

Salinity grips 80pc villages in Aila-hit Koira upazila

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Salinity grips nearly 80 percent villages under Koira upazila in the district, causing persistent crisis of safe drinking water and extensive damage to arable lands, especially those producing paddy and vegetables.

Due to high salinity following the onslaught of cyclone Aila on May 25 in 2009, paddy yield per bigha of land has come down to 8-10 maunds while it was 20-22 maunds earlier in Koira

upazila, according to the Department of Agriculture Extension in Khulna.

Salinity is gradually damaging fertility of land like slow poisoning due to infiltration of saline water due to collapse of 156 kilometres of embankments after Aila hit the coastal areas including Koira upazila.

Abdul Gafur Sardar, 52, and his wife Asiron Bibi, 40, set out from home before sunrise every morning to fetch water from a deep

tubewell at Jorhsing village, 18 kilometres away from their home at Koira Sadar.

"We cannot afford to buy a drum of 20 litres water for Tk 40," said Asiron Bibi.

Hundreds of people of the Aila affected upazila have similar tales to tell.

"All the ponds from where we collected drinking water before the Aila are of no use due to salinity," said Jabbar Howlader, a farmer.

According to Koira Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md Abul Bashar,

people of 30 villages have been suffering from serious crisis of safe drinking water as ponds are still full of saline water and there is no

FACTS

★ 30 villages in the upazila seriously hit

★ Persistent crisis of safe drinking water

★ Extensive damage to land fertility

tubewell in those villages.

People of the villages, namely, Tetultala, Mahesharipur, Nayani, Shekherkona, Choukuni, Kalikapur, Maharajpur, Mathbari, Kalna, Megharite, Motherkona, Lakkhikhola, Shyamkhali, Srirampur, Koira Sadar, Gurhiabari, Bagali, Arjunpur, Boga, Malikhali, Sharishamut, Hogla, Shaorha, Uttar Bedkashi, Patharkhali, Katkata, Paddapukur, Hariharpur and Dakkhin Bedkashi and Hadda, have to buy drinking water.

"Neither the government authorities nor any NGOs have taken any initiative to free pond water from salinity. Some NGOs supplied safe drinking water for about six months after cyclone Aila. But they later stopped the humanitarian task," said upazila Chairman GM Mohsin Reza.

Shahidul Islam, upazila engineer of Public Health Engineering Department, said over 400 tubewells were installed through government and non-government initiative after the Aila. But water of these tubewells has also become unfit for drinking due to excessive salinity and iron.

UNO Abul Bashar said, although it is a tough task as 80pc villages are in grip of salinity, steps are being taken to arrange safe drinking water by freeing the ponds from salinity.



Fishing cat cubs return to their mother safely

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Four fishing cat cubs, caught by the people of Baneshwar village in Madhabpur upazila under Habiganj district on Monday morning, were returned to the mother the same day.

Locals caught the cubs from a hole in a jute field as they came out from a nearby bush at about 10:30am on Monday.

As the villagers raised a hue and cry, the mother fishing cat got scared and fled away, leaving the cubs. The villagers took the four newborn cubs to the upazila livestock office, where the officials examined health of the cubs and asked the villagers to take the cubs back to the field.

In the evening the mother fishing cat took the cubs back to the nearby bush, said Akkas Miah of

the village.

Contacted, Md Farid Miah, assistant conservator of forest (ACF), Satchharai National Park, said, "Before the forest staff reached the village, the locals released the newborn cubs of fishing cat, locally called mechho bagh, in the field from where their mother picked them up and took to the jungle."



PHOTO: STAR

Women and children in Koira upazila of Khulna district take the trouble to walk long ways to fetch drinking water as salinity affects most of the water sources in the area following the onslaught of super cyclone Aila on May 25 in 2009.

PRE-AND POST-UP POLL VIOLENCE

50 hurt, 20 shops vandalised

STAR NATIONAL DESK

At least 50 people were injured and 20 shops vandalised in pre-and post UP-poll violence in Sirajganj, Jessore, Munshiganj, Noakhali and Faridpur districts yesterday and on Monday night.

Our Sirajganj correspondent reported that the supporters of a defeated member candidate and an elected member clashed in Shialcoat Union of Sadar upazila yesterday, leaving at least 15 people from both sides injured.

Police and witnesses said the clash ensued following an altercation between the supporters of defeated member candidate Sanowar Hossain and elected member Ratan Mia at around 11:00am.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under

control.

In Jessore, at least 18 people were injured and 20 shops vandalised during a post-election clash in Rajarhat Union of Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon, reports our correspondent.

Police said the incident occurred as the supporters of defeated chairman candidate Alamgir Hossain swooped on the supporters of chairman-elect Rezaul Islam at around 3:00pm.

At least 20 shops were ransacked in the area during the clash. Being informed, police went to the spot, dispersed the clashing groups and brought the situation under control.

Our Munshiganj correspondent reports: Unidentified criminals hurled five bombs at the house of Jahirul Mijhi, a supporter of UP member

candidate Shahjahan Sardar at Shiloi village under Sadar upazila of the district on Monday night.

Md Shahidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said they are looking for the culprits.

In Noakhali, five people were injured, one by bullet, during a clash between two groups over electioneering at Hasanpur village under Sonapur Union of Sonaimuri upazila on Monday Afternoon, according to our correspondent.

The bullet injured was identified as Md Tareq, 17. He was admitted to a local clinic while the rest four took first aid.

The clash ensued as Jakir Hossain, a supporter of an Awami League (AL) backed candidate beat up Saiful Saiful Islam, a campaigner of a BNP supported candidate at Haripur village.

The supporters of the

two rival candidates in the upcoming UP election to Sonapur Union Parishad attacked each other, leaving at least five people from both sides injured.

Locals said a few rounds of bullets were fired and at least three houses were vandalised during the clash.

In Faridpur, ten people were injured as the supporters of two UP chairman candidates clashed at Koira village in Boalmari upazila on Monday night.

The supporters of Awami League supported chairman candidate Mujibur Rahman and BNP backed candidate Khandaker Nazirul Islam attacked each other during electioneering in Satoir Union at around 10:00pm.

Of the injured, two were admitted to upazila health complex while the rest given first aid.

Peaceful voting in districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Barring a few incidents of violence, election to the union parishads in Munshiganj, Dinajpur, Narsingdi and Manikganj districts was yesterday held peacefully.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reported that election to nine union parishads in Joypurhat Sadar upazila was largely peaceful.

Police said mobile court sentenced four people to jail and fined 10 others for violating code of conduct during polling.

As many as 41 candidates contested for nine chairman posts, 376 for 81 member posts and 131 women for the reserved seats.

In Munshiganj, the supporters of two chairman candidates clashed over standing in the queue at Balasur Government Primary School centre in Rarikhal Union under Sreenagar upazila, leaving at least 15 people from both sides injured.

Voting at 81 polling centres in nine unions of the upazila was held peacefully, reports our correspondent.

According to district election office sources, 45 candidates contested for chairman posts, 270 for member posts and 72 women for the reserved seats of nine union parishads.

Our Noakhali correspondent add: Barring an incident of chase and counter chase between the supporters of two member candidates at Sonapur Primary School centre in Ghoshbagh Union, election to seven union parishads of Kabirhat upazila was peaceful.

Police fired three blank shots to bring the situation under control.

A mobile court sentenced a youth named Iqbal Hossain to seven days imprisonment for violating code of conduct during voting at Panditerhat Government Primary School centre in the union.



Samrat gives in to aging

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A 24-year-old lion died of old age complications at Rangpur Zoo yesterday morning.

The lion named Samrat (emperor) had

been at Rangpur Zoo for 18 years.

"The Indian species lion was brought here from Dhaka Zoo in 1993 when it was six-year-old. Due to old age complications, it got weaker and weaker and could

not eat properly during the last several months," said Abul Kashem, deputy curator of Rangpur Zoo.

A lion usually lives up to 18 years but exceptionally Samrat lived 24 years, he added.

MMCH interns call off strike, return to duties

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Interns at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) yesterday called off their indefinite strike.

They returned to their duties after a 'fruitful' talks with the hospital authorities and leaders of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) local chapter.

The interns went on strike on Saturday morning protesting alleged attack on their colleagues by the relatives of a patient on Friday evening.

Sources said, Divya Joyati Saha, 13, a class seven student of Baro Bazar area in the district town was admitted to the hospital's ward 14 on June 1 with bronco pneumonia.

But the relatives of the patient took him to a paying bed at ward 19 defying the

instruction of the on-duty doctors, sources said.

The patient's condition was not well and at around 5:30pm, Divya died of his complications at ward 19.

After sometime, relatives of the patient with the help of outsiders swooped on the interns and assaulted a few of them which triggered the indefinite strike.

The interns under the banner of Interns Chikitsak Parishad (Ichip) yesterday met with Brig Gen Dr. Mohammad Shahjahan, director of MMCH at his office at noon.

Following an assurance of bringing the attackers to book and enhancing security for the interns soon by the hospital authorities they joined their duties at around 2pm yesterday, said Dr. Rony Roy, secretary of Ichip.

During the meeting, Dr.

AFM Rafiqul Alam and Dr. Motiur Rahman Bhuiyan, president and secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), its vice-presidents Dr. Mustafa Kamal and Dr. ANM Fazlul Haque Pathan, Ichip president Dr. Arman Hossain were also present.

Contacted, director of the hospital said it was a great relief for all, especially the patients that the interns had joined their work.

"Tightening of internal security for the interns will be our prime task. We will arrange more force after the end of the ongoing union parishad election", said the director.

"We have already directed the private security personnel deployed at the hospital to be more alert to avert such untoward incident in future", he added.



PHOTO: STAR

This under-construction bridge over the Brahmaputra River at Idbardi-Majherchar on Narsingdi-Madanganj road in Araihaar upazila of Narayanganj district collapsed yesterday, allegedly due to use of substandard materials in the work.