



A farmer at Nageswarbari village in Thakurgaon's Baliadangi upazila shows some damaged boro saplings as a number of farmers in the district have fallen in trouble after the herbicides they used to protect their cropland from harmful weeds started turning the saplings reddish and killing them.

PHOTO: STAR

## Three rubber dams unused for four years in Lalmonirhat

Farmers deprived of getting irrigation

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Rubber dams were built over three rivers in three upazilas of the district four years ago, but they have not been put into operation as yet.

Executive Engineer of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Lalmonirhat Al-Amin Khan said three rubber dams have been constructed in the district at a cost of Tk 30.84 crores. The construction was funded jointly by Asian Development Bank and the government.

The dams will supply water to 1,550 hectares of land in three upazilas, he added.

The dam over Ratnai river at Shalmara village in Aditmari upazila is 30 metres long, the one over Saniyazan river at Gaddimari village in Hatibandha upazila is 90 metres long, and the one over the Dharla river at Bangkanda village in Patgram upazila is 130 metres long.

Farmer Mozammel Haque, 50, of Saniyazan village in Hatibandha upazila said they do not know when the dam over the river Saniyazan will start supplying irrigation water.



This 130-metre-long rubber dam on the Dharla river in Patgram upazila has been lying inoperative since construction four years ago. PHOTO: STAR

"Due to lack of water we cannot grow paddy on our lands," he added.

Sultan Hossain, 62, of Bangkanda village in Patgram upazila said farmers were prepared to cultivate IRRI-boro during the current season as they expected to get water from the dam over the Dharla river, but it has not come into operation.

Hatibandha Upazila Engineer of

LGED Ajoy Kumar said the dam over the river Saniyazan will come into operation in the next season after the connecting pipeline is installed by the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation.

Hatibandha Upazila Agriculture Officer Anowar Hossain said some farmers downstream of the rubber dam are farming crops on the river bed, so they do not want the dam to be in

operation. "We are talking with the farmers on both sides to solve the problem. The dam will be in operation very soon," he added.

Patgram Upazila Agriculture Officer Noor Alam said the dam over the Dharla river has not been opened as farmers have cultivated tobacco and maize instead of paddy. "We are encouraging farmers to grow paddy so that we can use the rubber dam," he added.

Al-Amin Khan said the three dams have been constructed according to the plan and design, and under the direction of experts. LGED only implemented the construction of the infrastructure, which will be used by the agriculture department, he added.

Deputy Director of Lalmonirhat Department of Agriculture Extension Bidubhushon Roy said he does not know about operation of the dams as he has joined recently. The upazila agriculture officers will take steps in this regard, he added.

Farmers urged the authorities concerned to take steps to operate the dams for ensuring supply of irrigation water for growing crops, especially paddy, during the dry season.

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## No headmasters in 293 Naogaon primary schools

Posts of 704 assistant teachers remain vacant for long

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

Teaching at primary schools in many upazilas of Naogaon is being hampered badly as the headmaster posts of 293 schools and posts of assistant teachers in 704 schools have been lying vacant for long.

There are 1,219 primary schools in 11 upazilas of the district, according to the district Primary Education Department officials.

Headmaster posts of 32 schools in Naogaon Sadar upazila, 34 in Mohadepur, 29 in Niamatpur, 28 in Patnitola, 22 in Dhamoirhat, 20 in Sapahar, 20 in Porsha, 23 in Raninagar, 22 in Atrai, 27 in Badalgachhi and 36 in Manda are vacant.

The posts of assistant teachers are vacant in 95 schools in Niamatpur upazila, 65 in Patnitola, 80 in Naogaon Sadar, 68 in Mohadepur, 48 in Dhamoirhat, 54 in Sapahar, 45 in Porsha, 65 in Raninagar, 54 in Atrai, 55 in Badalgachhi and 75 in Manda.

Teachers said they are burdened with the headmasters' official work along with taking classes, which hampers teaching, adding that the acting headmasters do not get any additional payment.

The headmaster post of Panihar Government Primary School in Niamatpur upazila fell vacant in 2014. Ismail Hossain, an assistant teacher, has been made acting headmaster of the school. His school has four teachers against seven posts, and 296 students.

Jannatun Ferdous, an assistant teacher and acting headmaster of Khosalpur Siddiqui Government Primary School in Mohadepur upazila, said there are only three teachers in her school.

Primary Education Officer in Naogaon AKM Amirul Islam said the vacant headmasters' and teachers' posts will be filled within this year.

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# 'Herbicide stunts boro saplings' growth'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Over 100 farmers of several villages in Baliadangi upazila of the district have fallen in deep trouble as the herbicides they used in their fields for controlling weeds are stunting the growth of the boro saplings and killing them.

Farmers in Khochabari, Nageswari, Dangapara, Choutaki and Mechni villages said they applied herbicides Almix 20 W, Metsulfuron Methyl and Chlorimuron manufactured by Petrochem Agro Industries Ltd in their boro fields.

Later, the boro seedlings turned reddish and died, they said, adding that the growth of the plants stopped due to the use of herbicides.

Charol Union Parishad Chairman Dilip Kumar Chatterjee told this correspondent that boro plants on over 100 acres of land may be damaged due to application of the herbicides.

Mosharul Islam, an affected farmer of Mechni village, said he applied herbicides on his boro field, but the

plants stayed the same size as they were about a month ago.

Robin Roy of Nageswarbari village said he applied Almix 20 W about twenty days ago, but the plants have stopped growing.

During a visit there on Sunday, this correspondent saw that the boro seedlings on the affected fields were not growing, while those in the adjacent fields where the herbicide was not applied were growing well.

Bipul Nath of Choutaki village said they informed the officials of the company about the matter through the local dealer. The officials advised them to use boron and zinc to revitalise the damaged field, but it did not have any effect.

Fertiliser and pesticide trader Nazim Uddin said he bought the herbicide from Giant Traders in Lahiria Hati.

Dealer of Petrochem Agro Industries Ltd Alamgir Hossain said the problem arose as the farmers did not use the proper dose of the herbicide.

cide.

Regional Manager of the company Golam Sarwar said Almix 20 W is being used for a long time on crop fields, but such a problem had not been reported earlier.

Sarwar said difference in acidity and alkalinity and lack of organic components in the soil could be the cause for the problem, adding that they are providing fertiliser and medicine free of cost to the affected farmers to maintain the company's reputation. The boro plants will recover soon, he hoped.

Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension Maududul Islam said different herbicides have to be applied for different crops. Almix 20 W is suggested for pani kochu (taro) and mutha grass, he said, adding that farmers might apply it on the advice of pesticide sellers.

"If the boro plants do not recover, we will take steps to arrange compensation for the affected farmers," Sarwar said.

## CHT film fest begins today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A three-day CHT film festival will begin in the district today.

"Hijek Felim" an organisation of CHT film making platform, organised the festival.

Supported by Tarek Masud Memorial Trust, Supporting People and Re-building Communities (SPARC) and Rangabel Media, the program will be held at Rangamati Cultural Institute around 4:30pm.

Chakma Circle chief Raja Debasish Roy is expected to attend the festival as special guest.

Adit Dewan, director of the film festival, said they invited CHT filmmakers at the festival to show their talents at the platform through film making.

"In Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), most of the filmmakers cannot show their work skills due to lack of opportunities. So, we arranged the festival for them," he said.

## Stalking stops her schooling

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A 13-year-old JSC examinee has stopped going to school for the last couple of months due to frequent life threat from two local stalkers.

Family members questioned the law enforcers' role as they are yet to arrest the stalkers while they are roaming freely in the town.

Meanwhile, Emdad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station, said they are trying to arrest the youths by deploying two police officers in the area.

The accused are Robin, 18, son of Meruj Hossain, and Shuvechchha, 19, son of Bablu Mia of Uttar Chelopara area in the town.

The eighth grader of Katnarpura Central Girls' School stopped going to school for over 45 days due to constant stalking on her way to the institution.

On February 25, the girl went to school, and on her way back home the duo threatened her with sharp weapons. They also threatened to burn her face with acid, alleged family members.

Victim's grandfather Afzal Hossain said the stalkers also threatened her family members, showing them sharp weapons, in broad daylight.

"Although we informed police about the matter several times, they are yet to take any action against the stalkers, who are moving freely in the area," Afzal said.

ASP Sonatan Chakrabarty said they will take action against the accused within 24 hours.

## 3 die in building collapse

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

At least three men were killed and another was injured as an under-construction building collapsed in College Gate area of the district yesterday.

The deceased were Md Shamsul Alam, 45, the house owner, and two construction workers- Kalu Mia, 34, and Md Hanif, 32.

The injured is construction worker Md Faruk, 40, said Md Rashid, officer-in-charge of Rangamati Police Station.

Faruk, 40, was admitted to Rangamati General Hospital, said the OC.

Akei Prue Chodhury, on duty doctor of the

hospital, confirmed the death of the three.

Police and witnesses said when the three labourers were working to build the wall of the house, earth collapsed from the nearby hill.

At that time the house owner was present there to look after the construction work.

Samsul, Kalu and Hanif died on the spot during the incident, said locals.

On information, fire fighters and members of the army and police rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies.

Md Golam Mostofa, deputy director of Rangamati Fire Service and Civil Defence, said the building collapsed as they were cutting a hill to construct the wall.

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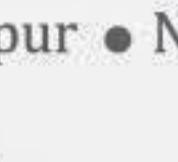
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