

'Paddy bank', a food security step for ultra-poor

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT,
back to Thakurgaon from Panchagarh

Community Dhan (paddy) Bank programme meant for providing the food crop to the ultra-poor rural people as easy term loan during the lean period (April-May) is becoming popular at different villages in Panchagarh district.

RDRS Bangladesh, a non-governmental organisation, is implementing the programme under a project titled 'Empowering the Poor through Federation' funded by Finn Church Aid, Dan Church Aid, Church of Sweden, Norwegian Church Aid and the European Union.

Under the programme, five community dhan banks have been set up at Sipaipara and Mondalhat villages in Boda upazila and Paikani, Hafizabad and Dhakkamara villages in Sadar upazila in Panchagarh district, said Mahfuzur Rahman, assistant agriculture officer of Panchagarh RDRS Bangladesh.

Initially, 25 to 30 ultra poor rural people, mostly widows, divorcees and physically challenged ones, were listed as beneficiaries in each dhan bank and 30 maunds (one maund = 40 kg) of paddy, scales and weights and a big size bamboo-made basket were given free of cost from the project.

The basket containing the paddy is kept at the house of a member of the 'bank management committee' in the area con-



PHOTO: STAR

Members of Community 'Dhan Bank' take paddy from the bank at Shipaipara village in Boda upazila of Panchagarh district.

cerned.

The committee comprising 5-7 members selected from the women beneficiary group run the bank under the supervision of an advisory committee led by the president of the Union Social Welfare Federation of RDRS.

The poor people in the rural areas of the district,

who suffer during April-May due to lack of job after completion of Irri-Boro plantation till start of the harvest, can get 50kg to 80kg of paddy from the bank as loan and they repay the amount with additional 5-7 kg after harvesting of the crop.

"The bank was set up at our village in 2012 with the

assistance of Moidandighi Social Welfare Federation under RDRS Bangladesh.

Starting with 30 maunds of paddy, our collection has now reached 42 maunds and we are including more members," Parul Rani, 'president' of the women group running Sipaipara Community Dhan Bank, said during this correspon-

dent's recent visit to the village.

"Earlier we borrowed paddy from land owners during the lean period and we had to repay double the amount after about two months. But now we can take loan from the dhan bank on easy terms," said Shefali Rani, a beneficiary of the programme.



PHOTO: STAR

Jamuna River continues to devour homesteads and farmland at Goshpara village in Daulatpur upazila of Manikganj district.

Jamuna erosion takes serious turn

250 homesteads, 1500 acres of farmland in Manikganj have gone into the river in 3 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Manikganj

Erosion by the River Jamuna took a serious turn in the last three days, rendering hundreds of families of 15 villages homeless and devouring a vast tract of croplands in Daulatpur and Shivalaya upazilas.

The erosion victims, who took shelter on roads and highways, are passing their days in misery as they are yet to get any support from government and non-governmental organisations.

During a visit to Kholshi, Baghutia and Bachamara unions of Daulatpur upazila and Tewta union of Shivalaya upazila on

Monday, this correspondent found many villagers leaving their homesteads for safer places as a number of big size cracks developed in river banks.

Anwar Hossain, chairman of Kholshi union parishad, said at least 250 homesteads and crops on 1500 acres of land at Bashtaluk, Ghosh para, Kuti para and Rouha villages in the area went into the river in the last few days.

More than 200 houses and crops on 1000 acres of land at Basail, Islampur, Rahatpur and Jotkashi villages in Baghutia union were washed away by the river, said Akter Hossain,

chairman of the union, adding that Pachuria Government Primary School and community clinic are now under erosion threat.

Abdur Rashid Sarker, chairman of Bachamara union parishad, said Jamuna devoured over 50 homesteads and crops on 200 acres of land at Charvanga and Chuadanga villages in the union during the period.

Charvanga Government Primary School and local mosque and madrasa are also under threat of the erosion, he said.

Besides, Jafarganj Bazar, Goaria Government Primary School and Jotkashi

Government Primary School of Tewta union in Shivalaya upazila, may go into the river anytime as they are now under threat of erosion.

Despite repeated calls, the authorities are yet to take any steps to check the erosion, said the chairmen.

Deputy Commissioner Md Masood Karim and local Water Development Board (WDB) Executive Engineer Md Mizanur Rahman already visited the erosion affected areas in the upazilas.

Md Mizanur Rahman said they wrote to the higher authorities, seeking fund to protect the erosion but no response yet to come.

One held with smuggled gold

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Benapole,

Members of Border guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested an alleged smuggler along with a gold bar weighing 2.5 kg in Putkhali area under Benapole Port police station on Tuesday night.

The arrestee is Shah Alam, 30, son of Yakub Ali of Khalshi village. Lt Col Mostafijur Rahman, commanding officer of BGB-23, said on secret information, they raided the area and arrested Alam along with the gold bar worth Tk 1.4 crore.

A case was filed in this connection.

Eight houses gutted

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Gaibandha

At least eight houses were gutted in a fire at Durgapur village in Shaghata upazila early yesterday.

Locals said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a house and soon engulfed the adjoining dwellings.

On information, fire fighters rushed in and doused the blaze. UNO Abdul Awal later visited the spot and distributed Tk 3,000, sarees and lungis among the affected families.

Man killed over land dispute

UNB, Laxmipur

A man was killed in a clash between two rival groups over a disputed land at Charporagachha village in Ramgati upazila on Tuesday night.

The deceased is Sekandar Hossain of the village.

Witnesses said there had been a longstanding dispute between Zaher Majhi and Sekandar over the ownership of the land.

Following an altercation the supporters of Zaher Majhi swooped on Sekandar Hossain, leaving him severely injured.

Sekandar succumbed to his injuries at the upazila health complex.

MMCH docs assaulted over death of child

They observe daylong strike, give ultimatum to arrest the attackers by 11:00am today

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

Doctors at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) observed daylong strike yesterday, protesting attack on the doctors by the relatives of a child who died at the hospital in the morning.

Hospital sources said Nirob, 7, son of Shahidul Islam of Mashkanda High School Road area in the town, was admitted to the hospital with fever and pain in the abdomen on Tuesday night.

The child patient was diagnosed with brain infection and given an injection at around 9:30am under the supervision of Prof Azizul Haque, head of paediatrics department, hospital sources said.

After pushing the injection, the condition of the child deteriorated and he died around 10:30am. But the patient's relatives alleged

that the treatment was 'wrong'.

Hearing the news of Nirob's death, his relatives and locals rushed to the hospital and attacked the on-duty doctors and nurses at Ward No 25. They also vandalised the ward, said police.

The unruly people also damaged several vehicles plying the road adjacent to the hospital, disrupting traffic on the road for half-an-hour, police said.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, said Abu Fazlul Karim, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

Dr Motiur Rahman Bhuiyan, secretary of Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) Mymensingh unit, alleged that the unruly people assaulted the on-duty doctors and nurses unneces-

sarily as the treatment was done rightly.

Soon after the incident, the doctors began work abstention, which continued as of filing of this report at 5:30pm.

At an emergency meeting held at noon, the doctors demanded arrest of the attackers by 11:00am today. Otherwise, they threatened to launch a tougher agitation programme, said Dr Bhuiyan. The doctors will also observe a token strike for two hours from 11:00am today to press their demand, medical sources said.

Five squads of doctors will render services to the emergency patients at the hospital, said the BMA leader. The emergency department will remain open, meeting sources said.

Additional police have been deployed on the hospital campus to avert any further incident.

Hili land port users start indefinite strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

Five Associations using Hili Land Port in Hakimpur upazila of the district started an indefinite strike yesterday to press home their three-point demand.

The demands are putting an end to giving seal on the manifest of imported goods, harassment by members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB), and filing of cases by BGB without informing the C&F agents and importers.

Att a press conference held on Sunday, Hili Land port C & F Agent Association, Customs Association, Truck Operators Association, Truck Driver Association and workers Federation

threatened to for an indefinite strike if the demands were not met by Tuesday.

At the conference, the leaders alleged that BGB members started checking import documents since April 27 at Zero Line, killing time. They also harass truckers and helpers at the time of checking documents, they added.

On May 7, the leaders of the associations urged the officials of Joypurhat - BGB Battalion to stop checking of import documents at Zero line, but to no effect, said Shahinur Islam Shahin, general secretary of Hili C&F Agent Association.

No goods laden truck entered Bangladesh while loading and unloading of goods in the port area

remained suspended.

The agitating traders, workers and truckers also staged a demonstration in front of the port yesterday. Later, they submitted a memorandum submitted to Hakimpur the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO).

Jamil Hossain, Port Affairs Secretary of Hili Land Port C & F Association said they will continue strike until their demands are met.

Md Abdur Razzak Tarafdar, commanding officer of Joypurhat BGB 3 Battalion, said they have taken the initiative to stop importing of goods forging documents.

He, however, refuted the allegation of harassment by BGB members.

BSF picks up three from Thakurgaon, Chuadanga

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) members picked up three Bangladeshis from Dharmagarh border in Thakurgaon and Munshipur border in Chuadanga district on Tuesday night.

In Thakurgaon, BSF personnel picked up two Bangladeshi nationals from Dharmagarh border in Ranishankoil upazila on Tuesday night.

The detainees are Md Shaheb Ali, 45, son of Wais Uddin of Amardangi village and Helal Uddin, 32, son of Setab Uddin of Shahanabad village of the upazila.

Maj Touhid Bin Ishaq, intelligence officer of BGB

30 Battalion said the BSF men from Kukradaha camp picked up the two, while they were returning to the country through Dharmagarh border at around 9:45pm.

They went to India about six months ago to work as brick kiln labourers, the Maj said.

The border guards of both Bangladesh and India held a flag meeting at 9:30am yesterday.

In the meeting, BSF said they have handed over the two Bangladeshis to Goalpukur Police Station in Uttar Dinajpur district of Paschim Banga, India, for illegal intrusion.

Our Kushtia correspondent reported that BSF

members detained a Bangladeshi cattle trader on border in Damurhuda upazila of Chuadanga on Tuesday night.

The detainee is Hasibul Hasan, 35, son of late Robiul Islam of the upazila.

Lt Col SM Moniruzzaman, commander of BGB 6 Battalion, said a BSF team of Mohakhola camp of Nadia district in India chased Hasibul inside the Indian territory and caught him while he along with 4 to 5 others were crossing the border at 9:00pm. Others, however, managed to escape the detention.

The BGB official quoted BSF personnel as saying that Hasibul is now under the



PHOTO: STAR

A two-member team from Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed (CRP) in Savar, Dhaka, examines the physically challenged Noimi during its visit to Badiar village in Sadar upazila of Nilphamari yesterday. Md Abu Bakar Siddiq, a community rehabilitation technician and Murad Hossain, occupational therapist from CRP, went to the village following a report published on the front page of The Daily Star on May 10 headlined, 'Living in a hole', and assured Noimi's parents of her treatment at the centre.