



PHOTO: STAR
A farmer in all smiles as she got bumper yield of pumpkin at her field on the sands of Teesta River at Char Gobardhan village in Aditmari upazila under Lalmonirhat district. Pumpkin cultivation in the char (landmass emerged from riverbed) areas has brought solvency to a good number of marginal farmers.

Big smiles on farmers' faces

People living on sandy chars see bumper yield of pumpkin

S DILIP ROY, *Lalmonirhat*

Fortune smiled on farmers as they witnessed a bumper production of the sweet vegetable on sandy chars of Teesta River.

Expressing happiness, pumpkin growers said they were earning good profit this year.

Earlier, the farmers could not achieve good yield of crops and vegetables on the barren lands despite months of toil.

According to Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), a total of 3,700 bighas of sandy char emerged on Teesta River basin now known as

Rajpur, Tajpur, Khuniya Gachh, Kalmati and Milon Bazar under Sadar upazila and Mohiskhocha, Gobordhan under Aditmari, Shoil Mari, Bhotmari char under Kaliganj upazila and Bhotmari, Dawabari, Goddimari, Sindurna and Sainyazan char under Hatibandha upazila.

Over 2000 char farmers engaged in pumpkin cultivation this year as the vegetable continued to witness better production and price for the last few years.

The vegetable was cultivated on 500 bighas of land in 2009, 1800 bighas in 2010

and 2500 bighas in 2011, said DAE officials.

Farmer Mohor Ali, 55, of Rajpur char village, said spending only Tk 1200 to Tk 1500, a grower can get 500 to 600 pieces of pumpkin from one bigha land, each weighing 2kg to 4kg.

"Each pumpkin can be sold between Tk 14 and 18" he said.

"I have already collected pumpkins from my three bighas of land and expecting to earn over Tk 80,000 this season", said Abdar Ali of Kalmati char.

Another cultivator, Alal Hossain, 50, said they are not facing any marketing hassle this year as traders

from different parts of the country, including the capital, are buying pumpkin straightly from the field.

"We are also getting fair prices", he said with a big smile on his face.

Farmers said, profitable cultivation of pumpkin and its marketing at fair prices can change the lot of the char people.

Zahurul Haque, Mansur Ali, Malek Miah, Nazrul Islam and other pumpkin growers of char Gobordhan, told this correspondent that they started cultivation of the vegetable on the Teesta chars in 2009.

The farmers earned a

reasonable profit as the then deputy commissioner gave necessary supports including trainings to cultivate the vegetable on the chars, they added.

M Zaman Shaheen, an official at Aditmari upazila agriculture office, said the cultivators in char areas achieved bumper production this year due to favourable weather condition.

Meanwhile, the erosion victims who live by farming pumpkin on charlands urged the government to extend more logistic and technical support to ensure profitable cultivation of the vegetable.

15 killed as storm hits dists

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Nor'wester lashed Thakurgaon, Satkhira, Jessore, Kishoreganj, Narayanganj, Madaripur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha and Barisal districts yesterday and on Tuesday, leaving at least 15 people dead and 80 others injured.

The storm also damaged over 9,000 thatched and tin-roofed houses, educational institutions and crops on around 3,500 hectares of land in the affected areas, report our correspondents.

In Thakurgaon, at least five people were killed and over 50 injured as a violent storm lashed 25 villages in Pirganj upazila of the district at around 8:00pm on Tuesday night.

The deceased are Alimul Islam, 28, Rina Akhter, 8, and Sakibul, 9, of Jagannathpur village in Boirchuna union, Sharifunnesa, 70, of Battala Hazirhat village in Jaborhat union, and Sukchand, 70, of Boirchuna village in Boirchuna union.

Of the injured, 27 were admitted to Dinajpur and Rangpur medical college hospitals while the rest given first aid at upazila health complex.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Abdur Rouf quoted upazila agriculture officer as saying that the storm damaged crops, including Irri-Boro, over 2,000 hectares of land at the affected villages.

In Satkhira, two people were killed by lightning during Tuesday night's storm in Tala upazila of the district on Tuesday afternoon.

The dead were identified as Nitai Chandra Mondol, 55, of Sonabandhal village in Tala upazila, and Probbas Mondol, 40, of Godaipur village in Assassuni upazila. Locals said both were struck by lightning on a paddy field at Shialdangi beel in Tala upazila and died instantly.

Over 200 thatched houses, 26 shops, four mosques, three temples and 15 educational institutions were damaged while several hundred trees uprooted in the storm-hit areas.

In Kishoreganj, lightning during storm killed two people in Karimganj and Tarail upazilas yesterday.

The deceased are Bachchu Mia, 50, son of Abdur Rashid of Mougao village in Tarail, and Kajol Chandra Debnath, 35, son of Jatindra Debnath of Panhargram village in Karimganj.

In Dinajpur, one person was killed and 10 others were injured as wall of a warehouse in Barapukuria coal mine area collapsed on during storm on Tuesday night.

The dead was identified as Rezia Khatun, 40, wife of Mokshed Ali Master of Gopinathpur village under Parbatipur upazila of the district.

Md Akram Hossain, a caretaker of the warehouse said some 20 people took shelter at the warehouse when a storm accompanied with hails started at around 8:00pm on Tuesday.

Suddenly, a wall collapsed, killing the woman on the spot and injuring 10 others. Locals rescued the injured and took them to Phulbari Upazila Health Complex.

In Jessore, a violent storm lashed 12 villages of Sarsa upazila on Tuesday night, injuring at least 15 people and damaging around 2,500 thatched and tin-roofed houses, educational institutions and poultry farms.

It also uprooted a large number of trees and electric poles, plunging Baghachara, Kaiba and Goga unions into darkness. Power supply in the affected unions was not restored as of 5:00pm yesterday.

Kamrul Arif, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) said the storm lashed the villages at around 8:30pm and lasted for 20 minutes.

In Narayanganj, two people were struck by lightning and killed during a nor'wester that lashed Musapur union in Bandar upazila yesterday afternoon.

The deceased are Mohammad Hossain, 36, and his son Shanto, 16, of Dasergaon village in the union.

Akhter Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bandar Police Station, said Mohammad and his son Shanto were carrying woods to Dasergaon in a rickshaw-van from Nabiganj bus stand. They were struck by lightning at Kaitakhali area at around 5:20pm and killed on the spot, he added.

In Madaripur, Lightning killed three people in Rajoir and Sadar upazilas of Madaripur yesterday afternoon. The dead are Saiful Islam, 45, Abdul Malek Mia, 55, and Matlab Khalashi, 55. Locals said they were struck by lightning during a storm that hit the upazilas at around 5:30pm.

In Barisal, a twister lashed four unions in Bakerganj upazila on Tuesday. The affected unions are Faridpur, Durgapasha, Dudhal and Darial.

Md Rokanuzzaman, headmaster of SR Secondary School at Ichchapur under Faridpur union, said the school collapsed during the violent storm that lasted only 15 minutes from 1:05pm.

In Gaibandha, a storm accompanied with hails swept through nine unions of Palashbari upazila early yesterday, damaging at least 500 thatched houses and crops.

According to the upazila agriculture officer, hailstorm damaged boro on about 1,030 hectares of land in the unions.

Besides, maize, jute, banana plants were damaged and trees and electric poles were uprooted by the storm that continued for half an hour, he said.



PHOTO: STAR
A brick built house at Jagannathpur village in Pirganj upazila under Thakurgaon district gets razed to the ground as a nor'wester lashed the area on Tuesday night.



PHOTO: STAR
Students of SR High School in Faridpur union under Bakerganj upazila of Barisal district take examination under the open sky as the nor'wester sweeping over the area on Tuesday ravaged the school.

Flash flood, hailstorm damage boro in Moulvibazar haors

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Moulvibazar*

Flash flood and hailstorm has caused extensive damage to mature and half-mature boro paddy in haor (large marshy land) areas of Rajnagar and Srimongal upazilas under the district.

During this correspondent's visit to different areas of Kawadighi Haor in Rajnagar upazila a couple of days ago, farmers said standing boro paddy on hundreds of acres of land in low-lying areas have gone under water due to recent weeklong downpour while the pump house at Kashimpur has failed to remove the stagnant water from the haor.

"I cultivated boro paddy on 17 acres of land but 60 percent of the standing crops has gone under rain water," said Hiralal of Kadipur village.

Kashimpur pump house should be kept operative round the clock to save paddy fields in Kawadighi haor, said Jutish Das and Gopal Boidya of Antehori village.

Rajnagar upazila Agriculture Extension officer Md Moeen Uddin expressed hope that standing boro paddy may be saved from further damage if there is no further rainfall and if Kashimpur pump house remains operative without any interruption.

On the other hand, Arfan Ullah, operator of Kashimpur pump house, said, "Operation of the pump house is often disturbed due to inadequate electricity supply. It had to be kept inoperative for 20 hours on April 26 - 27 due to disruption of power supply."

Meanwhile, hailstorm in early hours on April 20 caused damage of matured and half-matured boro paddy in Kalapur, Srimongal Sadar, Mirzapur and Bhunabir unions of Srimongal upazila. As a result, farmers in these areas sustained a loss of around 1500 tonnes of paddy worth Tk 20.6 million.

The hailstorm coupled with inundation due to excessive rain damaged about half of the standing boro paddy on 1,000 hectares of land in and around Hail Haor under the upazila, said Sukalpa Das, Srimongal upazila agriculture officer.

Moulvibazar district Department of Agriculture Extension sources said 52,350 hectares of land in seven upazilas under the district were brought under boro cultivation this year.



PHOTO: STAR
Boro paddy in large areas of Kawadighi Haor in Rajnagar upazila under Moulvibazar district get damaged as the recent weeklong downpour caused water stagnation in the fields.