

20 LANDLESS FAMILIES IN TEESTA BASIN

# Floating vegetable gardens change their fortune

KM REZAUL HOQUE,  
 Gaibandha

Twenty landless families in the Teesta River basin area have changed livelihood by farming vegetables on floating gardens at Belka in Sundarganj upazila under the district.

Such landless people usually serving as farm labourers often became jobless, especially in the rainy season.

Two years ago, donor agency Practical Action (Bangladesh) took an initiative to rehabilitate the landless peasants by providing them technical support to raise floating vegetable gardens in water bodies.

They put on water a thick layer of water hyacinth, fixing it with the help of bamboo enclosure. After covering the platform with a layer of soil, they sowed seeds of vegetables there.

Tributaries and canals of the Teesta River are being used for making such floating gardens, each measuring 10 feet by 6 feet and the process requires some physical labour and only a little cost.

"I spent Tk 2,000 for cultivating vegetable on floating garden and earned Tk 6,000 from



PHOTO: STAR

A floating vegetable garden on a branch of the Teesta River at Dahabandh in Sundarganj upazila under Gaibandha district.

selling the produce," said Rasheda Begum, now residing on Teesta flood control embankment at Belka.

"It was a very hard time as my husband remained jobless for a pretty long time due to prolonged illness. Then a field staff

of Practical Action helped me to raise a floating garden. Now I can sell vegetables after meeting up family requirement," said Majeda Begum, another beneficiary.

Sumon Mia, a field organiser of Practical Action in Dahabandh area, said the

NGO provided technical and financial support for raising floating gardens that help a lot to the destitute families.

"It needs close monitoring till the vegetable plants develop. Later the growers can maintain it themselves," he added.

"This programme has been proved helpful for the landless poor peasants in flood-prone areas. They can earn well by cultivating early variety of vegetables on floating gardens, which is not possible on swampy land," said Rahmat Ali, another field supervisor.

KACHARIPARA VILLAGE IN KISHOREGANJ UPAZILA OF NILPHAMARI

# Hindus in panic as land grabbers reappear

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,  
 Nilphamari

People of Hindu community at Dakkhin Bahagli Kacharipara village in Bahagli union under Kishoreganj upazila are passing their days amid panic as a land grabbers' syndicate is making forged land documents and filing false cases against them to force them to sell land at low prices.

In 2012, Hazi Noor Islam, a non-Bengali merchant of Saidpur municipality, started purchasing land in minority Hindu dominated village, to set up a jute mill, locals said.

Noor contacted with Mizanur Rahman Dulal, alleged leader of a local gang 'Bojrang group' to manage land on commission basis and the group comprising around 30 men, many of them accused in murder and mugging cases, started terrorising the unwilling land owners to force selling land at desired prices, they alleged.

Col (Rtd) Maruf Saqlain,

local lawmaker from ruling Awami League, said, "To occupy the properties of local Hindus, the grabbers are harassing them by making forged land documents and filing false cases. I have directed the police and local administration to ensure security of the minority community."

Octogenarian Dharendra Nath Roy said early this year he filed a case in court after Bojranj' group members equipped with lethal weapons came to forcibly occupy his land 82 decimals of land that he had purchased on registered document in year 1972.

"Hazi Noor and some Bojang members made a forged document on behalf of Hazi Noor," he alleged.

Basudev Roy, 45, a local, said, "To create panic, land grabber syndicate filed 11 cases against members of 30 Hindu families on false charges of road dacoity, mugging, attempt to murder etc and Kishoreganj thana police on May 13 arrest me and Pobitra Chandra, 30,

and Joti Bhushon Chandra, 35, in a case. The court granted us bail after a week."

Miscreants set fire to houses of Basudev Roy, Dharendra and Narayan on May 19 night and Basudev's wife Bobita Rani lodged a case against 'Bojrang' leader Mizanur Rahman Dulal, Zakir Hossain, manager of Hizi Noor, and others in this connection, locals said.

Police is still to submit charge sheet against the accused in the case but submitted charge sheet accusing the Hindus in three cases filed by men of Hazi Noorgong, they said.

Several locals including Asudev, Jintu, Ranjit, Narayan Chandra, Baloram and others said after publication of newspaper reports regarding grabbing of property of Hindus and harassment on them and local lawmaker Col (Rtd) Maruf Saqlain's interference in the matter the grabbers remained silent for about six months.

"But on November 8, Hazi Noor along with

'Bojrang' leader Mizanur Rahman Dulal, Hazi Noor's manager Zakir Hossain, and others again came to occupy their land and Mizanur threatened them with dire consequences when the political situation will change," Basudev Roy said.

Contacted, Zakir Hossain said, "We had purchased land according to Hindu inheritance law. I am not aware of 'Bojrang' group. I had given Mizanur Rahman Dulal charge of purchasing land, as he is efficient in the work. Two groups of local Hindus are filing cases against each other."

Mizanur denied his involvement with 'Bojrang' group and said, "I never threatened local Hindus."

Hazi Noor Islam, said, "I wanted to purchase 12 acres of land in the said village to set up a big jute mill and have been able to buy seven acres so far. As dispute occurred regarding ownership of some lands, I filed a civil suit in the court. I must abide by court verdict even if it goes against me."

## Guest birds killed with poison

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
 Moulvibazar

Poachers are hunting guest birds with 'poison traps' in Hakaluki Haor, one of the largest wetlands in the country, in Moulvibazar.

With the advent of winter, migratory birds have started coming into the haor, and the bird hunters become active in catching these birds by using poisonous food in the traps allegedly in cahoots with the guards of the haor.

Juri upazila Fisheries Officer Jahirunnabi and Centre for Natural Resource Studies Field-level Officer Nasim Hossain Sheikh said acting on a tip-off, they seized some 26 slaughtered birds from a boat used for hunting birds near Kanthinla bridge on the wetlands on Wednesday afternoon.

However, the hunters managed to flee the scene.

Bashir Ahmed, officer of the environment department in Kulaura upazila, said the poachers have been identified.

A case was filed with Juri Police Station in this connection.

## BNP to enforce hartal in Pabna tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Pabna BNP will enforce a daylong hartal in the district tomorrow, protesting remand of Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, special assistant to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia.

District BNP General Secretary Habibur Rahman Tota announced the

hartal at a press briefing after an emergency meeting of the unit yesterday.

A Dhaka court yesterday placed five arrested senior BNP leaders--Barrister Moudud Ahmed, MK Anwar, Barrister Rafiqul Islam Miah, Abdul Awal Mintoo and Shimul Biswas on eight days' remand in two cases for vandalism, arson and attack on police.

## BNP man drowns while evading arrest

UNB, Noakhali

A local BNP leader drowned in a ditch as he fell into it while trying to evade police arrest at Goaler Pool in Companyganj upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Abul Khayer, 58, general secretary of ward-3 BNP under Sirajpur union.

Family sources said police conducted a drive at Goaler Pool around 7:00am.

Being informed that the law enforcers were entering his house to arrest him, Khayer tried to flee the scene.

He, however, fell into a ditch and drowned.

Family members rescued the BNP leader and sent him to Companiganj Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead.

Meanwhile, OC of Companiganj Police Station Sajedur Rahman Sajid refuted the allegation, saying they did not conduct any drive to arrest Khayer.

## SNIPPETS

### Farmer commits 'suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chuadanga

A farmer allegedly committed suicide over family feud at Mojlishpur village in Damurhuda upazila on Wednesday evening. The deceased is Hanu Mondal, 40, son of Chhoyruddin Mondal of the village. Police and family sources said Hanu took his life by hanging himself from the ceiling of his room. An unnatural death case was filed with Damurhuda Police Station in this connection.

### Transport strike withdrawn

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Transport workers yesterday called off a daylong strike in 16 districts of Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions following a 'fruitful' meeting with the authorities. Akter Hossain Badal, president of Rangpur Division Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation, said they withdrew the transport strike following a meeting with the government at 10:30am. Earlier, the federation called the strike from 6:00am yesterday demanding immediate release of Shamsur Rahman Shimul Biswas, personal assistant to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia. Shimul Biswas was picked up on Friday night along with Khaleda Zia's adviser Abdul Awal Mintoo in the capital.

### Auto-rickshaw driver murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

Police recovered the body of a CNG-run auto-rickshaw driver from a roadside ditch in Choppra area of Debidwer upazila yesterday morning. The deceased was identified as Abu Nayeem Kalu, 22, son of Abdul Aziz of Gandra village in Muradnagar upazila. Locals found his body in the area and informed the police. Criminals might have killed Kalu in a bid to snatch his rickshaw, said police.

### Woman killed after rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Police recovered the body of a woman from Charmuguria PTI Road area of the district yesterday morning. The deceased is Rasheda Akther, 29, wife of Gopal Hawlder of Aatipara village in Kalkini upazila. She was a worker of Bhai Bhai Factory. Officer in-charge of Subash Chandra Paul of Sadar Police Station, said criminals might have strangled Rasheda after rape.

### Nine bombs seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Police recovered nine bombs from a house at Bhabanipur village in Raninagar upazila of Naogaon district yesterday. Abdullah-al-Masud Chowdhury, officer in-charge of Raningar Police Station, said on secret information, a team raided one Abdul Jalil's house and seized the bombs. However, none was arrested in this connection, said the OC.

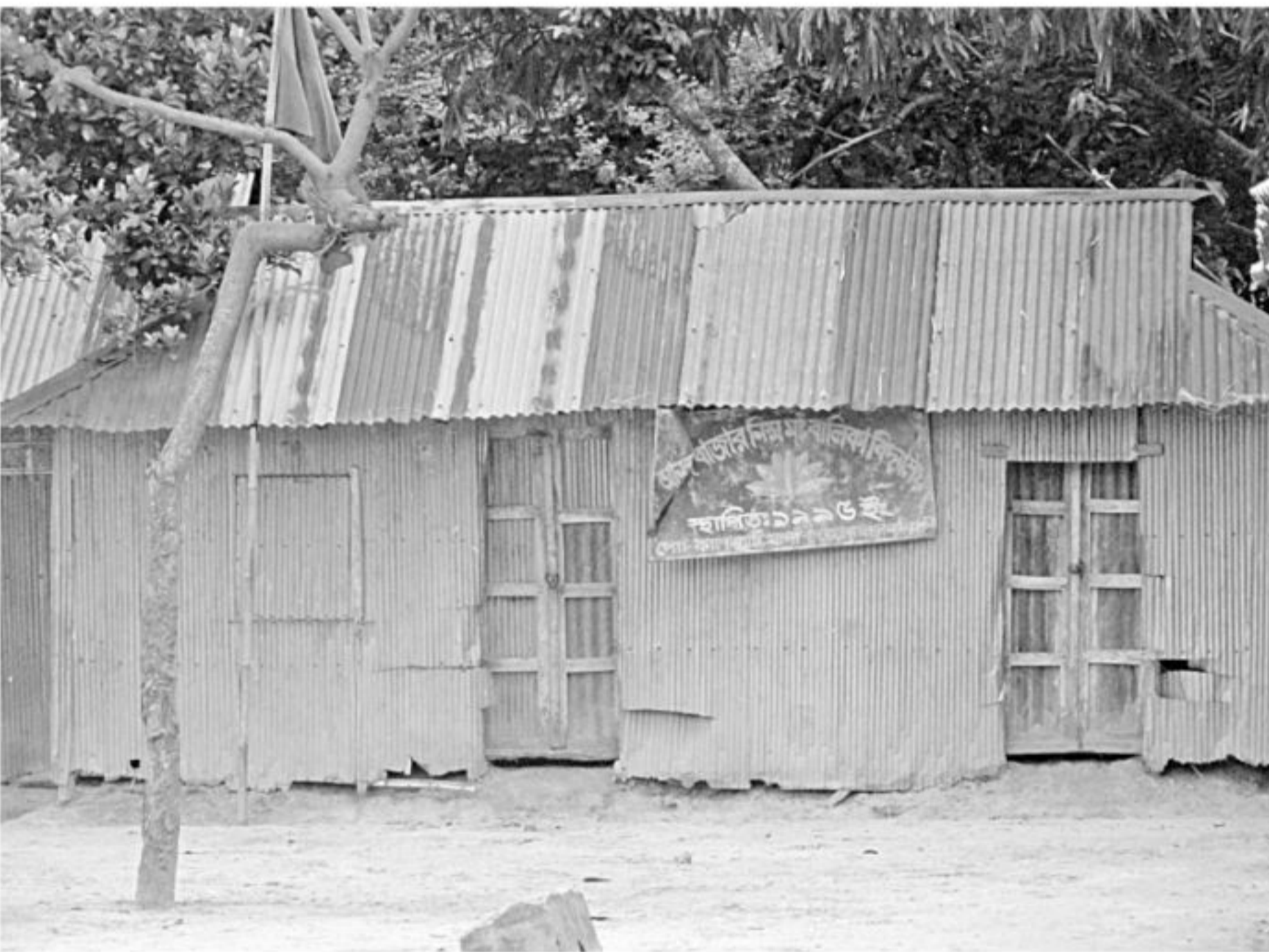


PHOTO: STAR

The teachers' room of Ananda Bazar Junior Girls' School in Khuniagachh union under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila remains closed all the time, bearing testimony to the virtual closure of the school for years.

# School runs without students for 9 years

## Teachers, staff still get govt salary

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Surprisingly though, Ananda Bazar Junior Girls' School at Kalmati village of Khuniyagachh union in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila has been 'running' without a single student since 2004 but six teachers and three staffs are still getting their salaries under the government's monthly payment order (MPO).

Seeking cancellation of MPO of the name only school, District Education Officer (DEO) Moslem Uddin Sarker wrote to the director general (DG) of the education directorate several times, the last one on August 19 this year, but no action has been taken yet.

"I visited the school several times but did not find any student there. But I cannot take any action without direction from the DG," the DEO said. The school was established in 1995 and brought under MPO in 2000, district education office sources said.

Afterwards, three brothers holding different positions of the school involved in a feud over control of the institution, locals said.

Afzalur Rahman Bosunia was chairman of the school managing committee from 1995 to December 2012, and his brother Anwarul Islam Bosunia served as headmaster from 1995 to February 2010.

Their younger brother Aktarul Islam Bosunia, earlier an assistant teacher of the school, has been holding the headmaster's post since then.

"Managing some corrupt officials the DG office, the teachers and staffs of the school have continued receiving their salaries although there is no academic activities in the school. The teachers and

staff always pose as ruling party men," said Minhazul Islam, a local.

Ershadul Haque Bakul, president of Khuniyagachh union unit of Jatiya Party, was made new chairman of the school managing committee in June this year.

"The three brothers are responsible for the present condition of the school. I am trying hard to resume the school activities. I have already contacted with the top political leaders for developing infrastructure of the school," he said.

Contacted, headmaster Aktarul Islam Bosunia said, "Now there are no students as the infrastructure of the school is very poor. I and all other teachers will conduct a drive to collect students for the school from early 2014."

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take proper steps to make the school functional.



PHOTO: STAR

With winter already touching the country's northern region, buyers handle warm clothes at a makeshift stall in front of Shaheed Satu Hall in Chapainawabganj town yesterday.