

Toll free vegetable market changes fortune

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Both the growers and buyers are happy as growers get fair price of their produce and buyers purchase vegetables at fair price at the toll free vegetable market named *Naksa Sabji Bazar* at Vata para village of Saptibari union of Aditmari upazila in Lalmonirhat.

The toll free vegetable market has been operating since March 2012 and it brings new opportunity for the ultra poor people at 15 villages surrounding the bazaar. All these become possible due to the Setu Project of CARE Bangladesh. Community Facilitator FC of Setu Project of CARE Bangladesh Mizanul Islam said, he had set up a linkage with the local landlords; Nurudin, Kader Muni and Sudhir Chandra in the village. Finally the three landlords agreed to donate 10 decimal lands for building a vegetable market in the village Vatapara, a remote village of Aditmari upazila.

Their donated lands were registered in favor of *Naksa Sabji Bazar*. "CARE Setu Project donated fund of Tk 2,20,000 for completing the project for the toll free vegetable market. The organisation also donated Tk 2,20,000 on a need to basis to provide support for predominantly poor villagers for running small business in the market," he said. Additionally Tk 25,000 was spent to build a tin shed house in the market for beneficiaries villager's meeting to share and exchange views about their livelihood. Since then, there are currently 20 small shops of different essential commodities in the market. Vegetable growers' comes to the mar-



PHOTO: STAR

Lalmonirhat: Toll free vegetable market "Naksa Sabji Bazar" operating in the village of Saptibari union at Aditmari upazila since 2012, brings in new facilities for the extremely poor people of 15 villages.

ket to sell their produce during the morning hours and later during afternoon's everyday of the week. At least 500 to 600 villagers comes here to sell and purchase regular necessities at the market place everyday.

Manik Miah; a small grocery shop owner said, his business is operation adequately. Manik Miah sells commodities at fair price and buyers are also content as they get commodities at fair price, he said.

A vegetable grower farmer Birendra Nath said, "I come to this market to sell my produced vegetable and I get fair price for it. There is no need to pay toll money for selling vegetables in the market but I am obligated to pay toll money if I sell vegetables at any other market."

Hossain Ali, a local poor villager said, he is running a small business in the toll free vegetable market and he is receiving support from Setu Project of CARE Bangladesh as his need demands. Beforehand while operating his business, he had faced difficulty over his livelihood. Now he along with four members of his family live peacefully. He earns around Tk 250 to TK 300 selling necessity commodities in the *Naksa Sabji Bazar*.

Local farmer Ahmed Ali said, previously he had to sell his produced vegetables to the middle men at a lower rate but now he changed his method of operation after setting up his shop at *Naksa Sabji Bazar*. He directly sells vegetables to the buyers and

gets expected price. "Toll free market *Naksa Sabji Bazar* brings new opportunity for the local farmers and buyers. Middle men can't deprive us from fair price", he said.

CARE Setu Project's Community Facilitator CF Rezaul Karim said, CARE officials always monitors' the toll free vegetable market at *Naksa Sabji Bazar*. Villagers from 15 villages are getting satisfactory output from the market and changing their method of operations along with their livelihood.

Local union parishad UP member Ayub Ali said; the toll free *Naksa Sabji Bazar* has already brought change to the villagers' perception of trading commodities at fair price. They are also benefited

by saving time as the other markets are at least three kilometers farther out. As more people are gathering around the market the union parishad has decided to construct a mosque here as well. The land donors Udhir Chandra and two others said, they feel very satisfied at donating the land to toll free market as local villagers are enjoying the benefit instead of outsiders.

The Project Officer of CARE Setu Project Ashraful Alam said, the market has brought change in social economical condition as many extremely poor people are getting job opportunity which was not possible earlier. The market has been playing an important role of solidarity for the villagers and hopes to bring more.

Out of Darkness: Improving Plight of Deaf-blind person

OSAMA RAHMAN

Five years ago, Centre for Disability in Development (CDD), embarked on a project to establish a strong and supportive national infrastructure in order to increase services and provide a coherent voice for deaf-blind people of Bangladesh. Back then, there was no organisation providing such provision. This was a brand new concept and needed initiation. The mission was technically assisted by Sense International India (SII) and financially supported by DFID, UK. The project began with six local partners—Research and Educative Action on Disability (READ), Gram Bikash Sangstha (GBS), Jhikargacha Development Organisation (JDO) Assistance for Blind Children (ABC), Bangladesh Blind Mission (BBM) and Bangladesh Organisation for Disabled advancement (BODA). Sense International UK provided support for the project and a National Resource Centre on Deaf-blindness (NRC-Db) of CDD was soon set up. Five years on, the results are startling.

Since then, more partners have been added, with focus being primarily towards rural areas of Bangladesh. Since 2009, 482 deaf-blind people have been directly reached whilst a further 70,000 deaf-blind people were targeted. CDD, with its aim of a more inclusive society, has been promoting equal rights for all individuals. Whilst providing a scope for creating a more inclusive society. Starting from educating the masses on the problems; the project has gone on to rehabilitate numerous numbers of deaf-blind individuals. Furthermore enabling them

to be included in societal activities; enrolling deaf-blind children into mainstream schools, funding income generating activities to these children along with their families. Creating human resources with an optimum skills and techniques to deal with deaf-blindness was another challenge faced on this project. Within a short duration, the organisation was able to develop 18 trained educators.

One of the shining examples of the initiation is of a 21 year old Hafizur Rahman (Torikul). Born without vision or the ability to hear, (JDO) identified Torikul in Jessore. Owing to his exuberant nature, the organisation soon began to rehabilitate him successfully in society, using various methods of training and education. Since he was adept with functional skills, he was soon hired and paid a monthly salary by JDO as a support staff for them. He later on got married and his wife has also been trained in sign language, gaining fluency quite easily. Another example is of Ms. Shammi, identified by READ, a partner organisation. After assessing her condition by

trained educators, she was provided with spectacles as a first step. With the support of trainers, Ms. Shammi was admitted to BRAC School. With proper advocacy, Shammi was provided with a stand and a magnifying glass to continue her study smoothly. She was further provided IGA support.

These are but two examples from many others, all who have been finally taught that a form of disability is no reason to be deprived of leading a normal life. In five years, much has changed. The government has included deaf-blindness as a separate category of disability in its disability law and has also ensured an option for rehabilitation for a good number of Deaf-blind people; at its newly built disability complex. Govt. Health workers are being trained on the problem in various regions to assist deaf-blind person and their families with need based support services. The project doesn't end here; the next course of action is total inclusion of deaf-blind person in all spheres of life. And if history is any reflection, then these organisations aren't far from achieving their goal.



PHOTO: STAR

A child after completing his rehabilitation has been living a normal life in society.



PHOTO: STAR

Numerous potholes make plying of vehicles on Marishya-Dighinala road in Khagrachhari district a tough task.

Marishya-Dighinala road in awfully bad shape

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Marishya-Dighinala road under Khagrachhari Road Division remains in an awful condition, much to the sufferings of commuters.

Numerous big and small potholes and stagnant water make the 22-kilometre road risky for the people of Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts who travel on the road by buses, *chandergari* (a locally devised three-wheeler), trucks and carry their agricultural products for marketing amid life risk.

Visiting the road recently, this correspondent found that the entire road badly damaged and almost become unfit for transport vehicles.

Although the authori-

Numerous big and small potholes and stagnant water make the 22-kilometre road risky for the people of Rangamati and Khagrachhari districts

ties concerned made repair works several times in last month, the road resumed its previous condition soon after repair works, said Md Abdul Shukkur, panel mayor of Baghaichhai municipality.

"The road restored in

previous bad condition despite three times done of repair works last fiscal year due to absent of drainage system," said Md Ismail Hossain, executive engineer, Rangamati Roads and Highways Department, who is also in-charge of Khagrachhari road division.

"We are suffering due to bad condition of the road. It takes much longer time to transport goods to the district town.," said Jupitar Chakma, a villager of Marishya under Baghaichhari.

"I drive *chandergari* amid serious risk on the broken road. Moreover, tiers and others parts of vehicles often get damaged in way to destination," driver named Md Ismail.

Locals have demanded urgent repair of the road.

Transport strike in Satkhira, Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Transport owners and workers yesterday went on an indefinite strike in nine routes of the district.

Associations of bus owners and workers and motor workers earlier called the strike, demanding removal of all 'illegal vehicles' like *Nasimon*, *Karimon*, *Mahendra* and *Bhatbhati* from the highways.

The strike created a huge tailback in different roads in the district.

Saiful Karim Sabu, secretary of Satkhira District Bus Minibus Owners' Association said they kept their vehicles off the roads protesting the plying of illegal vehicles and vandalism by *Jamaat-Shibir* men in the name of hartal and agitation.

Owners and workers have called the strike as several letters sent to the local authorities in this regard went unheeded, he said threatening to go for greater movement if their demand was not met.

Meanwhile, bus service on Kushtia-Meherpur highway came to a halt yesterday as transport workers in Kushtia protested assault on a co-worker.

The protesters demanded arrest of the culprit and also a ban on plying of *Nasimon* and other illegal battery-run easy bikes on highways, reports our correspondent.

All transports remained off the roads since morning, much to the sufferings of the commuters.

According to police, a passenger bus hit a *Nasimon* which fell into a roadside ditch at Bamandi in Gagni upazila of the district at about 4.30pm on Monday. Later *Nasimon* driver Sufol Hossain and his brother Sipon beat up the bus driver and helper.

AL men vandalise Gangni BNP office, set it on fire

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Awami League (AL) activists vandalised Gangni upazila BNP office and set it afire on Monday night.

The incident occurred following an altercation at a meeting held at the BNP office between the local BNP and AL men over an extra-marital affair between Sadrul Haq, younger brother of Gangni municipality BNP President Insarul Haq, and wife of local AL activist Babu.

Insarul, also a councillor of the municipality, convened the meeting at the request of Mayor and local Awami League leader Ahmed Ali to resolve the issue. The mayor also sent some AL men led by local Jubo League leader Mozirul to the meeting.

As the meeting failed to yield positive results, both sides started exchanging heated words and at one stage, BNP men forced their rival party activists to leave the office.

Hearing the news, Gangni municipi-

ality Mayor Ahmed Ali along with local AL men came out of his office at around 7:00pm. They vandalised the BNP office and set it on fire. No BNP man was present there at the time of attack.

Being informed, a team of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) rushed to the spot and dispersed the AL men. Additional Police Superintendent Anwar Hossain visited the spot at around 8:30pm and deployed police in the area to fend off any further incident.

Meherpur district BNP President Amzad Hossain condemned the incident and demanded immediate arrest of the persons involved.

Contacted, Mayor Ahmed Ali claimed that they recovered a sword, hockey and bamboo sticks from the BNP office.

"It is not only a party office, but also a shelter of criminals," the mayor said. He demanded immediate arrest of the

BNP men, who uses the office as a den for carrying out criminal activities.

BNP Meherpur district unit will hold a rally in the town today, protesting arson attack on the party office at Gangni upazila headquarters

Away in Manikganj, BCL activists hurled brick chips at district BNP office from a procession they brought out in the town at around 12:30pm yesterday, protesting alleged attack on their party men on Government Devendra College campus earlier on the day, reports our correspondent.

Refuting the allegation, district JCI President Masud Parvev said BCL men tried to foil their rally on the college campus at around 9:00am and hurled brick chips at their procession in the town at around 11:00am.

Parvev said they held the programmes, demanding withdrawal of a 'false' case filed against their central unit president Abdul Kader Bhuiyan Jewel.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Yakubia Girls' High School in Bogra town block Matidali-Banani road in the town yesterday demanding arrest and punishment of the criminals who seriously hacked Shahin Kadir Joardar, a teacher of the school, on Monday. Shahin fell into the wrath of the attackers, also alleged boyfriend of a Class VII student of the school, after he advised the girl not to make indecent overtures in front of the school.