

Fodder crisis threatens cattle rearing in 2 flood-hit districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Acute crisis of green fodder coupled with high prices of hay, oilcake and wheat bran is badly affecting cattle farming in Teesta and Dharla river basin areas in Lalmonirhat district. "The recent flood washed away my haystack and damaged grass fields in the area. I got seven to eight litres of milk daily from two cows a month ago but now they give only three litres of milk on an average," said Abdur Hossain, of Shoalmari village under Kaliganj upazila in Lalmonirhat district.

Milk production has decreased due to lack of fodder in river basin areas in the district, he said.

"I have sold eight milk cows of my dairy farm at a low price as the recent flood damaged the farm. Now I am facing financial crisis. Four labourers working in my farm have become jobless too," said Moslem Uddin of Boalmari Char village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Most of the farmers who took shelter on roads, embankments and highland along with their cows are yet to return home as floodwater destroyed their

houses and cowsheds.

During a visit to the char areas of Teesta and Dharla rivers, this correspondent found that many cows have become sick, many of them with skin diseases. Very few medical teams are working in char (landmass emerged from riverbed) areas to check any epidemic of post-flood diseases among the domestic animals.

"I have sold all of my three cows as fodder crisis has turned serious here after the recent flood damaged all the grass fields," Johir Uddin of Sindurna village in Hatibandha upazila said.

One maund (37.3242kg) of hay is selling for Tk 350 to Tk 400 in local markets whereas it sold for Tk 150 to 160 last year.

Mozibor Rahman, 50, a farmer of Gobordhon Char village under Aditmari upazila in Lalmonirhat said the fodder crisis will probably continue till the beginning of aman paddy harvesting.

"We the poor farmers always rear our cows on the grass fields in the village as we cannot purchase hay from the local markets at high price. Now we have to sell our domestic animals for low prices due to fodder

crisis," he said.

Hasim Uddin, 45, a dairy farmer at Kalmati Char village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said he is badly in need of grass seedlings after losing grass on four bighas (one bigha = 0.3306 acre) of land due to flooding.

Lalmonirhat District Livestock Officer Dr Abu Hossain Sarker said floodwater destroyed green fodder at about 50 villages in Teesta and Dharla river basin areas in four upazilas of Lalmonirhat and it would take months for new grass to grow.

UNB adds from Madaripur: A large number of farmers in the district, particularly in rural areas, are finding it difficult to rear their cattle due to acute shortage of fodder.

Farmers could not collect straw for their cattle during the harvesting season due to incessant rain that flooded the crop fields.

Over 20,000 cattle in four upazilas of the district have been suffering from various diseases due to malnutrition caused by acute shortage of fodder, sources in the District Livestock Department said.

Other sources, however, said the number of the affected cattle would be over 30,000.

Some farmers said that treatment of the diseased cattle is being hampered due to shortage of necessary medicine at the district and upazila livestock centres.

Failing to buy pricey fodder, many farmers are selling their cattle at throw-away prices.

The farmers urged the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to import fodder to save their cattle.



PHOTO: STAR
Seeking blessings of 'Maa Durga' for making rail communication in the northern region truly serviceable appears as the theme of Rayshaheb Bari Durga Puja venue in Dinajpur town this year. The five-day celebrations of the biggest religious festival of the Bangalee Hindus end today.

Creative themes at puja mandops in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The creative themes of the pandals or the grandeur of the idols have drawn the attention of a large number of devotees at puja mandops in many of 13 upazilas of Dinajpur district during the ongoing celebration of Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of Bangalee Hindus.

Rayshaheb Bari puja pandal in the town has been designed to depict the shabby condition of the northern railway. With such creative theme, the organisers are seeking the blessings of 'Maa Durga' to develop the northern railway and ensure better rail communications with other

parts of the country. The theme has attracted thousands of devotees of the district.

Shwapan Kumar Bose and Biswajit Ghosh Kanchan, president and general secretary of Rayshaheb Bari Durga Puja Celebration Committee, said that every year they decorate their pandal with a new theme, but this year they have highlighted the need for development of the northern railway.

Thousands of devotees visited the temple in the last three days and prayed to Goddess Durga for their wellbeing as well as development of the northern railway, the organisers said.

According to Dinajpur

District Durga Puja Celebration Committee, at least 1,098 puja mandops have been set up in 13 upazila of the district. The local committees have spent Tk 50,000 to Tk 7 lakh for decorating the pandals with spectacular lighting and various themes.

Rayshaheb Bari Durga Puja Committee, Chanderhat Club, Shyamla Durga Temple, Basuniya Potti temple, Dinajpur Rajbari Puja Committee, Suihari Ashram and Paharpur Puja Committee have spent a huge amount of money for decoration of their pandals, said Tapan Chakraborty, president of Dinajpur District Durga Puja Celebration Committee.



PHOTO: STAR
Farmers from flooded Sindurna village in Hatibandha upazila of Lalmonirhat district float a haystack towards a market to sell it for high price as fodder crisis in the flood-affected area has made the item dear.

Obscene dances, gambling go on at jatra in Narail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narail

Obscene dances and gambling are still being held in the name of *jatra*, a kind of opera, at Mithapur Bazar in Naldi union under Lohagara upazila of the district.

Although the district administration gave permission only for *jatra*, the immoral activities are held openly every night while non-stop loudspeakers causes nuisance for the locals.

"Every night obscene dances and gambling are arranged at Mithapur Bazar while police from nearby Naldi outpost turn a blind eye taking bribe from management," said Md Asaduzzaman, chairman of Naldi union parishad.

"Youths are going to astray as they are mad for money to join gambling", he added.

In every corner, raffle draw, housy, cards, guti and

roulette have been arranged while obscene dances are shown in the name of opera, Goffar Mollah of Mithapur village said.

Contacted over phone, Naldi union Awami League leader Mithu Mollah, also manager of the *jatra* team, said that only *jatra* was being performed by his men. He refused to say anything further.

On the midnight of September 24, a mobile court led by a magistrate raided Mithapur *jatra* venue and arrested one Muktar Ali from a gambling table while others managed to flee.

After that incident they stopped the show for a few days but on October 1 they again got permission for holding *jatra* for five days.

The immoral activities resumed again on the eve of the show and police took care of the total programme, said Ahad

Biswas of Nokkhali village.

During a visit to *jatra* venue yesterday, this correspondent saw all immoral acts being held openly and in presence of police and management.

Tickets for *jatra* are being sold at high rates between Tk 100 and Tk 200 each.

Locals urged the authorities several times to stop these obscene and illegal activities but mysteriously to no effect.

The Daily Star published a report in this regard last month.

Additional Superintendent of Police (Circle) in Narail Tariqul Islam, however, said, "We did not get any objection from the villagers. I was not aware of it. Now I will look into the matter."

Deputy Commissioner Md Zohirul Haque said, "They were given permission for holding *jatra* only. However, I will take necessary steps soon."

Two get life for murder, rape in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Two people were jailed for life in the district yesterday in separate cases for killing and rape.

Netrakona District and Sessions Judge Court yesterday sentenced one person to life term imprisonment for killing a boy in 2004.

The convict is Mohammad Mostafa of Kaldohor village under Purbadhola upazila.

The case in brief is that, on 30 April in 2004, Mostafa, following a family feud, killed Sohel Mia, 12, of Durgapur poura area in the district at Hatdhol Government Primary School under Purbadhola upazila.

A murder case was filed with Purbadhola police station in this connection accusing Mohammad Mostafa on the same day.

Police after investigation later submitted a charge sheet against Mohammad Mostafa.

The judge, after examining the witnesses and evidence, found Mostafa guilty and pronounced the verdict.

In another case, Additional District and Sessions Judge Court, Netrakona sentenced another person to life term imprisonment for violating a woman.

The convict is Abdur Rashid of Ranigaon village under Kalmakanda upazila in the district.

According to the case, on August 8 in 2011, Rashid raped Mazeda Begum, wife of Abu Mia of Satpai area in Netrakona town.

Mazeda filed a case with Netrakona police station in this connection.

The judge, after examining the witnesses and evidence, found Rashid guilty and handed down the punishment.



PHOTO: STAR
People use a risky bamboo bridge to cross a water body at Jalkar on Charmuguria-Srinadi road in Shirkhara union under Madaripur Sadar upazila in absence of a concrete bridge there.

Leave Kalapathor Math, the lone playground, out of occupation

Demands human chain in Sylhet town

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Locals of the city's Ambarkhana area yesterday formed a human chain in front of Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar to press for their demand for protecting Kalapathor Math, the lone playground in the area, from being occupied.

Several hundred people, carrying banners and placards, joined the programme organised by Kalapathor Math Rakkha Parishad, Kheloar Kalyan Samity of Ward No 5 and Surma Boys' Club.

Anwar Hossain, president of Surma Boys' Club,

said they will soon announce fresh agitation programme to save the playground.

Water Development Board (WDB) sources said 15 acres of land were acquired in 1966 for building quarters for WDB staff and other purposes. The playground is an extended part of the land belonging to the WDB complex in the city's Ambarkhana area, he added.

One Abdus Sattar alias Bachha Miah and 75 others filed a case with a Sylhet court in 2002, claiming the ownership of 8.25 acres on the land. The

court rejected their claim in 2005.

Later, one Baratunnesa and 89 others filed a writ petition with the High Court for getting back 6.6 acres of land on Kalapathor Math. They claimed that they got no compensation for their land acquired by the government in the 60s.

On June 1 this year, they got decree from a High Court bench in their favour. The bench comprising Justice Mifta Uddin Chowdhury and Jahangir Alam directed the respondents to return the land to the petitioners

within three months from the day of receipt of the copy of judgement.

Contacted, WDB Executive Engineer Shailendra Chandra Sarker said they have received the copy of the judgement this week and sought permission of the Supreme Court to file an appeal with the apex court.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Shamim Al Razi said 15 acres of land were acquired for the then WAPDA (now WDB) in 1966. Since then, they have been paying land development tax.



PHOTO: STAR
Gambling goes on at a *jatra* (opera) at Mithapur Bazar in Lohagara upazila of Narail district under the nose of law enforcers as they turn a blind eye allegedly taking bribe from the organisers.