

Rain, flooding bring woe to Jhenidah flower growers

Huge losses likely as inundated plants dying fast

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Flower plantations in the district are getting damaged due to inundation of the fields amid excessive rain, much to the worry of around 1500 flower growers in the district.

In the district, 265 hectares of land including 85 hectares in Kaliganj upazila, 65 hectares in Sadar upazila, 30 hectares in Harinakundo, 45 hectares in Moheshpur and 40 hectares in Kotchandpur upazila was brought under

flower cultivation this season, said sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

At around 70% of the plantations have already been damaged of the district, they said.

"I cultivated marigold on five bighas at a cost of Tk 1.5 lakh this year. I have sold a portion of the flowers for Tk 1 lakh. The rest would sell for around Tk 4 lakh if the weather remained good. But the recent downpour has flooded all the plots and the flowers are dying," said

former UP chairman Abdur Razzak, also a flower grower of Chotoghighati village.

Sharafat Mondol of Baliadanga village said he cultivated flower on one bigha of leased land taken for Tk 20 thousand.

He has sold flowers worth Tk 15 thousand but the remaining ones will die as the plot is now under water.

Islam Hossain, Mollik Mondol, Abdus Salam and Shariful Islam are also facing similar situations.

"At present flowers are

selling for good prices but the growers are worried due to dying of the plants due to excessive rain water. Most of them had taken loan from different NGOs for flower cultivation," said Motiar Rahman, president of flower growers association.

Shah Akramul Haq, deputy director of DAE in Jhenidah, said the flower growers will incur huge losses as their plots have got inundated due to excessive rain.



PHOTO: STAR

A flower field at Baliadanga village in Jhenidah Sadar upazila gets virtually destroyed due to waterlogging caused by heavy downpour during the last few days.

Among Shilkhali's Garjan Giants

ANDREW EAGLE

In Shilkhali the setting Bay of Bengal sun sends golden light from beyond the beach and through the first fields to meet the towering trunks of the garjan trees. Hundreds are lit as candles by the orange glow. It's quite a show.

The air is cooler, the day is done and locals haven't passed up the chance to stroll among the leafy giants that tower over the scattering of nearby tin and thatch homes. Unique in the coastal belt for having stood the test of time, this age-old forest in Cox's Bazar beneath Teknaf's range holds a beauty that cannot be denied.

Trees rise before and after the Marine Drive; and what's more interesting right in the middle of the road, as though the forest barely tolerates the line of pitch passing through its enchanted territory. In the several places where roadway is divided into narrow

lanes squeezing either side of a resolute garjan trunk the shared CNGs and small trucks must weave courteous s-curves to get through. It's as though the traffic tips its hat in honour of the trees.

Nearby a few tea shops are coming to life. Customers are ready to reacquaint themselves with neighbours after a day of labour. Nearby, on a shady field a football match is underway.

Such activities could characterise the life of many a village but in Shilkhali the forest grants an added degree of calmness to proceedings. In the tea shops it seems impossible to retain tension. Over the football ground the garjan canopy presides as silent, ever present referee.

Fading eastward into the shadow before the mountains, the garjan forest is a site that any passing tourist will want to see.

To the north in Shilkhali Bazar proper there's talk of a

wild elephant group that sometimes arrives by 8 p.m., wandering down from the hills to trample paddy in search of food. The villagers are yet brave and ready to chase them off.

And besides, if the group doesn't arrive there's a lone individual, a regular elephant who can be relied upon to grace the hillside farmlands from 9 pm until dawn.

Local Abdul Karim, 18, who studies in class 9, leads the way with his friends along a country lane, a short walk to the east, to show a trampled fence and a large, recently broken jackfruit tree.

"Elephants eat coconut, banana and jackfruit," he says, adding that the betel and areca palm gardens are spared. "You should see how an elephant headbutts a coconut palm to make the coconuts fall; how they open green coconuts with their feet."

Asked if the elephants

worry him he shakes his head. "I wasn't scared of them when I was little. Why would I be scared now?"

A short walk to the west meanwhile brings us to the beach with a minor lagoon to wade through before reaching the empty, stunning sand stretch. The red crabs by their hundreds scurrying into burrows were clearly not expecting visitors.

Alone on the foreshore further down, fisherman Hasan is hoping for shrimp, busy with nets.

To the south of the forest meanwhile new plots are well-marked between road and beach, with signboard names of hotel this and hotel that. Accommodation has made a long term booking it would seem to stay in the area along Teknaf's northern coast; and what will the garjan forest make of it should sun seeking crowds arrive in coming years?

Yet for the moment, the area is quiet.

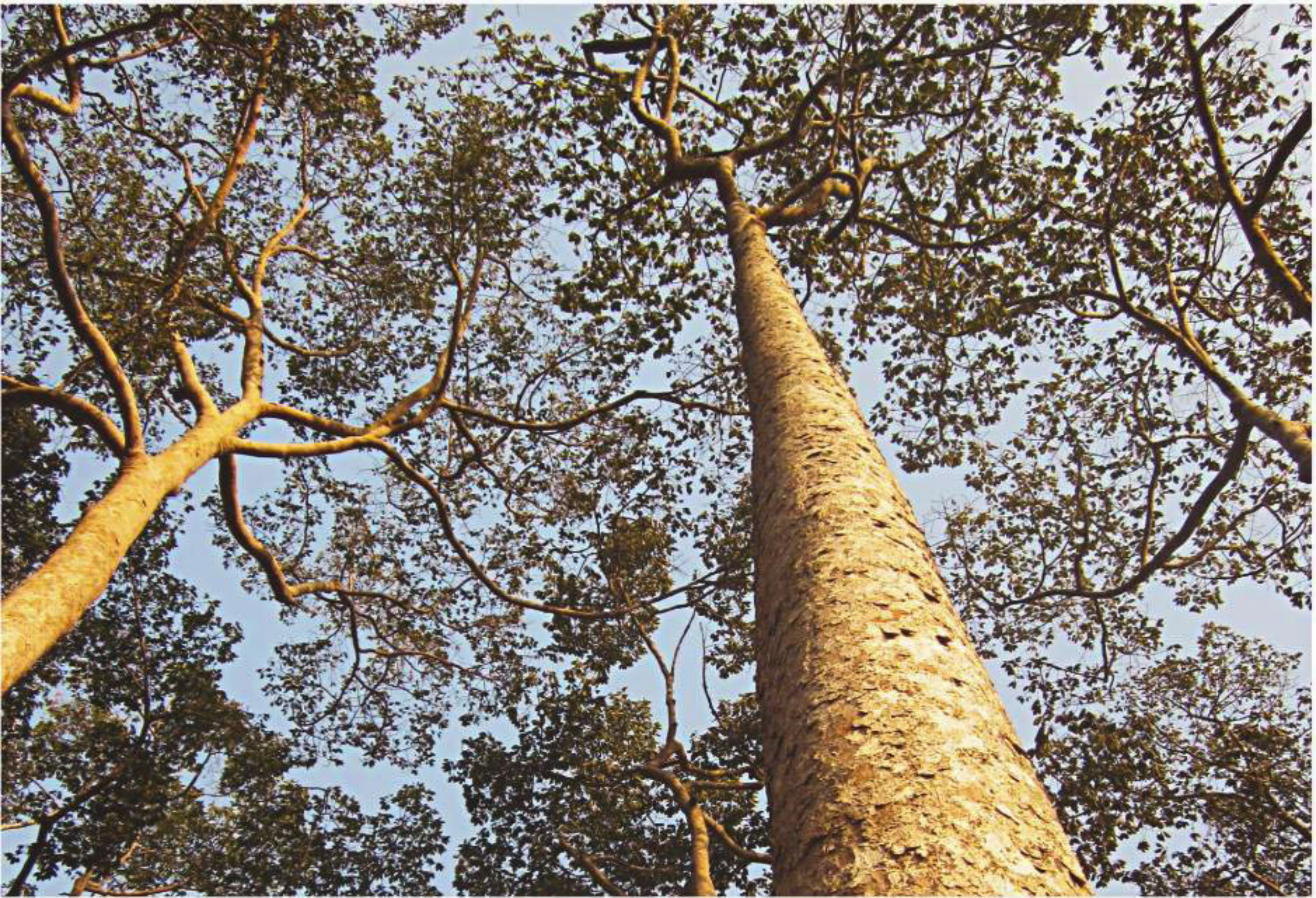


PHOTO: STAR

A towering garjan tree at Shilkhali in Teknaf under Cox's Bazar district.



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

A large number of people take bath in the sea water in Kuakata beach area yesterday as Eid holidaymakers continue thronging the picturesque tourist spot days after the festival.

Acid attack on schoolgirl in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A schoolgirl was seriously injured in an acid attack allegedly by a schoolboy at Baikula village in Sharsha upazila of Jessore district on Wednesday as the girl refused to have a relationship with him.

The girl, Sumaiya Khatun, 13, of Baikula village and a student of Class VII in Baikula High School, is now undergoing treatment at Jessore Medical College Hospital.

Milonuddin, father of the victim, alleged that Shamim Islam Baltu, 16, a student of Class IX in the same school, had been asking Sumaiya to enter into a relationship with him for the last one year.

"Disturbed by his behaviour, we complained to his parents, but to no effect," he said.

Shamim threw acid at Sumaiya when she was in her classroom at around 12:00 noon yesterday, leaving her injured, he added.

Shamim and his parents went into hiding soon after

Man killed over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A man was killed and his brother injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over a land dispute in Ghoraghat upazila of the district yesterday, police said.

The deceased was identified as Md Ariful Islam, 25, son of Bablu Mia of Bishainathpur village in the upazila.

Locals said there had been a longstanding dispute between Ariful Islam and Shahjahan Ali of the village over the ownership of 43 decimals of land.

A local arbitration team tried to solve the dispute, but failed, they added.

As Ariful and his workers went to the land in the morning, the hired goons of Shahjahan stabbed Ariful and his brother Masud Rana.

Locals took the duo to Rangpur Medical College Hospital where Ariful succumbed to his injuries at noon.

Student commits 'suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A youth allegedly committed suicide in Bagerhata Battala area of the district town yesterday morning.

The deceased is Sajib, 20, a second year student of Jasimuddin Institute of Science and Technology.

He had been suffering from severe stomach pain for long, said family members.

Movement if bid to grab temple land not stopped

C'nawabganj Hindus warn at press conference

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Leaders of Hindu community at a press conference in the town warned of strong movement if criminal activities against a temple of debottor (endowed) property in Shibganj upazila under the district are not stopped immediately.

Abdus Salam, a ward councillor of Shibganj municipality, also a local Awami League activist, has been trying to usurp 68 bighas of land of Shree Shree Bankobihari Debottar Estate Mandir at Shibganj, they alleged at the conference yesterday.

Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad and Bangladesh Hindu, Bouddha, Christian Oikyo

Parishad jointly arranged the press conference at Chapainawabganj Sadharan Pathagar.

Salam conducted an attack on the temple on January 17 and continued threatening the purohiths (priests) of the temple and leaders of local Hindu community, Mohit Kumar Da, president of Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad, said in his written statement at the conference.

Despite lodging of complaints with the police station several times the law enforcers did not take any action against Salam, he said.

The leaders warned of strong movement if criminal activity against the temple is not stopped immediately.

Anil Kumar Sarkar, central committee vice presi-

dent of Bangladesh Puja Udjapon Parishad, Babul Kumar Ghosh, general secretary of its district unit, Monoranjan Kumar, president of Chapainawabganj district unit of Bangladesh Hindu, Bouddha, Christian Oikyo Parishad, and Hindu leader Komol Kumar Tribedi were present at the conference.

Contacted, Abdus Salam claimed that he took lease of the land.

He also denied his involvement in criminal activities.

Moinul Islam, officer in charge of Shibganj police station, said, "There is a conflict regarding the possession of the property between two groups of Hindu communities. Police will take action as per law."



PHOTO: STAR

Such potholes mark the 27-kilometre rundown portion of Dhaka-Khulna highway from Jhenidah to Baro Bazar. The photo was taken from Mobarakganj Sugar Mills area in Kaliganj upazila under Jhenidah district.

Potholes make journey on Dhaka-Khulna road difficult

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Around 27 kilometers of Dhaka-Khulna highway from Jhenidah to Barobazar have been severely damaged due to faulty maintenance and downpour, much to the suffering of the commuters.

Roads and Highways Department invited tender for repair of the road in the first week of January, 2015, and the work was done in March.

While visiting the road on Monday, this correspondent saw around 500 big and small holes on the 27 kilometers stretch of the

highway.

Passengers and drivers say they travel on that portion of the road amid risk of accident.

Ferozul Haq, secretary of Khulna Motor Bus Owners Association, said road accidents have increased due to the bad condition of the road. Besides, they are incurring huge loss due to wear and tear of their vehicles caused by the uneven and damaged road, he added.

Hamid Ali, a truck driver of Kaliganj upazila, said they cannot see some potholes on the road as they are

filled with water.

Noor Islam, an easy-bike passenger, said he narrowly escaped on Sunday when the easy-bike he was on was hit from behind by a Khulna bound passenger bus at Mahtab Uddin degree college area in Kaliganj upazila.

Executive Engineer Md Rofikul Islam of Jhenidah Roads and Highways Department said numerous cracks have developed on the road due to the heavy rain that occurred in the month of June. If the weather is good we will start repairing the road.