



The ongoing flood destroys aman plants at a field of Kalmati village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, like many other places in the region.

FLOOD-HIT FIVE UPAZILAS OF LALMONIRHAT

Aman plants on 15,000 bighas of land damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Lalmonirhat

Aman plants on about 15,000 bighas of land have been damaged by flood water at 120 affected villages in five upazilas of the district.

Around 10 thousand flood-affected farmers of the villages have no means to overcome the losses caused by flood. They said they need immediate help from the government to recoup the losses.

"We have sought help from the government to buy aman seedlings from other

areas," said flood-affected farmer Nur Hossain, 55, of Kutirpar village in Aditmari upazila.

Mantaz Miah, 62, a farmer of Sindurna village in Hatibandha upazila said, "I cultivated aman on ten bighas of land, which has been damaged by flood water. I don't have aman seedlings to replant," he said, adding that his land may remain barren this season.

Saher Ali, 50, a farmer at Kalmati village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said aman plants on his five bighas of land have been

damaged by flood water. "Farmers living in river basin villages faced flood from mid-June to mid-July in the past, but this year the flood came late, doing great harm to agriculture," he said.

"Aman on my eight bighas of land have been damaged and there is no time to replant aman in the damaged fields," said farmer Nazrul Islam, 68, of the same village.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat, aman was cultivated on 83,618 hect-

ares of land in five upazilas of the district this year, but flood damaged plants on around 15,000 bighas of land.

The late flood has harmed agriculture, said Safayet Hossain, deputy director of DAE in Lalmonirhat. Some affected farmers have a stock of extra aman seedlings and they will transplant those in their fields, but most farmers will face shortage of seedlings.

Necessary steps will be taken to help the affected farmers to recoup their losses, he added.



Illegal construction of a multi-storied building goes on after filling up a portion of a century-old pond on a government land at Sowaetpur village in Phulbaria upazila under Mymensingh district.

Grabbers building structures on govt pond in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

Komor Dighi, a century-old government owned pond at village Sowaetpur in Phulbaria upazila of the district is allegedly being grabbed by influential quarters.

The pond was dug on 2.51 acres of land during the British regime by the then zamindars of Muktagacha, local sources said.

The authorities concerned leased the pond for a three-year term every year. This year, they leased it to Naugaoan Matshajibi Samabaya Samity of

Phulbaria, sources said.

Local people alleged that Harun-ur-Rashid, a corrugated iron sheet businessman of Sowaetpur, started construction of a multi-storied building for business purposes after filling up a portion of the pond several months ago, but the authorities concerned have not taken any steps to stop the illegal construction of the building.

Harun's brother Mukbul Hossain and one Habi Khan have also erected four tinsheds on a portion of the pond. The three have already grabbed around

seven decimals of the pond, locals said.

The upazila administration was recently informed about the grabbing of the pond. It has asked the grabber, Harun, to stop the construction of his multi-storied building, said Afroza Akhter, Assistant Commissioner (Land) of Phulbaria. But the construction work is still going on, it was alleged.

"We sent an application to the deputy commissioner of Mymensingh, seeking permission to evict the grabbers. We will serve eviction notice on the grabbers after getting permis-

sion," said the land official.

If the vested quarters defy the eviction notice and do not stop grabbing of the pond, the local administration will take punitive measures against them, the official added.

Contacted, Harun-ur-Rashid said he did not grab the pond's land and is constructing the building on his own land. He added that he has the necessary documents in support of his claim.

Banani Biswas, upazila nirbahi officer of Phulbaria, said stern action will be taken against the grabbers.

Historic Atia Mosque risks being lost for lack of care

MIRZA SHAKIL WITH
ANDREW EAGLE

It is in the distant past that the landlord of Atia, Said Khan Panee, set his mind to the task of building a mosque on the bank of the Louhajang River in Tangail's Delduar upazila. According to Department of Archaeology and local historians he engaged the best masons and artisans for the task, with construction beginning in 1609.

Perhaps he wanted to demonstrate his loyalty to God. Perhaps he wanted fine surroundings in which the residents of his Atia Pargana estate, granted as a gift by the Mughal emperor Jahangir at the start of the seventeenth century, could pray.

Whatever his precise thinking was, following generations were left with an architectural heritage that has the ability to join somehow those long ago days to the modern era. It's an archaeological site of national significance.

The site is adjacent to the shrine of Hazrat Shah Shah who came from Kashmir to Atia in about 1508 along with 49 followers to preach Islam in the region, perhaps why Panee determined to locate the mosque where it is. That the graves of Shah and his followers are nearby only adds to Atia Mosque's historical importance.

Moreover, the terracotta plaques adorning the mosque's nine-foot walls bear witness in their intricate patterns to the quality of craftsmanship available in an earlier Bengal.

But the 406 year old mosque is suffering from lack of maintenance, and the plaques these days are discoloured and fading; and some are damaged.

"Many plaques are worn," says the current Imam of the mosque, Farid Ahmed. "Parts of its unique decoration are falling off and water is leaking on the top of the structure."

With all the care Panee

ensured was taken to bring to the mosque longevity and splendour, it's in the current era that the fruits of his efforts may be sadly lost.

It's a sorry fate to befall a mosque which has been cared for through several centuries. In 1800 the building was badly damaged by a large earthquake, but in 1837 it was restored thanks to Rowshan Khatoon Chowdhurani, a female merchant from Delhi. The landlord of Delduar, Abu Ahmed Guznavi Khan, with the cooperation of Wajed Ali Khan Panni and other landlords of Atia repaired it again in 1909.

In 1978 the historic mosque came under the archaeology department's responsibility. They installed a signboard that says it is government property and that legal actions will be taken against anyone harming the mosque. The greatest harm however is that no initiative to restore or protect the building has been forthcoming.

"It's our heritage," says M o h a m m a d

Babuluzzaman, current chairman of Atia union parishad. "Local people, together with the local administration, have taken steps on several occasions to protect the site. But the Department of Archaeology always discourages us."

Although the mosque was partially repaired twice, in 2000 and 2009, more significant repair work is urgently required, says the mosque's caretaker Monirul Haque.

"After sending reports, senior Department of Archaeology officials visited the mosque about six months ago to examine the structure," Haque says, "And they assured us repair work would begin by this year." Yet there is no sign of activity.

Indeed the surrounding land that has traditionally constituted the mosque grounds is also at risk. Originally 115 decimals of land were donated to be held in perpetual trust for mosque use, says Mashud-ur-Rahman, secretary of the Atia Mosque Committee.

This land includes 15 decimals for the mosque, 80 decimals for the pond in front of the mosque and a further 20 decimals of adjacent land.

However, apart from the 15 decimals of the mosque building, the remaining 100 decimals were incorrectly recorded as government land during the last survey. This change brings to a significant portion of the mosque grounds the risk of being leased for other purpose.

"We hope the authorities concerned will take the initiative to record the land in the name of the mosque," says Mashud-ur-Rahman, "such that it cannot be leased out."

In Atia Mosque, Said Khan Panee bequeathed to the world architectural treasure which, once destroyed, can never be truly replicated. It is to be hoped that the current administration will properly care for his gift to the people of Atia and Bangladesh, just as over the centuries, previous generations have.



Impressively ornamented Atia mosque, a four-century-old structure in Delduar upazila under Tangail district, is heading towards ruination amid utter neglect as the archaeology department, custodian of the heritage site, seems hardly aware of its responsibility.

Teacher held on rape charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Patuakhali

Police arrested a primary schoolteacher on charge of raping a female student of Class V in Patuakhali sadar upazila on Wednesday.

The accused is Md Anwar Hossain, acting headmaster of Cokmahal Government Primary School in Kamapur union under the upazila.

Locals and a school committee sources said Anwar Hossain raped the girl several times and she became pregnant four months ago. On Tuesday, he took the girl to Patuakhali town for abortion.

On getting information about the matter, guardians and members of the managing committee of the school went to the town and caught Anwar Hossain.

Over 100 guardians and villagers gave statements to assistant upazila education officers Md Nazrul Islam and Ripon Kumar in the presence of the alleged rapist, Anwar Hossain.

Arif Hossain, a local youth, said a medical check-up at a diagnostic centre in Patuakhali town showed that the victim was 4 months and 15 days pregnant.

Md Alauddin Mridha, chairman of the managing committee of the school, said "I have requested the upazila education officer to take necessary action against the teacher."

The education officer said they will submit a report to the higher authority soon.

Refuting the allegation, Md Anwar Hossain said a group had brought the allegation because of a dispute over forming the school management committee.

Police said they arrested the teacher following a complaint filed by the victim.

Contractor, his men beat dean of Kazi Nazrul univ

Teachers, students form human chain, demand arrest of the attackers by 24 hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

Teachers and students of Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University (JKKNIU) in Trishal upazila under the district formed a human chain on the campus yesterday demanding arrest of the contractor and his men who assaulted a teacher of the university on Wednesday night.

Condemning the attack, teachers, students and employees of the university also observed a daylong strike on the campus yesterday.

Tariqul Hasan Tareq, a contractor of Haider Construction in Dhaka, and his accomplices mercilessly beat Dr Subrata Kumar Dey, dean of Business Administration Faculty of

JKKNIU, on Ram Babu Road in Mymensingh town around 8:30pm Wednesday, said Md Hafizur Rahman, deputy director of public relations of the university.

Dr Dey, also director of Finance and Accounts Department of the university, was on way to his residence in the town that time.

Hearing his scream, locals rushed to the spot, rescued him and took him to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where he is undergoing treatment.

Condemning the attack on the teacher, the speakers at the human chain gave a 24-hour ultimatum to the authorities concerned to arrest the perpetrators.

Earlier, they brought out a protest procession wearing

black badges.

Prof Dr Mohit Ul Alam, vice-chancellor of the university, joined the programme, among others.

"Contractor Tareq went to the university Wednesday noon and demanded his security money back. As Dr Dey said the bill was yet to be processed, Tareq allegedly misbehaved with him and left the campus," said Md Nazrul Islam, deputy director of Finance and Accounts Department of the university.

A case was lodged with Kotwali Police Station against 10/15 people including Tareq on Wednesday night and Drives are on to arrest the culprits soon, said Md Kamrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.



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