshi union, also general secretary of the union unit of ruling Awami League, however, claimed that the list of beneficiaries was made with the names of extreme poor people through proper verification.

When his attention was drawn to the names of the expatriate in Dubai and owners of brick built houses and lands in the list, he said that it was a mistake in computer composing.

When contacted, Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Abdur Rafiq said, "It is a gross irregularity to include wealthy men's names in this programme meant for the poor. Nobody complained to me about it. I must investigate the matter."

Under the government-run 40-day project, about 50 thousand ultra poor people in Nilphamari district are supposed to get employment with Tk 120 each as daily wage.

BHOLA BY-POLL IN FRAME



1) Activists of opposition BNP chase journalists who went to take photo of the formers' tearing off posters of Awami League during Bhola-3 by-election yesterday, 2) BNP candidate Major Hafiz Uddin Ahmed's polling agents, accompanied by party activists, demonstrate outside Purbo Dalighar Primary School centre in Lalmohon upazila protesting 'threats' by ruling Awami League (AL) men, 3) BNP candidate Major Hafiz Uddin Ahmed casts his vote at Lalmohon Boys' High School centre, 4) AL candidate Nurunnabi Shawon exchange greetings with voters at Lalmohon Islamia Kamil Madrasa polling centre.

Aila-hit people demand repair of breached dikes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The people affected by cyclone Aila on May 25 last year have demanded steps for early repair of the major breaches in the embankments to save them from further disasters during the next monsoon.

They demanded that the government allocate adequate fund in the next budget for reconstruction of embankments that were built in early 60's to save the coastal people in the country.

They made the demand at a discussion on "Embankment in the Aila affected areas: Needs transparency and accountability in management and reconstruction" jointly organised by Satkhira Sachetan Nagarik Committee (Conscious Citizens' Committee) a unit of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), Global Water Partnership South Asia, Water

Aid, Bangladesh Water Integrating Network and NGO Forum at Sadar upazila auditorium.

Awami League (AL) lawmaker Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was the chief guest while Satkhira Deputy Commissioner Md Abdus Samad and Satkhira pourasava Mayor Sheikh Ashrafal Haque were the special guests.

Zakir Hossain and Monzur E Khoda jointly presented the keynote paper while TIB executive director Dr Iftekharuzzaman moderated the discussion.

At least 190 people were killed, 4 lakh people became homeless, 237 km embankments were completely and 1557 km partially were damaged, crops on 3.23 lakh acres of land were damaged when the Aila hit the coastal areas in the country on May 25 last year, read the keynote paper.

"The shrimp cultivators draw saline water from the rivers by setting up pipes illegally through the embankments to cultivate shrimp in their enclosures in the coastal areas and it weakens the embankments.

"Even after ten months of the Aila, over two lakh people are still homeless and they are suffering from acute scarcity of safe drinking water.

"The WDB issued work order to nine contractors for reconstruction of nine breaches on the embankments in Gabura and Padmaur unions in Shyamnagar upazila on December 24 last year but no progress was made to repair the breached embankments due to negligence of the WDB authorities," adds the keynote paper.

Other speakers emphasised the need for transparency and accountability in reconstruction work of the embankments.

Clash over capture of khas land: 100 injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

People of two neighbouring villages clashed over capture of a khas land in Chhtak upazila of Sunamganj district yesterday, disrupting traffic on Sylhet-Sunamganj highway for two hours.

The clash left about 100 people injured. Of them, 25 were admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital while the others took first aid at local health complex.

Police and locals said the villagers led by Sirajuddin of Shibnagar and Golam Mostafa of neighbouring Diglhi locked in the clash when they went there to the land near Voterkhil Bridge to capture it.

On information, Iwa enforcers reached the spot and dispersed the clashing groups. A contingent of police has been deployed in the area to avert further clash, police said. More than 300 vehicles remained stranded on both sides of the road for two hours.

Nor'wester in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A nor'wester lashed Rajshahi yesterday evening, damaging standing boro crop, mango and lychee orchards.

Beginning at 6:30am, the storm lasted for half an hour, but thundershowers continued until 7:30pm. No casualty was however reported.

Three held with arms in C'nawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested three youths in Udayan Cinema Hall area in Chapainawabganj town on Friday night.

The arrestees are Mohammad Patanur, 28, son of Kalu Pramanik, Jahirul Islam, 19, son of Sobhul Islam and Khokon, 18, son of Satish Kumar of Ushkathi Para under Chapainawabganj municipal area.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-5 raided the area at around 8:00pm and arrested the three with arms. Rab sources said the youths were taking preparation to attack their rival group.

Later, Rab handed the arrestees to police and filed a case with Sadar Police Station against them under Arms Act.

UP member sued for felling 200 roadside trees

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A member of Moghia Union Parishad (UP) under Kachua upazila of Bagerhat district were yesterday sued for felling 200 trees on both sides of the road from Charsonakur Madrasa to Nandipara ferryghat.

Mizanur Rahman, acting chairman of the union parishad, filed the case with Kachua Police Station.

Locals said the UP member, Mostajabul Hossain Mantu, hired people who cut down all the trees in three days (from April 16 to 19). Logs of the felled trees were later sent

to Sharupkati of Pirojpur district in four boats for sale, they alleged.

Acting chairman Mizanur Rahman said the trees were partly damaged by cyclonic storm Sidr that lashed the coastal belts of Bagerhat district on November 15, 2007.

Contacted Upazila Nirbahi officer (UNO) Mehedi Hasan said the UP member has been sued for his direct involvement in felling the trees and selling them elsewhere.

UP member Mostajabul Hossain Mantu could not be reached over cellphone despite several attempts for his comment on this matter.



Students of Noakhali Medical College stage a sit-in on the campus yesterday to realise their four-point demand including appointment of required teachers and solution to accommodation problem.

Noakhali medical students lock principal's room

They agitate to press for 4-point demand

A CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

The students of Noakhali Medical College yesterday locked the principal's room, academic building and classrooms to press home their four-point demands.

The demands include immediate appointment of teachers, solution to accommodation problem and construction of own academic building.

The students boycotted their classes at 9:00am and brought out a procession. They later locked the princi-

pal's room, academic building and classrooms and held a rally on the campus.

Addressing the rally, the students demanded immediate appointment of at least one assistant professor for each department, construction of own academic building, solution to accommodation problem of the students and procurement of necessary books and equipment for college library and laboratory.

Second year students Nahid Hasan, Sadia Afrin and first year students Ferdousi Moni and Sunny spoke.

SNIPPETS

JMB man arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj:

Police arrested a member of the banned militant outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) at Mushkipurhut under Atrai upazila of Naogaon district Friday evening. The arrestee is Hafez Masud, 38, son of taslimuddin of Potisor village under the upazila. He was also a close aide of Bangla Bhai. Moazzem Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Atrai Police Station, said Masud was wanted in three cases, one for murder of army man Sheikh Farid. Police yesterday produced Masud in a court that sent him to jail. Earlier, Atrai police arrested another JMB member named Babu at Bamonitola village of the upazila on Thursday.

PCJSS activist shot

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

An activist of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) was shot allegedly by United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) men at Chakrapara in the town on Friday night. The injured are Jyotirmoy Chakma, 19, son of Moniraj Chakma of village of Chakrapara. Sources said a group of UPDF men fired at Jyotirmoy and left the scene. He was first admitted to Rangamati hospital and then sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated. Bodhi Satta Chakma, district unit secretary of PCJSS, yesterday blamed the UPDF for the attack. Shantideb Chakma, coordinator of UPDF Rangamati unit, denied the allegation.

Arms peddler held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

An alleged arms peddler was arrested with a firearm in Hakimpur upazila of Dinajpur district early yesterday. The arrestee is Jahangir Alam, son of Sayem Uddin of Basudevpur village under the upazila. Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-5 of Joypurhat raided the village and arrested Jahangir.

50 injured in Chandpur clash

UNB, Chandpur

At least 50 people were injured in a fierce clash between two rival groups over harvesting paddy in a char under Matlab upazila on Friday. Police and locals said the clash ensued in the morning when two rival groups--one led by Nurul Haque Prohdan and another by Ukul Dhal--were trying to harvest paddy in Diara Char. Both sides equipped with lethal weapons attacked each other, leaving 50 people injured. Of them, eight were admitted to Matlab Upazila Health Complex while the rest given first aid.

Woman commits suicide

UNB, Pirojpur

A housewife, who took poison on Thursday night at Lakhakati village under Sadar upazila, died at hospital Friday morning. The deceased was identified as Laizu Begum, 20, wife of Bachchu Shiekh of the village. Police quoted family sources as saying that Laizu took insecticides following a quarrel with her husband on Thursday night. She was rushed to Sadar Hospital where she died at 10:00am on Friday.

DAMAGE OF POTATO IN COLD STORAGE

Dinajpur farmers block road demanding compensation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Hundreds of potato growers yesterday blocked Dinajpur-Dhaka highway for five hours demanding compensation from the authorities of Uttara Himghar Ltd, a cold storage at Gopalganj village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila, for damage of thousands of bags of stored potato.

The affected farmers said the authorities overloaded the cold storage but did not arrange alternative power supply as per previous assurance.

Farmers from different places gathered in front of Uttara Himghar Ltd, a cold storage at Gopalganj village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila as the farmers heard that about 50,000 bags of potato rotted due to negligence of the cold storage authorities, witnesses said.

At 10:30am, Mirza Ashfaq, executive director of Uttara Himghar Ltd, also joint secretary of Dinajpur district AL, went to the spot to

pacify the agitating farmers.

The farmers confined Mirza Ashfaq and chanted slogans demanding compensation for their losses.

As Mirza Ashfaq declined to pay any compensation, the farmers burst into protest and blocked Dinajpur-Dhaka highway at 12:30pm.

A large number of vehicles lay stranded as the blockade halted road communication between Dinajpur and other districts.

The agitators withdrew their blockade at 5:30pm as the Dinajpur deputy commissioner formed a committee led by ADM Zakir Hossain to investigate the incident.

Besides, a one-member committee led by Upazila Agriculture Extension Officer Md Abdus Salam will assess the losses of the farmers who kept their potatoes at the cold storage, a sources said.



Farmers block Dinajpur-Dhaka highway at Gopalganj village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila yesterday demanding compensation for the damage of a large amount of potato that the growers had stored in Uttara Himghar Ltd, a cold storage at the village.