

Social afforestation a boon for the poor

Tk 76 crore distributed among the beneficiaries in two phases

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

The government's social afforestation programme brings monetary benefit to thousands of poor people who contribute to preservation and development of plantations on lands allocated by the forest department.

A total of 1,22,000 hectares of land have been brought under the programme in the district, mostly in Madhupur, Sakhipur, Ghatail and Mirzapur upazilas, and 15,948 beneficiaries, including a large number of women, have already got a total of Tk 75 crore 62 lakh 23,530.

The beneficiaries, each serving as caretaker of a 250-decimal social afforestation plot, got 45 percent of the total yield benefit.

The money was distributed in two 10-year rotations—one from 1989-1990 to 1999-2000 and the other from 2002-2003 to 2012-2013.

Last week, 29 beneficiaries received a total of Tk 36 lakh as profit at a function at Bashtoil Range Office in Mirzapur upazila.

"I worked regularly and spent Tk 20,000 for fertiliser to take care of a 250-decimal plot of acacia trees. Now I am feeling very happy after getting a cheque of Tk 1 lakh 41

thousand and 975. I will spend the money for renovating my house," said Rokeya Begum, 40, of Patharghata village.

Joy Tara, 35, and Habi Begum, 50, of Tarafpur village, received cheques of Tk 1,09,350 and 81,000 respectively for similar work.

They said they will spend the money for the schooling of their kids.

Farmer Fazar Ali, 50, of the same village is also happy to get Tk 1 lakh 57 thousand.

He, however, expressed disappointment as the ministry concerned has decided to allocate only a 100-decimal plot each

under the social afforestation programme from the next phase.

Tangail Deputy Commissioner Mahbub Hossain handed over the cheques to the beneficiaries at the function at Bashtoil and addressed there as the chief guest.

"Social afforestation programme is gaining popularity as it helps to improve the condition of poor people. We prefer women for the purpose as they take better care of the trees. They also spend the money wisely for their family," Abu Naser Khan, divisional forest officer in Tangail, said at the function.

Three die of diarrhoea in Bandarban

The disease is spreading fast in Lama upazila

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Three people died and several others were attacked with diarrhoea as the disease spread in the last few days in Lama upazila of the district.

To tackle the situation, five medical teams including three special teams from Chittagong, Bandarban Sadar and Alikadom Army battalion were sent to Rupashi Para union in Lama upazila yesterday.

The teams treated 60 patients while 15 others were sent to upazila health complex as their condition was serious, said sources.

A medical team was sent to remote Tong Pong Mro Para where three people died of the water-borne disease, said Dr Maong Te Zaw, Civil Surgeon of the district.

The victims were identified as Long Pong Mro, Chong Rung Mro, and Champau Mro.

The disease spread as people use contaminated river water for drinking and household work, the Civil Surgeon said.

High temperature in last few days has also contributed to the spread of the disease, he added.

Locals said diarrhoea outbreak has become regular matter as people suffer from the disease every year due to unavailability of drinking water in the district.

BAGERHAT

Five dried fish traders get life for killing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A court here yesterday sentenced five dried fish traders to life imprisonment for killing a man at Dublarchar in Sundarbans in 2007.

The lifers are Joydev Biswas, his brother Mohadev Biswas, Sheikh Sirajul Islam, Romen Nath Roy and Sadhan Biswas of Chuknagar village under Dumuria upazila of Khulna.

District and Sessions Judge SM Solaiman fined the convicts Tk one lakh each, in default they are to suffer five more years in jail.

According to the prosecution, the five dried fish traders beat up Sheto Sardar, a cook of another dried fish trader Liton Biswas, suspecting his involvement in theft of money from Joydev's bag at a fish depot at Dublarchar on February 27, 2007. He died on the spot.

Victim's son filed a murder case with Mongla Police Station on March 1, 2007, accusing Joydev and four others.

After investigation, Sub-Inspector Md Shahjahan Mia of Sharankhola Police Station, pressed charges against the five on June 6 the same year.

After examining the witnesses, the judge pro-

Man killed during nor'wester

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

An elderly man was killed after he fell from the roof of his house on Wednesday night during a nor-wester that lashed Futkibari village in Sadar upazila.

Local sources said when a gusty wind started at about 8:00pm he got on to the tin-roof to tie up the bamboo-beams of the house.

However, at one stage of his work he fell off the tin-roof of his house and died on the spot.



PHOTO: STAR

A threshing machine, paddy stalks and straw occupy a portion of Lalmonirhat-Hatibandha road at Boderhat in Hatibandha upazila under Lalmonirhat district, causing hindrance to vehicular movement and posing threat of accidents any time.

Paddy processing on highways goes on

Vehicles face serious problems

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Mindless use of the public roads for paddy processing during the ongoing harvesting season causes disturbance to vehicular movement in different areas of the district.

"I face problem to run my vehicle at around 25 places of Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway and Hatibandha-Lalmonirhat road as farmers process paddy there. The drivers have to remain super cautious and run the vehicles slowly to avoid accidents on the busy roads," said Haru Miah, a driver from Burimari land port.

Mahubar Hossain, a driver at Hatibandha upazila, said he faces untold

problem while driving to Lalmonirhat town as farmers process paddy on Lalmonirhat-Hatibandha road.

"I have to lower the speed frequently when faced with paddy kept at different places on the route," he said.

Dabira Rahman, 50, a farmer at Boderhat village of Hatibandha upazila said, he and many other local farmers daily use the road for processing paddy during this harvesting season.

"Usually we do the work in the morning when there is not many heavy vehicles on the road," he said.

"We have been using Lalmonirhat-Burimari

highway for paddy processing for long as many farmers, especially the marginal ones, have hardly any space for the purpose," said Shafiqul Islam of Kakina village in Kaliganj upazila.

Abul Kalam, general secretary of Lalmonirhat district transport workers union, said around 1200 vehicles including buses and trucks move on different roads, especially Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway, in Lalmonirhat district regularly.

Use of roads for paddy processing by farmers during the harvesting period causes serious problems for vehicular movement, he said.



PHOTO: STAR

People serving as caretakers of plantations under the government's social afforestation programme in Bashtoil Range of Mirzapur upazila under Tangail district pose for photograph with the cheques they received as benefit for the work at a programme last week.

Woman gets life for killing baby girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Sunamganj court yesterday sentenced a woman to life term imprisonment for killing her infant daughter in 2002.

The convicted is Jyotsna Begum, 35, wife of Nur Ali of Mollikipur village in Jamalganj upazila.

Judge of Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court Kazi Abdul Hannan also fined the convict Tk 20,000, in default to suffer another year in jail.

According to the case statement, Jyotsna used to quarrel with her neighbours Moyna Mia, Alamgir Hossain and Shamim Mia over trifling matters.

In the early hours of October 10 in 2002, Jyotsna strangled her one and half year old daughter and circulated that the trio had killed her daughter in a bid to take revenge upon her.

Shibir activist arrested for cutting tendon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Police arrested a Shibir activist from Balubagan area in Chapainawabganj town on Wednesday night for his alleged involvement in severing tendons of a BCL leader in the town on April 22 this year.

The arrestee is Rezwan Ahmed, 24, son of Abdur Rob of Satrosia village in Shibganj upazila of the district.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Jasim Uddin, of Sadar Model Police Station said police arrested Shibir activist Rezwan, raiding a students' mess in Balubagan area at around 11:45pm.

He is one of the accused in the case for attacking Nahid Shikdar Rubel, 25, organising secretary of the district unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League.

Shibir men swooped on Rubel and severed tendons of his legs in front of Chapainawabganj Government College on the

Criminals set fire to betel leaf orchards

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Betel leaves on around 20 bighas of land at Mathurapur village in Daulatpur upazila of the district were destroyed in arson attacks on Tuesday and Wednesday nights.

Farmers alleged that criminals set fire to their orchards, causing damage to betel leaves worth about Tk 50 lakh.

According to police, unidentified criminals set fire to two orchards on 10 bighas of land owned by Akul Uddin and Dema Mondol of the village on Tuesday night, causing damage to betel leaves worth about Tk 30 lakh.

Another orchard on 10 bighas of land owned by Hafizur Rahman of the village was burnt down on Wednesday night. Hafizur and locals said betel leaves worth

around Tk 25 lakh were destroyed by the arson attack.

Fire fighting units from the upazila and district headquarters reached the spot and extinguished the fire on both nights. Fire service personnel said the criminals set fire to betel leaves from different sides of the orchards.

The affected farmers told this correspondent that they cultivated betel, taking loans from a non-governmental organisation (NGO). "Betel farming is the only source of our livelihood. But fire completely damaged our orchards, they said.

Akul Uddin said he cultivated betel on five bighas of land, taking loan from the NGO. How will I repay the loan and maintain my family?

He demanded immediate investigation into the arson attacks and exemplary

punishment to the criminals.

Several such incidents of arson attack took place in Bheramara and Mirpur upazila of the district last year, but no action was taken against the persons involved, locals alleged. Betel leaves worth around Tk 1 crore were destroyed in the attacks.

Contacted, Ashish-binsahaan, assistant police superintendent of Bheramara and Daulatpur circle, said police are investigating incidents and trying to identify the criminals involved.

According to the sources in the district office of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), around 2000 bighas of land have been brought under betel-leaf cultivation in Bheramara and Daulatpur upazila of the district this year.



PHOTO: STAR

Criminals set fire to three betel plantations covering 20 bighas of land at Mathurapur village in Daulatpur upazila under Kushtia district on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, destroying betel worth Tk 50 lakh.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Institute of Health and Technology in Bogra bring out a procession on Sherpur Road in the town yesterday protesting increase of hostel fees and 'unreasonable' order on the second year students to leave the hostel before completion of their studies.

'Missing' student found murdered in Jamalpur

Agitation in Pabna as abducted Mishuk yet to be rescued

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A 'missing' textile student was found murdered on the bank of Brahmaputra River at Algirchar village in Sadar upazila of Jamalpur district yesterday.

The deceased is Asaduzzaman alias Robin, 22, son of Ruhul Amin of Barukhali village in the upazila. He was a student of Tongi Textile Institute in Gazipur district, reports our correspondent.

Police and family sources said Robin came to his village home from the institute a few days ago. On Tuesday night, he went out of his house and did not return since.

Yesterday morning, locals found his body on the river bank and informed the police who sent it to Jamalpur General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Criminals strangled Robin and dumped the body in the area, said Md Shahnewaj, sub-inspector of Jamalpur Sadar police station.

Away in Pabna, students of Pabna Government Technical School and College formed a human chain in front of the college on Dhaka-Pabna highway yesterday, protesting abduction of their fellow student.

They also denounced the role of the law enforcers for not rescuing Enamul Haque Sunny alias Mishuk, six months into the

incident, reports our correspondent.

On November 16 last year, Mishuk, 18, a second year student of the college and son of Abdul Mannan of Goyeshpur village in Sadar upazila, was abducted on his way to the institution for Tk 4 lakh ransom, said the participants.

Following a case filed by his family, police arrested five men in this connection, said sub-inspector of Sadar police station Md Fazle Elahi.

The arrestees are Saiful Islam, Selim Reza, Saiful Islam of Pabna, Abu Taleb Sheikh alias Rabi and Rafikul Islam of Sirajganj.

The students at the human chain also threatened to go for tougher agitation if Mishuk was not rescued immediately.

In Bogra, local people of Puran Bogra area blocked Dhaka-Rangpur highway yesterday, demanding exemplary punishment to the alleged abductor and killer of school kid Shahriar Nazif Siam.

They also brought out a procession in the town in favour of their demand, reports our correspondent.

On Tuesday, the body of Siam, 7, a class II student at Power Development Board (PDB Government Primary School), was recovered from the district town, said superintendent of police Mozammel Haque.