

# Anomalies in listing flood-hit boro farmers

Highest allocation for the least affected area in Sunamganj

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Gross irregularities have been alleged in the preparation of list of affected farmers for distribution of agriculture inputs in Sunamganj district, which was severely hit by the devastating floods this year.

Asking explanation on the 'irrational allotment' of the money sanctioned for special rehabilitation programme, the additional director of the Department of Agriculture Extension of Sylhet division on Monday sent a letter to the deputy director of the DAE of Sunamganj on the basis of some specific complaints.

"It was a surprise to me when I came to know that I am not in the list of affected farmers," said Monai Miah of Ekhtiarpur village, who lost at least 100 maunds of boro crops on two acres of land.

Soab Ali of Tajpur village in Derai upazila lost about 600 maunds of boro crops on 16 acres of land in the last season.

But he is being deprived of getting the assistance, as his name has not been included in the list. Milik Miah of Tarol also lost paddy on 20 acres but he is not in the list.

During the last boro season, Sunamganj district suffered highest crop loss of Tk 1127 crore in the region due to the repeated floods caused by the rolling down of waters from the upstream in the Indian state of Meghalaya.

While preparing the list of the affected farmers, the deputy director of agriculture, Sunamganj in connivance with the upazila agriculture officers of Biswambharpur, Chhatak, Doarabazar and Dakshin Sunamganj showed inflated figure of farmers although those were less affected areas, sources alleged.

Some upazilas have been allotted increased amount where the number of farmers is also very few, while some severely affected areas have been allotted very poor amount, sources added.

According to the list prepared by the deputy director of agriculture, Sunamganj, the highest allotment of Tk 2.8 crore has been given to Biswambharpur upazila, which has the lowest crop damage on 4500 hectares whereas Dharmapasha upazila with the highest crop damage on 22,350 hectares has been given only Tk 4.1 lakh.

With 20,900 hectares of damaged land, Shulla upazila has been sanctioned with Tk 2.1 lakh whereas Chhatak upazila with only 9640 hectares damaged land has been given Tk 3 crore. Derai upazila with 11,000 hectares of totally damaged crop land has been sanctioned Tk 1.8 crore whereas Doarabazar having 7360 hectares totally damaged crop land has been sanctioned Tk 2.07 crore.

Additional Director of DAE, Sylhet division Dulal Chandra Sarker said the government sanctioned Tk 38.8 crore for the division including Tk 25.8

crore for only Sunamganj district under a special rehabilitation programme during the ensuing Boro season.

Agriculture minister is expected to formally inaugurate the programme in the first week of November, he informed.

The amount is to be given in the form of seeds and fertilizer to the affected farmers. Each of the listed farmers is to get 25 kgs of Urea, 12.5 kg of triple super phosphate (TSP), 12.5 Kg of murate of potash (MoP) and 10 kg seeds.

Admitting "some mistakes" the Deputy Director of agriculture, Sunamganj Sirazul Islam said things had to be done due to political pressure from the ruling party men.

The Deputy Director (headquarter) in the additional director's office in Sylhet Matiur Rahman said the allegation is being probed.

The additional director had already sent an explanation letter to the concerned official, Matiur Rahman added.



PHOTO: STAR

Once a profusely flowing watercourse, Shakha Barak River in Moulvibazar district turns virtually dead in the dry season while it appears like a narrow canal during the rains (inset).



PHOTO: STAR

Staff unload textbooks from a truck on the premises of Dr Khastagir High School on Zamal Khan Road in Chittagong city yesterday as preparation is on, much ahead of the next academic session, to ensure timely supply of textbooks to students.

## BCL gunfight in Biani Bazar leaves 20 injured

UNB, Biani Bazar

At least 20 activists were injured in a gunfight between two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at Biani Bazar upazila headquarters yesterday.

Ten of the injured were admitted to the upazila health complex while the rest to private clinics.

Locals said a BCL activist was beaten up by his rival group on the Biani Bazar Government College campus at noon. As a sequel to the incident, both factions equipped with firearms locked in a gunfight on college road in the evening, leaving 20, including Ittefaq correspondent Abdul Khalid, injured.

More than 20 gunshots were heard during the clash that lasted for half an hour, they added.

Police rushed to the spot, dispersed the clashing groups and brought the situation under control. Six BCL activists were arrested on the spot but police declined to give their identity.

Those admitted to the health complex with bullet injuries are Abdul Khalid, Jamal Hossain, Pallab, Ajit, Saju, Shimul, Bimal, Hamid, Siddique and Swapan.

Law enforcers were patrolling the troubled areas.

## College student found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Police recovered the body of a college student from Jamuripara village under Sadar upazila yesterday.

The victim was identified as Saiful Islam, 22, a student of Thakurgaon Technical School and College.

Locals found the slaughtered body of Saiful at a bamboo cluster at the village at about 8:00am and informed police who went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Thakurgaon Sadar hospital for autopsy.

Victim's uncle Joynal Abedin said Saiful went out of their house Friday evening and remained missing since then. Police could not unearth the clues to the murder.

Another body was recovered from a paddy field near an electric post at Vanor village yesterday.

The victim was identified as Nur Islam, 30, son of Dunu of Barabari village under the same upazila.

Officer-in-charge of Baliadangi Police Station Sarwar Bhuiyan said the deceased might have been electrocuted while he went to steal electric transformer on Friday night.

# Dying Shakha Borak River needs urgent excavation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Locals call it Shakha Borak River. But the watercourse dries up fully in winter and during the monsoon it appears like a narrow canal.

People have made houses and planted trees at many places of the silted riverbed. Now a visitor from other areas can hardly think it was once a river with navigability throughout the year.

The 20-kilometre-long Shakha Borak River originates from Kushiara River at Khalilpur under Moulvibazar Sadar upazila and meets the Bizna River in Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj district.

Several elderly people said only 40 to 50 years ago the river was so deep and wide that big boats with the capacity to carry 500 maunds of goods plied it easily. Hundreds of boats plied the river daily as people used it for communication, transportation of goods and fishing.

During a recent visit to Khalilpur and Monumukh areas, this correspondent saw that people have encroached the silted riverbed and made houses and

planted trees in many areas. Some people were seen cultivating paddy on the riverbed.

Locals said a project to re-excavate the river was taken about 30 years ago but the work was stalled only after clearing weeds from the riverbed. People of Mubarakpur, Nasirpur, Fatehpur, Alalpur, Srichandrapur, Lamua, Chanpur, Katarai, Mohammadpur, Gurarai, Kesobchar villages under Khalilpur union parishad (UP), Bahadurpur, Bade-Fatehpur, Sadhuhati, Sharabpur villages of Monumukh UP of Moulvibazar Sadar upazila are worst affected due to siltation of Shakha Borak River.

A similar situation is prevailing up to Nobiganj upazila where the Shakha Barak meets the Bizna River.

There are thousands of acres of paddy land on both the banks of the river but the farmers are deprived of irrigation facility due to drying up of the watercourse.

People of these villages have been demanding re-excavation of the Shakha Borak River for long.

"The Shakha Borak has been silted up

and many people have constructed houses there. We had submitted application to the UNO and tahsildar (union land official) to evict the illegal encroachers. Re-excavation of Shakha Borak is urgently needed to provide irrigation facility to the farmers," said Qumruzzaman Konor, member of Khalilpur UP.

In May this year, the upazila administration served notice to 25 encroachers to remove their houses from the bed of Shakha Borak River and they have sought time to leave the land, said Moulvibazar Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Umme Salma Tanzia.

In winter, the administration will take action to evict them, she added.

"We have taken an infrastructure renovation project on Shakha Borak under Water Management Improvement Project. Now consultants are studying the project. After completion of the study, work for implementation of the project will start," M Aminul Islam, executive engineer of the Water Development Board, Moulvibazar, said.

## BDR MUTINY IN LALMONIRHAT

# Trial of 24 accused starts today

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Trial of 24 mutineers of Lalmonirhat 31 Rifles Battalion under Rangpur sector begins at special court-13 at the battalion headquarters in Lalmonirhat today.

Headed by Dinajpur Sector Commander Col Muhammad Saleh, the special court will start trial proceedings at 9:00am, said Major Shafi, second-in-command of 31 Rifles Battalion. Two other members are Lt Col Mahfuz Alam and Major Didar Al-Latif, reports our correspondent.

Commanding Officer of the battalion Lt Col Aslam Hossain will act as prosecutor. Attorney general's representative Biswajit Roy, two special public prosecutors--Rezaul Karim and Rafiqul Islam Mithu-- will remain present in the court during trial proceedings.

On February 26, 2009, the BDR men revolted against their officers and took control of Lalmonirhat 31 Rifles Battalion headquarters. They also vandalised doors, windows of the battalion headquarters and fired at least 150 blank shots.

The then officer-in-charge of Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station Foyezur Rahman filed two separate cases with the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court against 24 mutineers of battalion. The mutineers were later arrested and produced in the court that sent them to jail.

The arrestees are Havildar Nizam Uddin, Samedul Islam, jawans Nazmul Sahadat, Nazrul Islam, Pronayan Chakma, Habibur Rahman, Joynal Abedin, Ashraf Huda, Abu Siddique, Mohabbat Ali, Kamor Uddin, Rokon Khalasi, Dulal Hossain, Abu Bakkar,

Shahadat Hossain, Parvez Alam, Amir Hossain, Tarekul Islam, Abdur Rahman, Lance Nayek Taslur Rahman, Asaduzzaman, Motiur Rahman, Nayek Subedar yusuf Ali and Sirajul Haque.

According to our Rangamati correspondent, trial proceedings against 16 BDR rebels of 18 Rifles Battalion of Chhotohorina Zone under Barkal upazila resumes at BDR Sector headquarters in Rangamati today.

Lt Col Zahedur Rahman, sector commander of Chittagong sector, will lead three-member court. The other two members are Lt Col Abdun Nur and major Golam Mostafa-al-Mamun.

Kazi Mohammed Izaharul Kakon will assist the special court on behalf of the attorney general. All the 16 accused now at in Rangamati jail will be produced in the court.

# Rich nations should help countries at risk to deal with climate change

British MP Rushnara tells reception in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Bangladesh-born British MP Rushnara Ali has said wealthy nations have a great role to play in reducing carbon emission and providing financial assistance to the vulnerable countries to enhance their capability to adapt to the global warming.

"I will do my best to mobilise international funds to assist the most vulnerable countries like Bangladesh in adapting to climate change impacts. I will try to ensure that climate change continues to be a priority of the British government," she said at a civic reception accorded in her honour by Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) yesterday afternoon.

SCC Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran chaired the reception while former mayor of Tower Hamlet Council in the UK Golam Martuza, Bangladesh law-makers Mahmud Us Samad Chowdhury and Shafiqur Rahman Chowdhury, Sylhet Public Prosecutor Mesbah Uddin Siraj and Leading University Vice Chancellor Prof Kabir Hossain and Ward Councillor Rezaul Hasaan Lodi alias Koyes Lodi spoke, among others.

"It is a great pleasure and privilege for me, to be a lawmaker in the British parliament. I am thankful to British-Bangladeshi community in the UK as well as others in my constituency. The first generation immigrants played a great role,



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh-born British MP Rushnara Ali received a crest from Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) Mayor Badaruddin Ahmed Kamran at a reception arranged in her honour by SCC yesterday afternoon.

helping us to reach the present position," said an emotion-choked Rushnara.

Asked how the campaign like Shadow Climate Tribunal, scheduled to be held in Dhaka on November 8, would help the cause of Bangladesh in terms of climate change issues, the first ever Bangladesh-born British MP said it would be a unique way to create awareness among the people across the globe about the adverse impacts of the climate change and how badly it affects the life and property

in a vulnerable country. "Bangladesh is a country of potentialities. It is also facing huge challenges and concerns. A lot many things are to be done for the poor and distressed, especially for those among the women.

"This is my first trip back to Bangladesh as an elected member of Parliament for Bethnal Green and Bow in London. It is a great honour as a representative of the UK people to be returning to Bangladesh my country of birth," she said.

Rushnara, who came to

Dhaka on November 4 at the invitation of international development organisation Oxfam, is scheduled to return on November 9.

On a three-day visit, Rushnara reached Sylhet on Friday afternoon. The SCC mayor welcomed her at the Osmani International Airport as she landed by a flight of United Airways at 2:00pm. Hailing from Biswanath upazila, Rushnara migrated to the UK with the other members of her family when she was seven.

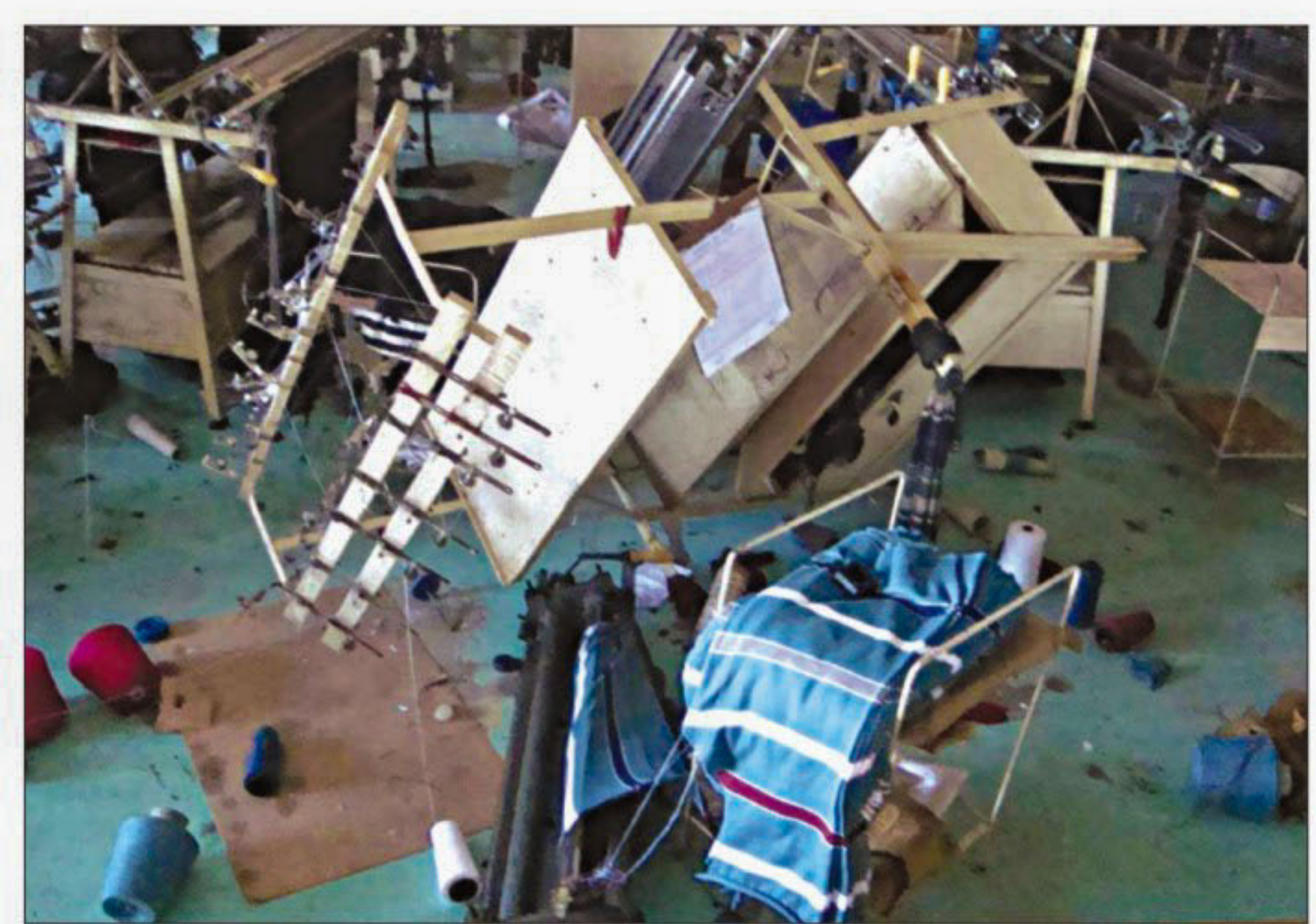


PHOTO: STAR

Workers of Diganta Sweater Factory at Naojore in Gazipur district vandalise the factory yesterday demanding pay raise as per 'earlier agreement' with the authorities.