



Morzina Khatun, left, producing the fertilizer vermicompost at her home. Mita Khatun, right, plucking potol (pointed gourd) from her own land.

PHOTO: STAR

Women take control

In Jhenidah they grow vegetables on their own

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Many women in Jhenidah have been working in the crop fields reluctantly under men and contributing to their family with their hard labour and skill. The vegetables produced are almost organic, where various types of locally produced compost manures and vermin-compost (fertilizer from the earth worms) are widely used. The initiative was a challenging one when the entire farming system was clutched by the chemical farming throughout the country. The female farmers now are selling the vegetables in markets as well as consuming the same for their family.

Rushia Khatun, 35, a house wife at Madhabpur village in Ganna Union Parishad in Jhenidah Upazila said that she has been working in crop fields with her husband, Tajul Islam, for last 15 years. Initially, she started farming activities when her family could not manage day labourer. Rushia, who studied up to class five said that two of her kids go to school. The family income with the joint activities had ensured them purchasing four bighas (measurement of land) of arable land. The purchased land have been used to produce vegetables all year round.

Rushia, also the president of Madhabpur Chashi Club (farmers' club) said that they formed a club in the village where women lead the organization. She deposited Tk. 20 a week from her earning that now cumulated to Tk. 13,000 in last 19

months. Following the success, Rahima, Rashida, Mita and some other women in the village were encouraged to work in the crop fields.

Working with her husband Rushia had constructed a building where it was nothing but a dream for her. "I am proud of Rushia as she works in crop fields like the males in the village. The financial solvency in my family was possible for her", said Rushia's husband Tajul Islam.

Another housewife, Morzina Khatun, 35, of Balarampur village said that she was encouraged to handle the process of vermin compost by her father, Omar Ali, an ideal farmer of Moheshwarbanda village. Now, around 3,000 housewives are working under a Card Samity of the village. She earns Tk 30,000 thousand per month, she added.

Madhabpur Chashi Club member said, her husband Shah Alam was very open minded to allow her in the fields. Usually she earns Taka 1,200 to 1,400 a month. "Usually I do not give pressure on my husband for my kids' education as I am earning working in the crop fields. Furthermore, the weekly savings for Tk. 20 deposited in the club account might be a great savings in the long run, she said.

According to Mita, selling vegetables in the market, each and everybody in the family give emphasis on consuming vegetables they produce. Villagers are pleased when she can distribute the organic vegetables free of cost among their near and dear ones. A non-governmental

organization has organized the women farmers in Jhenidah.

Jhenaidah Sadar Upazila Chashi Federation president Rabiul Islam said, the farmers in Jhenaidah and Chuadanga districts were organized through 60 clubs, raising their voices in their respective locality to receive services from the department of agriculture extension, cooperative, social welfare, women affairs, youth development, water development board, Union Parishad and some others institutions.

Maina Khatun, field level activist of the a development organization Action In Development-AID said, the agriculture project had a great impact in the society when 64 women of total 69 were engaged in crop farming in the locality, while five well-to-do women were not allowed to work in crop fields.

Any latest technology and know-how is now within the reach as the farmers are keeping touch with Union information centers in the respective areas. The project had ensured a new era for women in society, she said.

Chandan Bose Mukto, project coordinator of the implementing organization AID, said, the Manusher Jonno Foundation providing support for the project, such as: Establishment and Protection of Rights of Vegetables Producing Farmers (EPRVPF) targeting the Access Creation and Association Building for Agriculture Development (AABAD) in Jhenaidah and Chuadanga districts

since 2009. Three other organizations: Sonarbangla Foundation, RESWO and Pratyasha Samajik Unnayan Sangstha working as partner organizations in their respective areas

Sixty villages of Jhenidah Sadar, Kaliganj and Kotchandpur Upazila in Jhenidah and Chuadanga Sadar and Alamdanga Upzila in Chuadanga districts have been covered under the EPRVPF project activities. The project has been helping the access for the farmers in government institutions and good governance.

It has been also helping the farmers to avail latest available technologies from service providers at the villages. The project has been contributing a lot as it helps ensure financial safety for the farmers.

Deputy Director of the department of agriculture extension in Jhenidah Joynul Abedin said, the field level activities of the DAE were strengthened as the project has been helping learning the responsibility and accountability of the staff in fields towards the digitalized country.

Jhenidah sadar Upazila Nirbahi (UNO) officer, Kalachand Shingha said, the people of the working areas were consuming the fresh and organic vegetables, as well as the farmers, especially, the women farmers were benefiting from the project when they were engaged in their livelihood aside their male counterparts. The trend will help establish rights for the women community gradually.

Ashar Alo Pathshala

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Ashaar Alo Patshala, an evening school, is contributing to poor students in a remote area of Kurigram district for last three years. The school was established in January 23, 2010 in Rumkhana Union under Nageswari Upazila of the district to motivate and teach the poor and dropout students.

Some local higher secondary students, led by Kumar Biswajit Barmon, started the free educational activity in Ashkar Nagar High School of the union. Then 120 dropout students of class-IV were brought under their free education service through motivation.

With the increase of students according to classes, more teachers (higher secondary students) were involved with the school activity.

Now over 200 students of class I-VII are receiving education free of cost with 17 teachers are teaching them. Each teacher teaches for two days in a week. Besides, eight government officers including Nageswari UNO Molla Mijanur Rahman, teaches in the school as a volunteer teacher.

An evening school for poor and dropout students gaining praise by locals as a commendable initiative

Later, Ashaar Alo Patshala was shifted in Nakharganj Shabbyashachi College of the same Union in 2012 about two kilometers away from Ashkar Nagar High School.

Every day, activities starts through national anthem and light physical exercise with the presence of some teachers. Each student is a student of any government or registered primary school of the union. Students are taught on their concerned school-based curriculum. Students gather general knowledge, cultural activity and sports beside their class lessons.

Government high officials and local elites of the

district are invited at various programs as guests. Sometimes, the guests help the students providing various educational materials.

Former Deputy Commissioner of Kurigram, Md. Habibur Rahman donated a computer set in Ashaar Alo Patshala in January this year visiting the school.

Sometimes Nahid Chawdhury, a business man and the President of Kurigram Press Club, Shafi Khan Provides financial supports to buy equipment for the school. Some local give financial support to hold various programs of the students.

The teaching centre has received good commendation from well wishers of the district for their great contribution in free education services.

Director of Ashaar Alo Patshala, Kumar Biswajit Barmon, said, "People from all walks of life help us with a advice. Nakharganj Shabbyashachi College authority is helping us giving permission of using the college rooms and ground. Officials of local administration are satisfied of our activities and are involved with us".



PHOTO: STAR

Students and teachers of Ashar Alo Pathshala



PHOTO: STAR

Country boats ready for sale wait at the weekly boat market at Kuriana in Swarupkathi upazila under Pirojpur district. The ongoing rainy season sees a high demand for the items that serve as the main mode of transport for short distance travel in the area, crisscrossed by a good number of rivers and canals.

Noukar haat remains lively as boat is their lifeline

SUSHANTO GHOSH, Barisal

The weekly noukar haat (boat market) at Kuriana in Swarupkathi upazila under Pirojpur district now sees lively presence of sellers and buyers every Friday as the traditional country boats, serving as convenient transport in riverine southern region, are on good sale during the ongoing rainy season.

Carpenters of Muktahar, Chami, Boldia, Inderhaat, Boitha Kata, Dubi, Kathali villages of the area build mainly panis (or pinis), dingi and naak golui types of boats and bring to the weekly market stretching about two kilometres.

Commonly used timbers for building boats are from locally available koroi, rain tree, jarul, shal, sundari, mahogany and teak trees.

The timber is seasoned and tar or tannin of mangosteen is applied for

making the boats water resistant.

Boat making is a traditional family business for many people in the area and the skill is learnt through apprenticeship with father, brother or any elder relative.

Assisted by a helper, a carpenter can build a boat within four days after purchasing sized woods from local saw-mills, said Swapan Sadhu, a boat maker of Muktahar.

Depending on design, size, finishing, coating, and construction materials, manufacturing of a boat usually costs Tk 1200-4000 and is sold for 20-25 percent profit, said Yusuf Ali, a boat carpenter at noukar haat.

At Kuriana boat market, a small pinis boat sells for Tk 1500-1700, large pinis for Tk 2500-4500, dingi Tk 2500-3000, naak golui for Tk 1500- 2000, said boat-trader Stephen Roy.

"Most of the boats of this market are

of flat-bottom type. These are suitable for plying on shallow water and often used for carrying guava, crop and nursery items," said Harshit Mandal, a boat purchaser.

These are usually 13.5 to 18 feet long and 3 to 4 feet wide and can be operated easily by one or two boatmen to cover short distances, he said.

A well-built and properly maintained boat can be used on shallow waters for more than one season, said Anwar Mistri of Chami village.

"Over 500 families are involved in boat building trade in this region.

On an average, 60-100 boats are sold every Friday, the market day at noukar haat. The business continues well from May to September/October, depending on the length of monsoon," said Sarwar Hossain Chowdhury, lesee of the boat market.

Patient dies after being trapped in lift

UNB, Mymensingh

A patient, being trapped in a lift at Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital, died on Monday night.

The deceased was Mosharref Hossain, 35, hailed from Gafargaon upazila of the district.

Hospital sources said, Mosharref was brought to the emergency unit of the hospital at about 7:00pm following complaints of severe chest pain. The on-duty doctor admitted him to coronary care unit (CCU) of the hospital.

When the patient was being taken to the second floor of the hospital, the lift got stuck in between the two floors. Mosharref died inside the lift as the hospital authorities took an hour to open its doors.

BGB seizes SLR from BSF man, returns it

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized a self loading rifle (SLR) from a member of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in Jaspur border area under Sadar Dakshin upazila yesterday.

BGB-10 Commanding Officer Lt. Col. Mamun Al Mahamood said, a BSF member intruded into Bangladesh territory while chasing a smuggler in the morning.

When the BSF man was trying to pick her up from a field near the BGB camp, a border guard chased him.

The BSF man, sensing danger, fled into the Indian territory, leaving his firearms behind.

BGB later returned the SLR following a flag meeting with its counterpart.

Ruling party men's tree felling 'fest'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Over 100 roadside trees were felled alleged by the ruling party men in five upazilas of the district in the morning of Eid Day and the day before.

Locals alleged that the ruling party men with the connivance of some unscrupulous district council staff cut down the trees beside Lalmonirhat-Mahendranagar Road in Sadar upazila; Saptibari-Kalmati Road, Saptibari-Velabari Road, and Hajiganj-Chaparhat Road in Aditmari upazila; Tisbhandar-Chaparhat Road, and Kakina-Baninagar Road in Kaliganj upazila; Hatibandha-Tongbhanga Road, Hatibandha-Goddimari Road, and Lalmonirhat-Burimari Highway in Hatibandha upazila; and Patgram-Panbari Road, and Patgram-Jagotber Road in Patgram upazila.

While visiting the Lalmonirhat-Mahendranagar Road in Sadar upazila on Saturday, local told this correspondent that some BCL and Jubo League men felled at least 20 big roadside trees in Nizpara area on Thursday and Friday.

The villagers didn't disclose the names of the BCL and Jubo League men, fearing harassment. Anwar Hossain of Mahendranagar village said they will disclose the names of the people involved in

roadside tree-felling only to an official probe body.

Montazur Rahman, another villager, said some BCL and Jubo league men have felled the roadside trees, saying that they have got them as Eid bonus from their leader. They didn't mention the name of the leader, he added.

Babul Hossain, general secretary of Mohendranagar union unit of AL, said no AL man was involved in roadside tree-felling. "Unknown criminals have cut down the trees and I have already informed the district council administrator of the matter," he said.

Mohendranagar UP Chairman Abdus Sobahan Mondol said he filed a complaint with the district council, but to no effect. He further said that 15 to 20 BCL and Jubo League men were involved in this illegal act.

Sadequzzaman, a schoolteacher in Patgram upazila, alleged that some identified BCL and Jubo League men were involved in felling roadside trees in the upazila.

Contacted, Motiar Rahman, district council administrator and also the general secretary of AL district unit, said he will take necessary actions against the persons responsible for cutting down the roadside trees after a proper investigation.



PHOTO: STAR

Log from a felled roadside tree lies on Lalmonirhat-Mohendranagar road at Nizpara village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, bearing testimony to such illegal acts in different areas of the district allegedly by ruling Awami League men on Eid day and the day before.