Flood threatens livelihood of farmers



PHOTO: MD MUKUL HOSSAIN

As a consequence of the flood this year, many farmlands, households and rural infrastructures are under water.

SHYKH SERAJ

Continuous rainfall and rising water level in the upstream of Bangladesh are the main causes of increase in water at most of the rivers and other water bodies across the country at the moment. For the first time in 6 years, 36 districts of Bangladesh have been severely affected by flood. However, the nature of the flood is now different from others which had impacted us in the past.

As a consequence of the flood this year, many households and rural infrastructures are under water. Aus paddies have been ruined. The most affected was the Ropa Aman paddies. As I travelled through different parts of Bangladesh this year during the flood, all the farmers shared their terrible experiences with me, experiences of the flood affected regions.

"Flood water grasped my paddy land and ruined everything", said one farmer from Kurigram. "My paddies are gone. I'm wondering what we'll eat for survival", said another farmer from Motherganj, Jamalpur. "If the banks support me, I'd be able to sow again. I don't have any options left", said another hapless farmer from Sunamganj. These are the real scenes from the field. Their faces are portraits of real sorrow.

Kurigram farmers are the worst sufferers of the flood. Water is now over 38,000 hectares of Ropa Aman paddy lands in Kurigram. 30,000 hectares in

Gaibandha, 23,000 in Tangail, 20,000 are still behind in that specific sector. in Jamalpur, 19,000 in Sylhet, 12,000 in Sunamganj, 11,000 hectares in Bogra, 15,000 hectares in Sirajganj, 10,000 spread impact, agrarian lands in Natore, Feni, Habiganj, Sherpur and Mymensingh have been under water for fifteen or twenty days. This has resulted in severe crop loss and many farmers have fallen behind their regular agricultural activity for at least two months.

Qurban Ali, a farmer from Singabari, Sirajganj shared with us what he lost. "I had paddies on 2.5 bighas of land and I lost all of them", said he. He eventually jumped into the water to show us the condition of his paddy plants. He fetched some ruined paddy plants to show us from under the water. I met another farmer in Sthalbari, Sirajganj, by the name of Joynal Abedin, who is suffering the same fate as others.

"Joynal bhai, what was being farmed in that land over there?", I asked. "There were pointed gourds, papaya, eggplants", he showed me.

"What have you lost?", I asked eagerly. "I lost paddies and many vegetables I was farming", replied he.

The world has advanced after the severe floods of 1988, 1998 or 2004-05 floods. Agriculture is also blessed with new technologies and more are on their way to empower the sector. However, we

We're failing in case of taking preparation in advance and we haven't seen any great measures to tackle the risks posed by this hectares in Netrokona are doomed natural disaster. We spoke to Senior ies. Where the submergence tolerant under water. As a consequence of wide- Scientist of BRRI, Dr. Abdul Majid regard- varieties were experimented by BRRI ing submergence tolerant rice varieties.

> "For how long can the submergence tolerant varieties can stay under water?

"Sixteen days." Abdul Majid added, if the water stays for seven to ten days, the plants have a great chance of survival. There is 97% of probability of survival in case the water stays for twelve days. When they kept the plants under water for sixteen days for experiment, they could save 69% of the paddies. Some of the plants were lacking in tolerance as they found. If one crop is affected by flood for a couple of times, their survival chance is very low, says the expert.

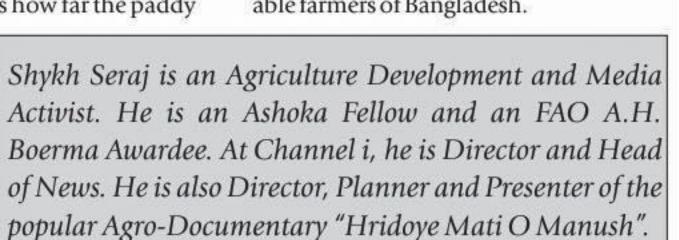
As per the information given by the scientists, these two submergence tolerant rice varieties have already reached farmlands in 2010. I came to know that enough seeds were sent across the country. The question is how far the paddy

from those seeds could survive during this year's flood. "It depends on how fast the flood water went over the paddies. What was the soil erosion situation and the duration of the flood- seven, ten, sixteen days or beyond that? We must monitor these issues", replied Abdul Majid. Abdul Majid requested the farmers to clean the silt of their paddy plants as soon as the water moves away. After they clean them properly, they will have to wait for another seven days. As these plants were stressed for a long time, if farmers apply urea or potassium it will help the plants to rot fast. They have to wait for the first six or seven days. When the plant will achieve stability, farmers will have to clean the aquatic weeds from the land. If they apply 20 KGs of urea and 20 KGs of potassium after seven days when water moves away, the plants will get a new life. If water moves away in two weeks, farmers won't lose everything. This is based on what Abdul Majid suggested.

I also talked with scientist of the IRRI, Dr. Abdul Bari regarding this. He has been coordinating field level extension of these submergence tolerant varieties. "Under STRASA programme, we distributed submergence tolerant seeds to farmers", said Dr. Bari.

But the reality at farm level is very much different. In many regions, farmers don't even know about these varietwhile being submerged twice, 18% production came down. And 23% when it was submerged thrice. "If government can bring up a plan regarding withdrawal of BR 11 and local Swarna varieties from field and subsequently replace it with Sub 1, BRRI can assure that the newer variety will give more produce, even if there isn't any flood happening in a calendar year" said Dr. Abdul Majid.

BADC has enough Aman seeds of Nabi varieties, BR 23, Najir Shail, Bina Shail. Besides, at the northern region farmers cultivate Baran varieties of paddies. Short term Porangi variety is also good and farmers can start farming it. For times of emergency, such a now, government and related organizations should work together and play an effective role in tackling the situation and protect vulnerable farmers of Bangladesh.





Farmers, businessmen and students suffer acutely for the incomplete Kanchatala-Laxmipur bridge.

Incomplete bridge constrains thousands of lives in Jhenidah

AZIBOR RAHMAN, from Jhenidah

The construction of a bridge on Kanchatola ghat over Fotki river at sadar upazila is still incomplete. As a result, people including students, farmers and businessmen of the nearby villages suffer a lot on a daily basis. Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) sources said that in 2007, Tk 26 lakh 54 thousand had been allotted for the bridge which is 44 meters in length.

Two pillars were constructed for founding the bridge in 2007. But the platform has not yet been built. People of Laxipur, Fursondi, Huda, Marundi, Bonkumra and Muktarpur come to Tikari bazaar through a sako (makeshift bridge) made out of bamboo. Most of the time of the year, people can still cross the river using this sako. But, because of excessive water in the rainy season, communication is suspended altogether.

Inhabitants of Laxmipur village informed, though it is a rural road, at least 2-3 thousand of people need to cross the river every day. School and college students of the northern side of the river need come to institutions situated at Tikari bazaar. If they cannot cross the river, mostly in the middle of the year due to excessive water level, they cannot attend their classes. Local students Mina Khatun, Ismail Hossain, and Nazmul Hossain expressed grave concern as their attendance in school is often hampered.

Contractor Mahabubur Rahman told the Daily Star that all of a sudden the water in the canal increased after building two pillars here. He was waiting for water to recede to resume the work, but then, prices of all constructing materials went up. In this situation he had to incur heavy loss in completing the work based on the original tender, and so he abandoned the work. He received a bill of four lakh takas but he had already spent taka six lakhs. He had to pay the money as fine for his not finishing the work. Executive Engineer Rokibul Islam of LGED Jhenidah said, he will look into the matter and take necessary step in regard to resuming the construction of the bridge.



PHOTO: STAR

With the recession of flood water, erosion by the river Jamuna has taken an alarming turn in Saghata upazila of Gaibandha district. Photo shows a homestead, which is on the verge of collapse into the river, at Gobindapur village in the upazila.

LAND DISPUTE

14 get life for murder in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A court here on Monday sentenced 14 people to life term imprisonment for killing a man in 2004.

The lifers are-- Moti, Lutfor, Nurul, Renu, Hafizuddin, Sayed, Barek, Jalil, Haider, Selim, Jabbar, Ramzan, Billal and Mahadi, hailed from Nawdhara village in Durgapur upazila.

Judge of the Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court's Abdul Hamid also fined the convicts Tk 50,000 each, in default, to suffer five years more in jail.

Modlets.

Eleven others, however, were acquitted of the charges.

According to the prosecution, the convicts stabbed Abdul Kaddus, 26, son of Rahmat Ali of neighbouring Shankerpur village to death on August 18 in 2004, following a feud over the ownership of a disputed land.

The nextday, Osman Goni, elder brother of the deceased, filed a murder case with Durgapur Police Station, accusing 25 people.

After investigation, police pressed charges against 25 people on May 16 in 2006.



PHOTO: STAR

The Railway authorities have started demolishing illegal structures at Joypurhat station and its surrounding area. The photo was taken yesterday.

Erosion renders 130 families homeless in Gaibandha

Victims face food, water crisis

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

With the recession of floodwater, erosion by the river Jamuna has taken a serious turn in the last three days, rendering 130 families at three villages in Shaghata upazila homeless.

It also devoured a number of homesteads, a vast tract of croplands, school and graveyard.

Meanwhile, at least 200 villagers are now under threat of erosion, said local Water Development Board (WDB) sources.

The affected villages are Gobindapur, Garamara and Haldia.

At least 42 homesteads at Gobindapur went into the river due to the erosion, said locals.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found many villagers leaving their home-

steads for safer places in fear

of further erosion.

The river devoured my homestead and cow-shed during the period, said Ataur Hossain of Garamara

The erosion-hit people, who took shelter on high lands, faced acute crisis of drinking water and food, he said.

The students were taking classes under the open sky as the schoolhouse had gone into the river, said Asabuddin, a teacher of Garamara Government Primary School.

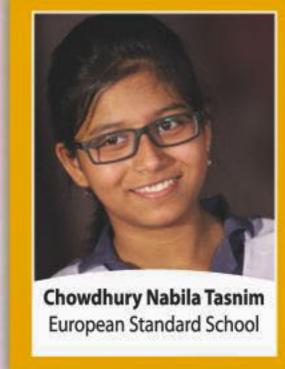
If immediate steps were not taken to check the erosion, more homesteads would be devoured, said Rafiqul Islam Mandol, chairman of Haldia union parishad.

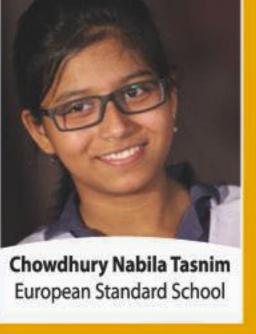
Gaibandha WDB executive engineer Abdul Awal Mia said we informed the higher authorities about the situation and sought funds to protect the area from erosion.

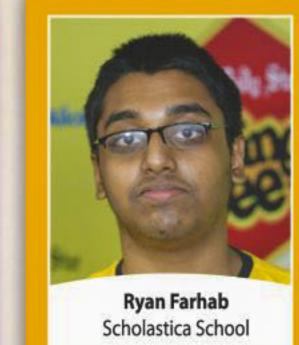


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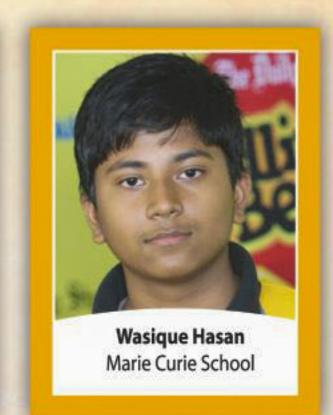
The Baily Star











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