



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers take jute sticks after rotting the plants in the Garai River in Shaikupa upazila under Jhenidah district, leaving the water badly contaminated.

Jute rotting pollutes rivers, threatens fish in Jhenidah

Alternative ribbon retting fails to attract growers

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Farmers have continued rotting their jute plants in all the 12 rivers and other water bodies in the district as ribbon retting method, a device for rotting the plants with much less water to get quality fibre, is yet to gain popularity. As this year saw inadequate rainfall, pollution of rivers and other water bodies due to stacking of huge amount of jute poses threat to fish and other aquatic creatures.

Introduced among the local farmers in a very limited scale 32 years ago, the ribbon retting method became a fad due to lack of steps for its promotion.

This year the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) took an initiative to re-introduce the system but scanty training and lack of response from farmers resulted in its failure again.

"We are not familiar with the system. A few farmers were informed about the new

system but they did not show interest," Altaf Hossain, a farmer of Enayetpur village under Kaliganj upazila, said.

Asgar Ali, another farmer of Kulchara village under Shaikupa upazila, said, "Ribbon retting method is very easy but we took training on it only for a day, which is not sufficient."

A few elderly farmers said the then upazila chairman inaugurated this sort of system about 32 years ago but no step was taken to promote it among the farmers during the past three decades.

"This season five farmers were trained in each upazila. Local farmers were provided with Tk 200 each for purchasing polythene and digging hole to establish ribbon retting system. It may take time to adopt the system by each and every farmer," said DAE Deputy Director Ahmed Hossain.

During a recent visit to Jhenidah Sadar and Shaikupa upazilas, this correspondent saw that

water of a few rivers has turned black and stinks. Thousands of people were catching fish in the polluted water bodies that contain mostly dead or nearly dead fish.

Many people living beside rivers said they suffer from various skin diseases when they use river water for bathing and other purposes.

Many farmers at Kulchara and Bhatai villages in Shaikupa upazila said they were hopeful when the government was encouraging the farmers about the bright future of jute cultivation. But their hopes and aspirations were shattered, they said.

As the price of the newly harvested jute is around Tk 1,800 a maund (40kg), the farmers are expecting good profit from it but problem in rotting jute due to water crisis frustrates them.

Traditionally, farmers remove fibre after rotting jute plants in water for two to three weeks, but ribbon retting system requires

extracting the fibre first and then keeping it in water pots for rotting. It requires much less water. Ribbon retting needs polythene and a big hole in the soil. After separating raw fibre from the jute stalk it is kept in the water hole.

Usually around 450 millimetres of rainfall is required between June and August for rotting of jute but this year the district saw 135 millimetres of rainfall, according to the DAE. As a result, many farmers are carrying their jute from one place to another in search of water to rot jute.

According to the DAE, the farmers in six upazilas of the district brought their 24,638 hectares of land under jute cultivation in the current season whereas it was 10,517 hectares last year.

Harvesting on fifty per cent of the jute fields was completed till August this year but now farmers have stopped harvesting the cash crop due to lack of water.

Three get life for killing madrasa student

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A tangail court yesterday sentenced three people to life imprisonment for killing a madrasa student after rape in 2007.

Judge Mohammad Mohsin Mollah of Tangail Children and Women Repression Prevention Court delivered the judgment in the afternoon.

The convicts are Jahangir Hossain, 23, son of Julhash Uddin of Nikladoripara village, Abdul Jalil, 22, son Wahed Sheikh of Kastapara village, and Rashed alias Ratan, 23, son of Abdur Rashid of Bilchakra village under Bhuapur upazila.

The court also fined the convicts Tk 1 lakh each, in default they are to suffer five years more in jail.

According to the prosecution, the three picked up Mariam Khatun, Alim first year student of Bhuapur Fazil Madrasa, on her way to the madrasa on November 17, 2007. They took her to a sugarcane field at Konabari village in the upazila and raped her. Later, the three slit the throat of Mariam and left the scene.

Following a case filed by victim's father Motiar Rahman of Nikladoripara village on November 19, police arrested the three.

After investigation, Anisul Haque, the then officer-in-charge of Bhuapur Police Station, submitted a charge sheet against the three.

Housewife electrocuted

A CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

A housewife was electrocuted at Parchimpara village in Muradnagar upazila yesterday morning.

The dead was identified as Aleya begum, 35, wife of Md Badiuzzaman of the village.

Police quoted locals as saying that Aleya came in contact with an electric cable while she was working near a tube-well. She died on the spot.

Born to a cruel world

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Before seeing the world or feeling the touch of mother properly, the one-day-old infant, rescued from a roadside dustbin at Middle Balubari in Dinajpur town on Tuesday morning, had to face most painful experiences.

The ill-fated newborn has already undergone three surgeries as pigs and stray dogs bit him severely at his right leg and right hand, said doctors of Dinajpur Medical College and Hospital where he is receiving treatment, still unconscious.

His right hand had to be cut off while his right leg required 10 stitches, doctors said.

"Hearing from a local boy that a baby wrapped in

a polythene bag was lying beside a roadside dustbin at Middle Balubari, I rushed to the spot and found him lying senseless with serious injury marks on the right leg and right hand. Immediately I took him to Dinajpur Sadar Hospital and admitted him to the Paediatric Ward," said Champa Rani Roy, wife of Manik Chandra Roy of Dinajpur Harijan Colony.

Mother of two children, Champa is bearing the child's treatment costs and wants to take him as her adopted son.

Her 10-year-old daughter Monisha Rani Roy has already started treating the infant as her brother.

The boy was yesterday shifted to Dinajpur Medical College and Hospital as his condition was deteriorating,

said doctors, said the doctors of Dinajpur Sadar Hospital.

Visiting Dinajpur Medical College and Hospital yesterday, this correspondent found the infant, still lying unconscious, was being given oxygen while curious people at the hospital were watching the boy.

He is yet to be out of danger, said Dr Moshir Rahman and Dr MA Sadeq of Paediatric Department of Dinajpur Medical College and Hospital.

They are jointly conducting treatment of the newborn and supervising its care.

The police are looking for the biological mother of the boy who was found in an area located amid several private clinics, sources said.



PHOTO: STAR

This newborn, rescued by a benevolent woman from a dustbin at Middle Balubari in Dinajpur town on Tuesday morning, is receiving treatment at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital.

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