



Flood plain students negotiating through knee-high water to get to school

PHOTO: STAR

Wading thru' for education

Going to school a struggle for char students

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

In five upazilas of Lalmonirhat district, at least three to five thousand students of different classes, specially in high school and college level, at 65 chars (flood plain) in the Teesta and Dharla River basin are struggling for their education. They have set up a good example for the mainland students. char students face a huge challenge in commuting to schools round the year. During the rainy season, their homes are flooded. During the dry season, these two rivers dry up and the students walk on the sandy land where the rivers used to be.

Mizabur Rahman, 15, son of Yasin Ali at Dharla river basin Bowalmari char village in Lalmonirhat sadar upazila, is a student of class nine at Kulaghat High school situated about three kilometer from his home, said, he and twelve other students in this char village go to Kulaghat high school. "We go to school everyday walking 3 kilometer. But we never miss our school." He added that they face flood during rainy season and have to go to school by boat.

"I and 25 other students at Teesta river char Milonbazar go to Khuniyagachh high school in

Lalmonirhat sadar upazila. We attend our school everyday walking 2.5 kilometers of sandy char for two hours," said char student Ebadot Ali, a student of class even.

Lalmonirhat District Education official sources said, at least three thousand char students go to different high schools and colleges in the mainland at five upazilas in Lalmonirhat. These char students live 2 to 3 kilometers away.

Afzal Hossain, 45, a guardian at Teesta River basin char Sindurna in the village of Hatibandha said, "My two daughters- Salma Khatun and Halima Khatun go to Hatibandha Shah Goribullah High School. Our residence is 3 kilometer distance from the school. My daughters go to school through walking the char area, as the water is not sufficient for plying boats." Like his daughters, 42 other students in the same char village also face communication problem to go to school. All of them are struggling only for their education and they are doing well in school, he said.

Sobur Ali, 40, another guardian at Teesta River basin char in Paruliya village said, his son Shamsul Islam in class eight at Paruliya High School struggle regularly to go to school. "I'm poor; I live from hand to mouth. So I'm not

capable of sending my son to a hostel in the mainland for his studies," he said.

Papri Akhter, 13, a class seven student of Paruliya High School at Hatibandha Upazila said that she and twenty other students of same char in Paruliya go to school by foot. "We can easily go to our school during rainy season when boats run in the river. But during this dry season, Teesta river is dried up and there is no water to run boat," she said. Khotib Uddin, chairman of Sindurna union parishad said, Upazila Parishad provides two boats for carrying char students to school during the rainy season. The Upazila parishad bears all the expenditure of these boats.

The Lalmonirhat District Education Officer, Moslem Uddin Sarker said, "Char students are great examples for other students. They struggle hard but their results are brilliant. We have no plan to build schools in sandy char, as these char areas are flooded during the rainy season."

If the government takes an exceptional initiative to help students with hostel facility free of cost to the char area students, they will get brighter opportunities and bring more and more brilliant result, the char dwellers urged the government.

Birds for pest control

PONUEL S BOSE, Narail

Use of perching system in Boro paddy field of the current season is gaining popularity amongst the farmers in three Upazillas of Narail district.

As the farmers of this district got more effective results with a small investment in previous years, most farmers of this region are now using perching system instead of using excessive pesticides on their Boro paddy field, according to an official of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Narail.

Perching is a system where the farmer sets up a few branches of trees in the Boro paddy field where birds sit and eat the pest. When the birds eating pests, they help to protect the paddy field from pest attacks without any investment, DAE officials said.

Abul Hossain, a farmer of Voakhali

village under Narail municipality said, "Due to price hike of pesticides, I have used organic fertilizers and perching system in my Boro field and got good results. It is also cheaper than Urea and pesticides.

Agriculture office encourages and gives ideas on perching system, which is more effective to protect crops from pest attack, Asit Biswas, a farmer of Mulia union of Narail sadar upazila said.

Agronomist Sobi Hori Das, deputy director DAE Narail said that Perching system is now gaining popularity in this region because it's easy and affordable. He added that in this current season 100 percent of farmers in this district use perching system.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), a scheme was taken to bring 41,295 hectares of land under Boro cultivation this season in Narail.



PHOTO: STAR

Perching system applied on a Boro field in Narail

What's Your Insight?

Send your contributions to star.insight@gmail.com

Articles/stories/profiles should be between 700 and 1,300 words in length and should be accompanied by at least two photographs.

Defaulters without taking any bank loan!

Notices to scores of farmers in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Lalmonirhat branch of Sonali Bank has served notices to hundreds of farmers in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, terming them as loan defaulters, although many of them did not take any loan while others earlier repaid their loan taken from the bank.

Nilkanta Roy, a marginal farmer at Khatamari village of Kulaghat union in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, became surprised after getting a notice from the Sonali Bank branch in Lalmonirhat to repay agriculture loan of Tk 50 thousand.

He claimed not to have taken any loan from there.

"Lalmonirhat Sonali Bank field worker Amzad Hossain took my signature in a bank form in the name of giving Tk 20 thousand as loan but he didn't give me the money. Rather the bank staff drew from the bank loan money of Tk 50 thousand in my name 18 months ago. I knew of the matter only a week ago," he said.

"I didn't take any loan but the bank served me notice. Now I, my wife and two school going sons are passing days amid worry," he said.

Many other marginal farmers including Shah Alam, Surz Miah, Hazrat Ali, Usuf Ali, Monsur Ali of Khatamari village, Golzar Rahman, Idris Ali of Kulaghat village, Santosh Roy and Amol Chandra Roy of Banomali village and many other farmers of Siberkuti, Dhairkhata, Baniadighi and Tiktiki villages in Lalmonirhat Sadar



PHOTO: STAR

Marginal farmer Nilkanta Roy of Khatamari village in Kulaghat union of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila and his wife are visibly upset as Lalmonirhat branch of Sonali Bank has issued a notice, 'falsely' identifying him as defaulter of a Tk 50 thousand loan that he claimed to have never taken from the bank. Below, sharecropper Habibor Rahman of Bosti Khatamari village under the same union is also in the same boat as the bank served him a 'false' notice to repay Tk 75 thousand.



upazila also got notices as loan defaulter in last two weeks.

Habibor Rahman, a sharecropper at Bosti Khatamari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said he repaid his agriculture loan of Tk 40 thousand two years ago but bank field worker Amzad Hossain drew Tk 75 thousand as agriculture loan using his name about 18 months ago without his

knowledge.

"I can to know it ten days ago when a three-member probe team of Sonali Bank visited our village," he said.

Farmer Golzar Rahman at Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar said he took Tk 40 thousand as agriculture loan from the Lalmonirhat branch of Sonali Bank four years ago and later he repaid it.

"But I have been served a

notice as a loan defaulter. Bank staff Amzad Hossain embezzled the money instead of depositing it at the bank. I will go to the court if the bank authority doesn't take proper action soon," he added.

In last four months, the bank served notices to 1500 of the 3500 agriculture loan recipient farmers in Kulaghat, Mohendranagar and Khuniyagachh unions,

declaring them as loan defaulter, bank officials said.

But several affected people alleged that about 70 percent of the farmers who were served such notices in the three unions are actually cheated by the corrupt bank staff.

Field workers as well as officials of Lalmonirhat branch of Sonali Bank are involved with this corruption and so, the higher authorities concerned must conduct proper investigation in this regard, said the cheated farmers.

As two 'loan defaulter' farmers at Dhairkhata village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila submitted a written allegation to the deputy general manager of the Kurigram branch of Sonali Bank on May 7, authorities on May 21 formed a three-member probe body headed by Mostafa Zaman Mandol, senior executive officer of Sonali Bank principal office in Kurigram.

Since then the team has continued investigations as they are regularly getting similar complaints from different villages.

The probe team chief expressed hope that he will be able to complete the investigation by the first week of July.

He, however, did not agree to disclose further about the internal report before completion of the probe.

Meanwhile, manager of Lalmonirhat branch of Sonali Bank Sazidul Islam and field workers Amzad Hossain and two others declined to talk regarding the matter without permission from the high officials.



PHOTO: STAR

The renovation work of Tangail stadium hardly sees any prospect of completion within the stipulated time of this month, much to the worry of local sportsmen as several regular tournaments scheduled for the next couple of months are not likely to be held there.

TANGAIL STADIUM

Tourneys uncertain due to slow pace of renovation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The reconstruction of Tangail Stadium, scheduled to complete by this month, sees very slow progress, making uncertain the holding of several regular tournaments scheduled for the coming months.

On December 20 last year, K Enterprise of Dhaka got a Tk 7-crore work order for construction of eight galleries, drainage system, walkway in front of the gallery, pavilion shed, gates and a 12-foot road surrounding the stadium, earth filling on the field, and setting grills in front of the galleries.

June this year was the deadline to complete the work but about half of the overall works has remained undone so far, said sources of the district sports association.

Visiting the stadium on Friday, this correspondent found that construction of seven out of eight galleries was completed while the earth filling on field and construction of the road surrounding the stadium remained on the halfway.

Works for construction of the walkway and the grill in front of the galleries, gates and pavilion shed are yet to start.

However, Ashrafur Rahman Kajal, owner of construction firm K Enterprise claimed that 80 percent of the total work has already been done.

"We were trying to complete the remaining task by the deadline. If it cannot be completed within the fixed time, we will apply for extension of the work period," he added.

A Hasan Firoz, secretary of district sports association, said they have arranged the second division cricket tournament on the adjacent eidgah (ground for Eid congregations) due to the ongoing reform works of the stadium.

"The present progress rate of the reconstruction work suggests that the remaining task cannot be completed within next few months. In that case, we will not be able to arrange several tournaments including first division cricket league and upazila football tournament that are scheduled during the coming months of this year," he added.

Intern doctors on strike

UNB, Faridpur

The interns at Faridpur Medical College Hospital (FMCH) went on an indefinite strike on Monday demanding payment of their outstanding salary of May.

They announced the strike in the afternoon stopping their medical services to the patients of the hospital.

One of the hospital interns alleged that they went on strike protesting nonpayment of the salary of May.

Dr Shamsul Alam, director of the hospital, said he had requested the interns not to enforce the strike assuring them that the fund of their salary would reach in a day or two, but in vain.