

Ribbon retting fails to attract jute farmers

Traditional rotting system causes water pollution, affects fish cultivation

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Ribbon retting, a method for rotting jute plants with less water, remains virtually ineffective as farmers find the new method more costly than the traditional way of rotting jute.

As many as 1500 devices for jute peeling in ribbon retting method have remained unused in Jessore due to farmers' lack of interest have no interest to use the machine for its extra expenses that invented to peel jute fibre and rot it in little water, reports our Jessore correspondent.

The government in 2011 introduced ribbon retting method in different areas of the country to ease peeling of jute fibre, said sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Jessore.

Authorities distributed 800 ribbon retting machines in eight upazilas of Jessore in 2011 and 736 machines in 2012.

Farmers were also provided training on its use.

But farmers felt very little interest to use the method for what they said extra cost.

"The government distributed 8 to 12 ribbon retting devices in every union of Jessore district free of cost. But those machines are left in the farmers' houses as they feel no interest to use it due to its extra cost," said Bazlur Rahman, sub-assistant agricultural officer of Noapara union in Jessore Sadar upazila.

Nur Hossain, a farmer of Baganchara-Matpara village under Sharsa upazila in Jessore, who used ribboner last year said, "It needs 24 labourers to peel jute of one bigha of land that costs Tk 6000. It is much more costly than the traditional way of jute peeling. Besides, we get low quality jute stalks if we



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers peel and wash jute in the traditional way at a water body of Bijoyanagar village in Kashimpur union under Jessore Sadar upazila. The photo was taken a few days ago.

peel it with using ribbon retting method and our production also reduces by about two maunds in one bigha of land."

Birendranath Majumdar, Jessore Sadar upazila agriculture extension officer, however, claimed that the costs of jute peeling by ribbon retting method and traditional system are almost equal.

Our Lalmonirhat Correspondent reports: Almost all the farmers in the district have continued rotting their jute plants in the traditional way in rivers

and other water bodies as 'ribbon retting method for rotting the plants with less water, is yet to gain popularity in the area.

Due to inadequate rainfall this season, rivers and other water bodies in the district do not have enough water and so, large scale jute rotting causes serious water pollution, posing threat to fish and other aquatic creatures.

Ribbon retting method was introduced among the local farmers a couple of years ago in a very limited scale.

This year the DAE took an initiative to re-introduce the system but arrangement for training was inadequate and farmers showed very little interest.

Ribbon retting needs polythene and a big hole in the soil. After separating raw fibre from the jute stalk it is kept in the hole full of water.

"We are not familiar with the system. A few farmers were informed about the new system but they did not show interest," said Abdul Hossain, a farmer of Mostofi village under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Krishna Chandra Pal, another farmer of Teesta village in Lalmonirhat Sadar said, "Ribbon retting method seems easy but we took training on it only for a day, which is not sufficient."

Due to pollution from jute rotting water bodies are turning black and stinky, badly affecting fish production, said Hasmat Ali, Aditmari upazila fishery officer.

This year 9,260 hectares of land were brought under the jute cultivation in five upazilas of Lalmonirhat, DAE sources said.



PHOTO: STAR

The Dharla devoured about half a kilometre portion of Lalmonirhat-Fulbari road at Shiberkuti and Shimulbari villages in Kulaghat union under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. Erosion by the river has taken a serious turn during the last few days.

Dharla erosion takes serious turn in Lalmonirhat

A half kilometre road, homesteads, cropland have gone into riverbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The River Dharla devoured about half a kilometre portion of Lalmonirhat-Fulbari road at Shiberkuti and Shimulbari villages in Sadar upazila in the last few days, causing immense sufferings to the villagers.

A large number of homesteads and a vast tract of croplands and orchards in the areas had gone into the riverbed during the period.

The erosion-hit people have already taken shelter on roads and high land, said an official of local Water Development Board (WDB).

The villagers expressed concern as the river devoured the road, which is the only way to communicate with other areas, including the town.

The road was devoured by the river due to negligence of the authorities, said Idris Ali, chairman of Kulaghat union parishad.

Because, local WDB and Roads and Highway Department (RHD) did not take any steps to protect the road earlier despite repeated pleas, he said.

More than 1000 families of six villages might have been rendered homeless anytime as they face erosion

threat, added the UP chairman.

Samad Miah, an erosion-hit victim of Shiberkuti village, sugarcane on his 10 bighas of land was eroded by the river during the period.

Contacted, Lalmonirhat RHD Executive Engineer Suruz Miah said it is the duty of WDB to protect the road from the erosion.

Executive Engineer of WDB Kurigram Zone Abu Taher said, we have already sent a letter to the higher authorities for fund to thwart the erosion but to no response yet.

SNIPPETS

Youth commits 'suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A youth allegedly committed suicide following a family feud in Kulaura upazila yesterday afternoon. The deceased was identified as Sahin Ahmed, 23, son of Kolim Miah of Borogaon area in the upazila. Police and family sources said the youth hanged himself from the ceiling fan of his room. On information, police recovered the body and sent it to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

Two kids drown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Two kids drowned in a pond at Balardanga village in Patgram upazila yesterday afternoon. The dead were identified as Marufa Akhter Sharmin, 5, daughter of Sesar Uddin and Sumaiya Akhter, 3, daughter of Habibur Rahman of the village. Police said the duo fell into the pond while they were playing on its bank.

2 killed in wall collapse

A CORRESPONDENT, Feni

Two schoolgirls were killed in a wall collapse on Mizan Road in the town yesterday afternoon. The deceased were identified as Srabani Shaha, 13, daughter of Kartik Chandra Shaha and her cousin Pushipta Poddar, 8, daughter of Gobinda Poddar of the area. When the two were returning from an art school on foot, a portion of a boundary wall fell on them. Of them, one died on the spot while another succumbed to her injuries on the way to hospital.

Schoolboy found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

Police recovered the body of an abducted schoolboy from Chotto Shakpur village in Barura upazila on Wednesday night. The dead was identified as ananda Chandra Ghose Joy, 11, son of Durjoy Chandra Gosh of the upazila. He was a class six student of Taltola High School in the upazila. Police arrested deceased's cousin Dipok Chandra Ghosh, 25, and his brother-in-law Prantosh Ghosh, 45, suspecting their involvement in the abduction.

34 rescued from traffickers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benaple

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested 34 people, including women and children, from Putkhali frontier area on Wednesday night while they were being trafficked to India. BGB 23 Battalion Commander Lt Col Tayaful Haque said a team of BGB raided the area and caught five women, one children and 28 men while they were being trafficked to India through the border. However, the traffickers managed to flee, sensing the presence of the BGB men. The victims hailed from different areas of Jessore, Kushtia and Barisal districts, said the commander.

DISPUTE BETWEEN UP CHAIRMAN, AL MEN

Over 2,000 ultra poor deprived of VGF rice

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Over two thousand ultra poor people of Debottar union in Atghoria upazila under the district have been deprived of special allocation of VGF rice before the Eid-ul-Fitr due to a dispute between the union parishad (UP) chairman and a few men of ruling Awami League (AL).

Earlier 21.65 tonnes of rice allotted against 2,165 VGF cards for ultra poor people of the union before Eid-ul-Fitr under the government's social safety net support, official sources said.

"Secretary of Atghoria upazila unit of Awami League Shahidul Islam Ratan demanded one thousand cards from the total allotment of 2,165 cards. As I declined, pro-Awami League members of the union parishad did not submit lists of the VGF beneficiaries within August 8, the last date of submission," said Md Abdul Malek, chairman of

Debottar UP.

"Last year I handed over 900 VGF cards to the upazila AL secretary but this year the union committee decided to distribute the VGF rice according to the lists submitted by the members, said Abdul Malek, also vice president of Debottar union unit of BNP.

"Five UP members submitted their lists to me within August 8 while seven other members, who are pro-AL men, did not submit lists within the time. And so, we could not submit the final list within the scheduled time," Malek said.

Refuting the allegation, Atghoria upazila AL secretary Shahidul Islam Ratan said, "The chairman reserved one thousand cards for himself and the members of the union parishad protested it. Therefore, the chairman could not finalise the list within the time."

Md Saiful Haque, member of ward No 7, said, "We protested as the chairman

prepared list according to his choice."

Talking with this correspondent, Md Al Amin Sarkar, project implementation officer of the upazila, said, "The chairman could not finalise the list of VGF beneficiaries within the time. This is a special allotment of VGF among the ultra poor on the occasion of Eid. As the time was over, the allotment lapsed officially."

Atghoria upazila Nirbahi officer Sayed Robiul Islam said, "An inquiry committee is investigating the matter. After the report we will decide whether the VGF rice will be distributed or returned."

Moyez Uddin, a VGF beneficiary of Aubhirampur village in the upazila, said, "Each card holder is given only 10 kg of rice but this is good support for poor people like us before the Eid. But this time we have been deprived of the facility due to the disputes among leaders."

Poor parents seek help for thalassemia-affected kids

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Two siblings, undergoing extremely expensive treatment for thalassemia at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital (DjMCH), are in dire need of financial help as their poor and ailing father finds the task too tough.

The ill-fated kids are Md Mahfuzur Rahman, 10, and Bithi Ara, 7, children of Aynul Islam, a day labourer of Nasratpur village under Chirirbandar upazila of Dinajpur.

"Around five years ago, doctors detected thalassemia of my elder son. Two years later my only daughter was diagnosed with the same disease. Being a day labourer, I could not arrange proper treatment for them," said a tearful Aynul, himself suffering from kidney problems.

As condition of the two kids worsened, Aynul sold his valuables and with the help of locals admitted them to DjMCH around one and a half months ago.

On Wednesday, a team of doctors led by Dr ATM Zillur Rahman, a senior surgeon of DjMCH, conducted an operation on Mahfuzur and removed his badly inflated spleen.

"A surgery on Bithi will be done after 10 or 12 days. We will also conduct a test on the youngest sibling 18-month-old Mahid for the



PHOTO: STAR

Mahfuzur Rahman, 10, and his sister Bithi Ara, 7, both undergoing treatment for thalassemia at Dinajpur Medical College Hospital, give pitiful look as their day labourer father is too poor to continue the highly expensive treatment.

same disease," said Dr Zillur.

Mahfuzur and Bithi were brought to the hospital when their condition turned serious, he added.

"My two kids have already received at least 40 bags of blood in last 35

days. Around Tk 5,000 is being spent daily for their treatment," said Aynul Islam.

Aynul and his wife Majia Begum have appealed to the affluent people of the society for help for treatment of their children.



PHOTO: STAR

Oblivious of the risk of accident, farmers thresh paddy with a machine, setting it on a part of Kalaron-Chandipur Bazar road at Zianagar in Pirojpur district yesterday.