

RECURRENT FLOODS IN GAIBANDHA

Agri products on 9,293 hectares damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Gaibandha

Prolonged flood for the third time in this season has damaged crops and vegetables on 9,293 hectares of land in the district.

Transplanted aman on 7,243 hectares of land and vegetables on 98 hectares of land in the district have been totally destroyed as floodwater got stagnant for a pretty long time, said officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

Agricultural products on 1952 hectares have been damaged partially.

Total damage by the flood has been assessed at Tk 27 crore 84 lakh.

DAE sources said 1,27,365 hectares of land was brought under aman cultivation against the target of 1,18,649

hectares during this crop season and the department is expecting production of 3 lakh 10 thousand tonnes of aman this season.

But the prolonged flood in four upazilas of the district would cause loss of 8,692 tonnes of rice.

There is a little opportunity to transplant a late variety aman locally called ganjiya, but it would cover only 200 hectares of land in char lands in river basin areas of the district, said a DAE official.

"The floodwater washed away aman seedlings on vast char lands. Now we cannot afford the cost of transplanting aman seedling afresh due to its high price," said Afzal Hossain, a farmer of Kuthipara village in Fulchhari upazila.

Joyenuddin of Madhya Uria village in Fulchhari

upazila said he had transplanted aman seedling on two bighas of land at the beginning of the season but all was destroyed under water during the first surge of flood.

"With the money borrowed for high interest, I transplanted seedlings for the second time, but untimely flood again washed away all the seedlings, making me utterly helpless," he added.

Jahurul Islam of Uria village, Fazlu Mia of Kathur village, Mobarak Ali of Kabilpur village in Fulchhari upazila said they will have to suffer till harvest of rabi crops as floodwater washed away their aman crops twice in this season.

As the crops in flood affected areas get covered with sediment from river water, the plants are per-

ished soon after recession of water, locals said.

Besides, many of the croplands are still under stagnant water.

At least 200 acres of cropland at Karaibari and Kittaniyapara villages in Kamarjani union turned unproductive, as thick layer of sand got deposited there by floodwater from the upstream, said Nurun Nabi Sarker, chairman of Kamarjani union under Gaibandha Sadar upazila.

"This season aman farming exceeded our target in Gaibandha district, but untimely floodwater damaged huge crops in char areas. The DAE will extend all possible help to farmers in the rabi crop season to recoup the loss," said Mir Md Abdur Razzak, deputy director of Gaibandha DAE.



PHOTO: STAR

Zahurul Islam gives a bleak look at his aman field damaged by stagnant floodwater at Uria village in Fulchhari upazila of Gaibandha district.

ASSAULT ON SZMCH DOCTORS

BMA Bogra unit gives 24-hour ultimatum to arrest the accused

A CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) Bogra unit took out a procession on Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital (SZMCH) campus yesterday demanding arrest of the outsiders who assaulted the doctors of the hospital on October 12.

After parading the campus, the doctors held a rally at the outdoor of the hospital and gave a 24-hour ultima-

tum to the authorities concerned to arrest the persons involved.

The BMA unit will also stage a token hunger strike from 10:00am to 12:00noon, bring out processions on SZMCH and Mohammad Ali Hospital campuses and submit memorandum to the deputy commissioner today.

Leaders of the unit threatened to launch a tougher agitation programme if the outsiders, who assaulted three doctors of SZMCH,

were not arrested with the deadline.

They alleged that the three doctors were assaulted by the relatives of a patient who died at the hospital on Friday Abdullahil Baki, administrative officer of SZMCH, filed a case against 10 people with Sadar Police Station the following day.

Police said they have already arrested two of the accused and are trying to arrest the remaining eight.

Four Jamaat-Shibir men arrested in Gopalganj

A CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Police arrested four leaders and activists of Jamaat-e-Islami and its student wing Islami Chhatra Shibir in the district town yesterday morning.

The arrestees are Arif Billah, 28, general secretary of Jammatt Sadar upazila unit, Ahsan-ul-Mahbub, 25, president of Shibir district unit, and Shibir activists Mizanur Rahman, 20, and Rafiqul Islam, 25.

Zakir Hossain Mollah, officer in-charge of Gopalganj Police Station, said they arrested the four when they were pasting posters on walls in the town demanding release of their central leaders.

In another incident, law enforcers arrested an alleged member of Islamist outfit Hizb-ut Tawhid in the town yesterday noon.

They also recovered leaflets and books on jihad from his possession.

The arrestee was identified as Salam Bin Sanu, 35, of Alekhanda in Barisal, said police.

Sanu came to a local newspaper office in the town for publishing an advertisement regarding his party activities.

Being informed by Sikder Nur Mohammad, publisher of the daily Juger Sathi, police came to the office and arrested the Hizb-ut Tawhid activist.



PHOTO: STAR

The damage and casualties caused by Thursday's powerful storm would have taken more serious proportions but for such forests that absorbed much of the onslaught. The photo was taken from Nalchhira Math in Hatiya upazila of Noakhali district.

Trees absorb shocks of storm in Noakhali coastal areas

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, from Hatiya

Most of the fierceness of Thursday's storm in Noakhali was absorbed by hundreds of trees, which were either uprooted or broken throughout the affected coastal areas of the district.

In areas of Companyganj, Subarnachar and Hatiya upazilas hundreds of different types of trees, mostly karai and mahogany, were seen damaged in the storm.

The protective belt of trees actually helped minimise the damage and casualties due to the storm for which there was no warning, locals said.

Abdul Motaleb, a farmer

of Char Elahi in Comapanyganj, said around 40 trees surrounding his house yard were uprooted and partly broken while his house remained intact.

"The trees worked as protectors of my family members," he added.

Octogenarian Abu Taher of Sukhchar village under Hagahmara union in Hatiya Island experienced the mega cyclones of 1970 and 1991 when his house was destroyed and he lost five of his family members including his parents.

"But this time nothing has happened to my house or any person although 15 trees around my house were uprooted or partly broken

down," he added.

Taher's son Md Rashed, now living with his family in Horni union under the same upazila, also narrated similar experience. Rashed's kitchen was partly damaged while 20 trees around the house were broken.

"The powerful wind was not the reason behind the damage of any house in our village. The houses were damaged as the trees fell on them. Had there not been so many trees in the villages, there would be more casualties," said Md Shahin, a youth of Jahajmara village.

Md Mahidur Rahman, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Hatiya, said there are lots of trees across the

island and those trees have protected the houses from the stormy wind.

Nijhumdwip union saw serious damage as the trees there were not grown up, he added.

"Large scale plantation of trees under Coastal Social Afforestation Program by the Forest Department in the previous years alongside the roads and others areas in the coastal zone played a key role in containing damages during Thursday's storm," said Abdul Aual, UNO of Companyganj.

Villagers of the affected areas said they should protect the trees in future as they act as shield during storms and cyclones.

2 cattle traders shot by BSF

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Two cattle traders sustained injuries as Indian Border Security Force (BSF) opened fire on them on Katgiri border in Bhurungamari upazila early yesterday.

The injured are Hashanuzzaman Hashu, 35, of Dinhat Police Station under Coochbehar district of Paschim Banga, and Rum Babu, 34, of Gorakmdal village in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram district.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) sources said the BSF men of Baro Garoljhar border outpost (BOP) opened fire on the cattle traders when they were crossing the border at around 4:30am.

20 injured as villagers clash in Gopalganj

A CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

At least 20 people, including five policemen, were injured during a clash between the people of two villages at Kathi Bazar under Gopalganj Sadar upazila on Saturday evening.

Police and locals said the clash was a sequel to a longstanding rivalry between the people of Khanarpar and Teligati villages over establishing

supremacy in the area.

At around 7:00pm, the rival villagers, equipped with lethal weapons, attacked each other at the bazar. At least 20 people, including five cops, were injured during the clash that continued for two hours.

Police charged batons and fired tear gas shells to disperse the clashing groups and arrested six people on the spot.

Four of the injured--

Polash Sheikh, 20, Sayeed Sikder, 42, Yousuf Sheikh, 18, and Jewel Mia, 42--were admitted to Gopalganj Hospital while the rest given first aid. Polash Sheikh was later referred to Khulna Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

Zakir Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Gopalganj Sadar Police Station, said police have been deployed in the area to avert any further incident.

Bridge work stalled as fund stuck

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Construction work of Sheikh Russel Bridge at Mohipur-Alipur point on Patuakhali-Kuakata Road has stopped as the authorities are yet to release Tk 9.60 crore for acquisition of land for its approach road.

The bridge was scheduled to be completed by October 5 but the work came to a standstill on completion of 60 percent of the project. However, work on two other bridges on the same road is continuing unhindered.

The Awami League-led government took up a plan for construction of three bridges on three rivers on the 20-km-long Kalapara-Kuakata road, which is also a part of Kuakata-Dhaka road. The initiative received wide acclaim from all quarters as these bridges are set to make the visit to Kuakata tourist spot easier and hassle free.

Of the three under construction bridges, Sheikh Russel Bridge, named after the youngest son of Bangabandhu, is over the Shibbaria River at Alipur-Mohipur point. Two construction firms, TSL and REB, got the contract to jointly build the 408.36 metres long and 10.25 meters wide bridge at a cost of Tk 24.83 crore. A 400-

metre approach road would also be built under the project.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally inaugurated the construction work of the bridges on February 25 this year. The two other under construction bridges on the same road are also named after the two other sons of Bangabandhu -- Sheikh Kamal and Sheikh

Jamal.

Sheikh Russel Bridge, the smallest of the three bridges, might take a long time as the authorities are yet to ensure its approach road by acquiring the land. The owners of business establishments near the site also have not removed their setup due to non-payment of acquisition money.

Kamolendu Majumder,

executive engineer at Roads & Highways Department in Patuakhali said that the problem of land acquisition in Alipur side would be resolved very soon.

However, a few local ruling party leaders of Alipur alleged that negligence of the supervising authorities and construction firms is the main reason behind the delay.



PHOTO: STAR

Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad brings out a procession in Panchagarh town yesterday protesting the barbaric attack on the places of worship and households of minority communities at different places, including Ramu, Patiya, Ukhia, Teknaf and Chirirbandar.



PHOTO: STAR

Work on the under-construction Sheikh Russel Bridge over the Shibbaria River at Mohipur-Alipur point of Patuakhali-Kuakata road has remained stalled the halfway due to non-release of funds by the authorities concerned.