



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer gives a bleak look as he sits on his dried up cropland at Monthona village in Nilphamari yesterday. Several districts across the country witnessed scanty rain in the last few weeks, dimming the prospect of planting aman paddy.

Aman cultivation faces setback for scanty rain

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Cultivation of transplanted aman (T-aman) paddy in several districts across the country is facing a setback due to inadequate rain during the ongoing monsoon.

In the last two weeks, eight northern districts witnessed a scanty rainfall, reports our Nilphamari correspondent EAM Asaduzzaman.

A large number of farmers who harvested late variety of boro paddy and jute now cannot transplant aman seedlings for want of water while already transplanted seedlings in many areas are turning reddish as cracks are developing in the dried up lands.

The official target to cultivate aman paddy this season was set at 10,24,068 hectares of land to produce 27,64,983.6 tonnes of rice in eight northern districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh, said sources at the regional office of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources in Rangpur.

Due to want of rainwater, farmers are yet to transplant aman seedlings in 20 per cent of the targeted fields although there is only one week left before the end of the peak aman transplantation season (from the first week of July to mid of August), they added.

"For the last two weeks the rainfall in the district is only 2mm. Although there was much rainfall in June, the region saw scanty rainfall from mid July to first week of August in the peak harvesting season, said SM Sirajul Islam, deputy director (DD) of DAE in Nilphamari.

Visiting several villages like Mirganj of Nilphamari, Chandanbari of Panchagarh and Angarpara in the district, it was found that many farmers, who have already tilled their lands, were waiting anxiously for rain for transplantation.

In some crop fields, where transplantation was completed earlier, saplings were turning reddish while at many places saplings in the seedbeds became too old to be transplanted.

If farmers fail to transplant aman saplings within 35 days after sowing, it will result in poor yield, said Sanarul

Islam, sub assistant agriculture officer at district DAE office.

After transplanting aman saplings, 3-4 inches water is to be kept on the land at least for a couple of weeks but it could not be done due to lack of rainfall, said several farmers including Atiqur, Anwar, Tayeb, Sirajul and Mojibar.

Firoz Ahmed, DD at regional office of DAE in Rangpur, however, claimed that despite less rainfall there is nothing to worry as more than 80 per cent transplantation had already been completed in the region.

"We have directed field level officials to arrange irrigation facilities to farmers through deep tube well and shallow pumps. By this time 1,160 deep tube wells and 21,248 shallow pumps at either government or personal level have started providing service in the region," he said.

Our Thakurgaon correspondent Quamrul Islam Rubaiyat reports: DAE officials are holding meetings and conducting campaigns to make farmers aware about different methods of combating the ongoing drought-like situation in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts.

The DAE has set a target of cultivating aman paddy on about 1 lakh 25 thousand hectares of land with a production target of 3 lakh 39 thousand 388 tonnes of rice in the district.

About 1 lakh 22 thousand 355 hectares of land have been already been cultivated with transplanted aman seedlings, officials said.

In Panchagarh, DAE set a target to cultivate aman on 85,700 hectares of land with the production target of 2 lakh 27 thousand 85 tonnes of rice. About 81,000 hectares of land have already been brought under aman cultivation.

Last month there was only half of the required rainfall in Thakurgaon district.

While visiting Kanikoshalgaon, Akcha, Ruhea, Akhanagar villages in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila on Sunday, this correspondent saw cracks in the transplanted aman fields as the areas remained rainless for the last two weeks. Solvent farmers were irrigating their paddy fields with shallow machines while marginal farmers, failing to bear the high cost, waiting for rain.

"The field level sub-assistant agriculture officers have been asked to

motivate the farmers to operate their shallow machines and other pumps for irrigation on the T-aman lands," said Zahedul Islam, crop specialist of Thakurgaon DAE.

Our Natore correspondent Bulbul Ahmed adds: Aman farming in the district will be costly this season as farmers have to depend on ground water for irrigation.

The area of cultivation of the paddy this season sees a decrease by 45,968 hectares of land in eight districts under Rajshahi division as lack of rainfall, coupled with the backdrop of low price of the paddy last season, high cost of fertilisers, seeds, and other agricultural inputs discouraged the farmers, DAE sources said.

Aman was cultivated on 7,86,296 hectares of land in 2011 but it came down to 7,40,328 hectares of land this season in eight districts under Rajshahi Agricultural Zone, DAE sources said.

Several farmers have expressed fear that planting of older seedlings and belated aman farming may hamper the production this year.

"Many farmers are keeping their land fallow in fear of loss. We will cultivate alternative crops like banana, gram and sugarcane in the fallow lands next season," said Babul Akter, a farmer of Ekdala village in the district.

Sharful Islam Khokan, a farmer of the Chalanbeel area under Singra upazila, said only the farmland owners in low-lying areas are planting aman this year as its cultivation has turned unprofitable.

"Climatic changes are contributing to such decrease in rainfall. The authorities must take immediate measures to increase irrigation facilities and take steps for efficient use of surface water and rainwater, especially through preservation during heavy rainfall," said agriculture expert Delwar Hossain, also former deputy director of DAE.

Mozammel Haq, additional director of DAE in Rajshahi region, emphasised minimising misuse of surface water while supplying it to lands and preserving rainwater.

Similar reports have been received from several other districts including Rangpur and Jhenidah.

3 held while distributing leaflets against MP

UNB, Panchagarh

Three young men were held while distributing leaflets against a ruling party lawmaker in the district town on Tuesday night.

The arrestees were identified as Dulal, 30, Jibon, 20, and Aliur Rahman Sumon, 23.

Of them, Dulal is a Jubo League leader of Hafizabad Union in Sadar upazila while the two others are the activists of Panchagarh municipality unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Police said leaders and activists of Awami League and its front organisations caught the three youths while they were distributing leaflets titled 'people's demand' in front of the district unit office of the ruling party at about 9pm.

The leaflets termed a local ruling party MP corrupt, tender manipulator, killer and land grabber and so on.

The leaflets said that the MP was of bad moral character and had ordered to kill BCL leader Faruque.

"His father was the Sadar union commander of Rajakar and secretary of Peace Committee during the war of liberation in 1971," also read the leaflets.

Contacted, officer in-charge of Sadar police station M Humayun Kabir confirmed the incident.

Stalker to die for killing Barisal schoolteacher

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A Barisal court yesterday sentenced a stalker to death for killing schoolteacher Zinnat Ali in the city in 2011.

The convict is Rupom Dey alias Anik, 25, of Bazar Road area in the city.

District and Sessions Judge AKM Salimullah pronounced the verdict in the murder case. He acquitted another accused Monowar Hossain Tappu as charges brought against him could not be proved.

Twenty-eight out of 29 witnesses were cross-examined during the trial and both sides ended their arguments on July 25 this year.

Zinnat Ali, 58, a teacher of M A Wahed High School in the city, was stabbed to death by stalker Rupom in front of his house in Rupatali area of the city on November 25.

Rupom attacked Zinnat, also a freedom fighter, as he refused to withdraw the general diary (GD) filed



STAR: FILE PHOTO

Zinnat Ali and, right, his killer Rupom

against his with Kawnia police station in August 2011 for stalking his daughter on her way to college.

Zinnat was admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries the following day.

Victim's wife Kazi Shirin Akhter filed a murder case with Kotwali police station the same day, accusing Rupom and his accomplices--Tappu and Arifur Rahman Mithu--of killing her husband.

Police arrested Mithu on November 27 and Rupom at Khajuria bus stand in Jessore on November 28. Later, Tappu surrendered to the court.

After investigation, police pressed charges against Rupom and Tappu. Mithu was released from jail as the investigation officer did not press charges against him.

Court sources said Rupom gave confessional statement before Senior Judicial Magistrate Abul Bashar on November 29 in 2011.

RIVALS CLASH OVER DISPUTED LAND

2 killed, 17 hurt in Narail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narail

At least two people were killed and 17 others injured in a clash between two rival groups over a piece of disputed land at Amdanga village in Lohagara upazila yesterday morning.

Around 10 houses were also damaged during the clash that continued for about two hours.

The deceased were identified as Shukur Mollah, 70,

son of Fozel Mollah and Moksud Mollah, 65, son of Bazlu Mollah of the village.

There was a longstanding conflict between one Yunus Mollah and his neighbour Tuku Mollah of the village over four bighas of land.

An altercation erupted at around 8:00am between the supporters of the rivals over the issue.

At one stage, they attacked each other with lethal weapons, leaving at

least 19 from both sides critically injured.

Shukur was rushed to the upazila health complex where the doctors declared him dead.

Police also recovered Moksud's body from the residence of Yunus in the afternoon, said Md Akram Hossain, officer in-charge of Lohagara police station.

The bodies were sent to Narail Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said the OC.

PABNA UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

5 arrested for agitation get bail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Five students of Pabna University of Science and Technology, arrested on August 1 on charge of unruly activists on the campus, were granted bail yesterday.

They are Md Baki Billah of computer science and engi-

neering, also convener of the 'students' agitation committee', Mahadi Hassan of physics, Sajjad Hossain Jitu and Khalid Hossain of mathematics, and Al Amin of electrical and electronic engineering department.

Additional Chief judicial Magistrate Abu Saleh Md Salauddin, also the judge of

the Speedy Trial Tribunal, issued the bail order, court sources said.

Police arrested the five from a rally on the campus following a case filed by the proctor under the Speedy Trial Act, accusing 30/35 students of assaulting teachers of the university earlier on the day.

The university authorities

also expelled the five students following their arrest on the day and announced closure of the university from August 5 to September 4 'on the occasion of August 15, Eid-ul-Fitr, and puja.

PUST students started agitation on July 17 to realise their eight-point demands that include introduction of 'short semester system' for promotion, amendment to present GPA (Grade Point Average) system, cancellation of results published according to the running GPA system, eight years' registration validity instead of present six years, recruitment of experienced teachers, construction of university campus hurriedly, and end to 'ill-treatment' by the teachers.

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