

SCANTY RAINFALL THREATENS AMAN CULTIVATION

# Supplementary irrigation, weedy field too costly for farmers

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Farmers of Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts are struggling to save their aman plants from drying as the monsoon this year saw a poor rainfall.

The farmers, who mainly depend on monsoon rain for aman cultivation, are worried about recovery of their production cost as the yield is likely to be hampered while supplementary irrigation adds to their cost.

Scanty rainfall also helped growth of dense weeds in the paddy fields, much to the concern of

farmers.

Most of the farmers of the districts transplanted aman seedlings on their fields smoothly as there was required rainfall in the initial stage of the crop cultivation.

But afterwards, the season saw scanty rainfall and consequently, the soil hardened and weeds developed fast in the crop lands in many areas.

Growth of shoots of the plants hampered due to the situation.

During visits to different villages of these districts, this correspondent saw the paddy plants drying and

getting yellowish.

Dense weeds were also seen in the fields.

Hekmat Ali, 48, a farmer of Boikanthapur village under Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, said he transplanted aman plants on three bighas (one bigha = 0.3306 acre).

"Usually about Tk 6,000 is needed to cultivate aman on a bigha of land when the weather is favourable. But in absence of sufficient rainfall this season I have to irrigate my crop lands with diesel-run pumps. Besides, scanty rainfall helped to develop dense weeds on the lands. I have to spend Tk

2,500-Tk 3,000 per bigha for the supplementary irrigation and weeding to save the plants.

"But the production is not likely to be more than 15 maunds in each bigha.

At present each maund of paddy is selling between Tk 450 to Tk 550 in the local markets. So it is very tough to get profit from aman cultivation," Hakmat said.

Shamsuzzoha, 55, a farmer of Sakoya village in Boda upazila, said he cultivated aman on seven bighas of land but about the plants on two bighas is getting damaged as he is unable to manage expenditure for

irrigation for the whole cultivated land.

This season, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts saw aman cultivation on 1,28,795 and 88,480 hectares of land respectively, the production target of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) being exceeded in both districts.

But the production targets -- 3-lakh 39-thousand 388 tonnes and 2-lakh 27 thousand 85 tonnes of rice respectively, are uncertain due to the adverse weather condition.

DAE in Thakurgaon recorded only 127 mm rainfall in August this year while it was 535 mm in the same month last year.

The solvent farmers are irrigating their land by diesel-run shallow machines to save the transplanted seedlings while poor and marginal farmers, failing to afford the high cost, are eagerly waiting for heavy rainfall.

In Thakurgaon, 10,080 shallow tube wells including diesel-run and electricity-run pumps and 910 deep tube wells of BMDA are being run for irrigation on aman fields.

In Panchagarh, about 5,500 shallow pumps including diesel and electricity-run pumps and 225 deep tube wells of BMDA are on for the purpose, said DAE and BMDA officials.

When contacted, Zahedul Islam, crop specialist of Thakurgaon Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), said, "After planting of seedlings the soil became hard due to shortage of rainfall. As a result weeds developed fast in some areas especially in high lands. Farmers are trying to tackle the adverse situation by watering the fields. If the weather improves within a short time production will not be hampered."



PHOTO: STAR

Members of the Christian Community and human rights activists form a human chain in front of Ashwani Kumar Hall in Barisal city yesterday, demanding action against the realtor who forcibly evicted 40 poor Christian families from a slum at Baptist Mission Road in the city on Saturday.

## 'Punish land grabber and rehabilitate 44 families'

*Christians, HR activists demonstrate in Barisal, give memo to DC*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Members of the Christian community and human rights activists formed a human chain in front of Ashwini Kumar Hall in the city yesterday, demanding action against the realtor who forcibly evicted 44 poor Christian families from a slum at Baptist Mission Road on Saturday.

They also held a rally at the venue and then submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner demanding rehabilitation of the evicted families.

Addressing the rally, Johnson Merry Guha, assistant secretary of Baptist Church, claimed that 2.53 acres of land grabbed by Olympic Properties Limited (OPL) was donated by British citizen Reverend Gordon Soddy to Bangladesh Baptist Association, a subsidiary of Baptist Church Trustee, in 1969 and it was non-transferable or non-saleable.

The land was earmarked for the ultra poor families of the community. A case is pending with the court

### Follow-up

against the Olympic Properties Limited, who claimed to have purchased it from the Church Trustee, Guha added.

He urged the government to take action against the land grabber and rehabilitate the 44 poor Christian families.

Suranjit Dutta Litu, human right activist and local leader of Bangladesh Hindu-Buddha-Christian Oikya Parishad, Paresh Boiragi, Dhiraj Kanti Biswas, and Ujjal Kumar also spoke at the rally.

Meanwhile, AL lawmaker advocated Talukdar Md Yunus yesterday visited the area and talked to the members of the poor Christian families. He urged all to maintain law and order in the area and assured the affected families of taking necessary steps for their rehabilitation.

Locals and witnesses said armed cadres and labourers led by Shafikul Alam Gulzar, councillor of BCC ward-11 and former district treasurer of Awami League, evicted the 44 landless families from

2.53 acres of land on Saturday evening.

As soon as the eviction was complete, the perpetrators hung a signboard of proposed South Wave Medical College and Children's Hospital there. After the incident, the poor families took shelter in the adjacent Baptist church compound.

Ansar Ali Hawlader, a director of the Olympic Properties Ltd, said Reverend Asim Kumar Baroi, secretary Bangladesh Baptist Church Trust Association, sold the property for Tk 8.82 crore on February 8, 2012 where they plan to construct a private medical college and child-hospital.

When they came to know about the deal, the Christian slum dwellers, claiming ownership of the land, lodged a case and got a temporary injunction. But the District Judge's Court vacated that injunction, Hawlader claimed.

Contacted, AL leader and BCC Councillor Gulzar said he only helped the OPL develop the land for construction of a medical college and children's hospital.



PHOTO: STAR

Two women removing weeds from an aman field at Akcha village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila. Scanty rainfall in the monsoon has caused dense growth of weeds in paddy fields, much to the concern of the farmers.

## Bangladeshi youth hurt as BSF opens fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot a Bangladeshi cattle trader along Masudpur frontier in Shibganj upazila early yesterday.

Seriously injured, he was identified as, Mister alias Ahmed, 20, son of Ebadul of Tarapur-Sahapara village under Monakasha union in Shibganj upazila of the district.

BSF members at Shuvopur camp under 20 BSF Battalion in Maldah of Indian state of Paschimbanga opened fire on a group of cattle traders at around 12:30am when they were crossing the border to collect cattle, said Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) sources and locals.

Locals rushed Mister to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) in a critical condition.

The other cattle traders, however, escaped unhurt.

Major Abu Nayem, Operation Officer of 9 BGB battalion of Chapainawabganj said Mister received bullets in his left hand and chest.

## AL leader hacked to death in Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A union level Awami League leader was hacked to death by local criminals in Shibpur upazila early yesterday.

The victim was identified as Dulal Bhandari, 45, son of late Samir Uddin Bhandari and president of ward 8 under Putia union.

Police arrested five people suspecting their involvement in the killing.

Sources said on Sunday around 10:30pm, a gang of 7 to 8 masked criminals waylaid Dulal near Kararchar Moulvi Tofazzal Hossain Hospital field and hacked him with sharp machetes indiscriminately.

Hearing his screams, locals rushed

to the spot and sent him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in critical condition, where he succumbed to his injuries around 1:30am.

Nurul Islam, officer in-charge of Shibpur police station, said they had already nabbed five people in connection with the murder.