

Boro farmers opt for other crops as fair price denied

19,000 hectares in 5 northern districts give way to more profitable crops in 2 years

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Boro cultivation area in five northern districts of Rangpur agriculture region has been decreasing for the last few years, raising concern about the country's staple food.

Admitting the matter, Additional Director (AD) of the Rangpur regional Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Shah Alam said it is happening as they advise farmers to reduce irrigation-based boro cultivation area and go for cultivation of other crops as the region's underground water layer is falling alarmingly every year.

According to the information provided by regional DAE, boro paddy is being cultivated on 5,02,283 hectares of land in Rangpur, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat this year.

The cultivation area of boro was 5,21,283 hectares in 2015, while it was 5,11,686 hectares last year.

On the other hand, potato cultivation area increased by 10,357 hectares in the last two years -- from 90,255 hectares in 2015 to 1,00,612 hectares in 2017.

Maize cultivation area has also risen in the last two years -- from 65,200 hectares in 2015 to 76,424 hectares this year.

Farmer Monwar Hossain of Ketokibari village in Domar upazila of the district said, "I cultivated potato on four acres of land this year, and transplanted boro on three acres and jute on one acre, though I cultivated boro on all my lands in previous years."

Amzad Hossain, a farmer of Burihat village in Gongachara village of Rangpur said, "I will incur loss in

cultivating boro as production cost for a maund of paddy is Tk 750 to Tk 800, but I get Tk 500 to Tk 600 when I want to sell."

Farmers Golam Mostofa, Mosirat Fakir and Shamsul Islam of Sadar upazila said that they opted for cultivation of other crops as those are profitable.

President of the district unit of Krishak Samity Dreedam Das said although the government fixed purchasing rate of a maund paddy at Tk 800, farmers are being deprived of it.

"We encourage farmers to cultivate multiple crops other than irrigation-based boro paddy as water layer in the region is falling. Moreover, farmers are benefited by cultivating potato, maize, mustard seeds and wheat as they are getting more profit compared to boro," said DAE AD Shah Alam.



A good portion of the agricultural lands at Shalmara village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila now sees wheat and maize along with boro, which was the lone crop grown in the area only a few years ago.

PHOTO: STAR

Happy abode for landless people

40 families get houses at cluster village in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Landless people of Sicharpara village and surrounding areas under Sonatola upazila of the district are delighted to get houses in the newly built cluster village.

The village was built in two years under Climate Victim Rehabilitation Project (CVRP) of the ministry of land. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated it on February 26 this year and 40 landless families started living in the allocated houses from the beginning of this month, headed.

The cluster village was built on 8.34 acres of land in the char areas of Bangalee and Shukdaha rivers at Khodadil village in Jorgaca union at a cost of Tk 63.72 lakh, Upazila Project Implementation

Officer (PIO) Ziaur Rahman said.

Each house stands on four decimals of land and has a living room, kitchen, sanitary latrine and stove, the PIO said, adding that 40 families share one tubewell and a three-bigha pond. A cooperative has also been formed by the residents, the PIO added.

Beneficiaries Joygun Bewa, 55, and Jobeda Begum, 45, of Velurpara, Shamsul Haque, 55, Kona Begum, 45, of Goshaihari village, Azadul Mondal, 27, of Thakurpara village, Abdur Rashid Mondal, 30, of Khodadil village under the upazila, said they had been living on others' lands or with relatives, adding that the government has made them free by giving them the houses and other facilities.

Jorgaca union parishad Chairman Rostom Ali Mondal said the government has taken an initiative to ensure housing for the landless and erosion-hit people of the chars in the Jamuna and Bangali rivers under the upazila. The people urged the authorities concerned to build more cluster villages for the remaining landless people.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shakila Dil Hasin, also the president of the project, said residents of the cluster village can breed cattle, chicken and fish there.

Local lawmaker Abdul Mannan said it is a pledge of the present government to ensure housing for all, and it has spent more than Tk 1 crore for building two more cluster villages for 60 landless families in the same upazila.



This recently inaugurated cluster village at Sicharpara village in Bogra provides a decent dwelling for 40 families who earlier became homeless and landless due to erosion by the Jamuna and Bangali rivers.

PHOTO: STAR

Lone teacher struggles to manage govt primary school

RABIUL HASAN with ANDREW EAGLE

Lessons to plan, papers to mark, administrative tasks that seem without end: any school teacher knows how much there is to do, outside classroom hours. But spare a thought for Anas Saren, the acting headmaster and lone teacher of Jalahar Government Primary School in Chapainawabganj sadar upazila. He teaches all seventy of the school's students, in different years, in all subjects. The school with a total of five designated employment posts, he runs single-handedly.

"It's not possible for one teacher to take all the classes in two shifts and complete all the other work of the institution," he says. "The students are deprived of a good education due to the lack of teachers."

Two assistant teachers used to teach the students but one has been on maternity leave since last November

and the other left the school, established in 2013 under a project as one of 1,500 new primary schools in villages without schools, in January.

"I come to school every day and read textbooks on my own," says Sumitra Tudu, a student of class four.

"Our teacher does not regularly attend all classes so we cannot study properly," says Sanjoni Hemrom, also in class four.

Jalahar is a predominantly Santhal community thirteen kilometres from the district town. When the school first commenced academic activities in January 2014, there were 90 students. "The long-term teacher shortage might be the cause for students to discontinue their study," says Anas, who was first deputed to the school from Kendul Government Primary School in August last year.

Several guardians agreed that their children are losing interest in going to school because classes are not held

regularly. They urged the authorities to appoint enough teachers to facilitate the proper education of their children.

"It's not as though we can tutor our children at home either," says one guardian Alam Tudu, who like many of the area's farm workers never had the opportunity to learn to read.

In the meantime Anas does as best he can. Though not trained in all subjects he teaches them, and the school's students are grateful for his efforts despite their frustration that their education is being stifled by the lack of teachers.

According to the upazila's primary education office, three other schools, Chor Johorpur, Narayanpur Rustom Monder Tola and Ghone Narayanpur government primary schools, face similar staffing problems. Upazila primary education officer Shamim Ahmed Khan says new teachers will be appointed to the schools within a short time.



Acting headmaster Anas Saren serves as the lone teacher, managing office work as well as lessons of different classes at Jalahar Government Primary School in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Man kills mother, surrenders to police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A woman was beaten to death allegedly by her son at Sonapur village in Manda upazila of Naogaon on Friday night.

Accused son Sharifuddin, 35, later surrendered to Manda Police Station.

The deceased was Aklima Begum, 55, wife of late Gias Uddin of the village.

Police and locals said Sharifuddin started quarrelling with his mother since she got some money by selling a tree.

As Aklima refused to give the money, Sharifuddin beat up her, leaving her dead on the spot. The incident took place when she was asleep.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the body, Officer-in-Charge Anisur Rahman said, adding that a murder case was filed in this connection.

The body was later sent to Naogaon General Hospital morgue for autopsy, said the police official.

BY-ELECTION IN SUNDARGANJ Candidates in hectic campaign as poll nears

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Candidates are moving door to door seeking votes ahead of March 21 by-election to Gaibandha-1 constituency (Sundarganj).

The post was declared vacant after the murder of ruling party lawmaker Manzurul Islam Liton on December 31 last year.

A total of seven aspirants have filed nomination papers to contest the poll.

The candidates are Golam Mostafa Ahmed of Awami League, barrister Shamim Haider Patwari of Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad), Waheduzzaman Sarkar Badsha of JP (Monju), Mohammed Ali Pramanik of Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Shariful Islam of Gano Front, Zia Zaman Khan of NPP and independent candidate Mostafa Mohsin Sardar.

Posters and banners of respective candidates are seen hanging at different important places in Sundarganj upazila, said locals.

The main contestant, upazila AL secretary Golam Mostafa Ahmed, was defeated in 1991 poll. He was also defeated in the upazila parishad election in 2014.

Shamim Hyder Patwari, adviser of law and judiciary affairs of party Chairman HM Ershad and president of upazila JP, is also a strong candidate.

It was the JP's seat for long years, but they lost it in 2008 and 2014. So, the supporters of JP are campaigning heart and soul to regain the seat.

Votes of Jamaat supporters would play a vital role in the polls. The aspirants are trying to convince Jamaat voters for winning the race, said local people.

Involvement of former JP lawmaker Abdul Kader Khan in Liton murder may have a negative impact against the JP candidate, they said.

Shamim Haider Patwari, however, denied it saying that former lawmaker Abdul Kader Khan is no longer with Jatiya Party since 2014, even he has no primary membership in JP and so, the evil act conducted by Kader Khan is totally his personal matter.

BNP led 20-party alliance did not set any candidate in the upcoming by-election, as they did not get any green signal from the party high-ups.

SSC examinee raped, one arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

An SSC examinee was raped allegedly by her stalker at Pashchim Nawdabash village in Hatibandha upazila on Friday.

Police arrested one Sohel Rana, 20, aide of alleged rapist Rubel Islam, 21, of Doikhowa village from the spot.

Rubel used to stalk the girl on her way to school, said family members.

Police said when the girl went out of her house for using toilet at night, Rubel along with his two aides -- Sohel and Ziaur Islam, 22, -- picked her up from the courtyard and took her to a nearby maize field. Rubel raped her there.

Hearing the hue and cry, locals rushed to the spot, rescued the girl and caught Sohel. However, his two aides managed to flee the scene. Sohel was later handed over to police.

The victim was sent to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital for medical test, said Rezaul Karim, officer-in-charge of Hatibandha Police Station.

The arrestee was produced before a court which sent him to jail yesterday, said the OC.

Speech impaired boy tortured, hospitalised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

An eight-year-old speech and hearing impaired boy was brutally beaten, allegedly for stealing, in Saptibari Bazar at Saptibari village in Aditmari upazila of the district on Friday.

The victim Atul Chandra Roy, 8, son of Manik Chandra Roy of Kisamot Chongadar village of Harati union, is a Class IV student at Kisamot Chongadara Government Primary School.

Atul was standing in front of a grocery shop when its owner Jamil Hossain caught and beat him him mercilessly, suspecting him to be a thief, said locals who admitted him to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital.

Manik said "My son never stole anything," adding that he will lodge a case in this regard after Atul's treatment.

Jamil claimed that he did not beat Atul.

The boy is not out of danger, Resident Medical Officer of the hospital Dr Azmal Haque said.

OC of Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station Rafiqul Islam said they will take action if a case is lodged in this regard.



Only the main stems of mahogany saplings keep standing after criminals torch this plantation at Chandipur village in Shailakupa upazila under Jhenidah early Friday.

30,000 mahogany saplings torched in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Unidentified people torched 30,000 saplings of mahogany trees, worth around Tk 10 lakh, at Chandipur village field under Shailakupa upazila of the district on Friday.

The owners of the saplings are Golam Sarwar and his brother Shariful Islam of the village.

Sarwar said they had been producing saplings of mahogany in two nurseries at the

village field for long, adding that their rival group in the village torched the nurseries due to enmity. Sarwar and Shariful demanded exemplary punishment of the culprits.

Shariful filed a case in connection with the incident with Shailakupa Police Station.

Officer-in-Charge of the police station Tarikul Islam said he has received a written allegation. After investigation he will take stern action in this regard, he added.

Beggar's 'adopted' girl gets govt grant

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Physically challenged Rupbani, 5, who was rescued from a dustbin near Saidpur Railway Station by childless beggar woman Saleha, 50, finally got a disabled allowance card of the government's social welfare department yesterday.

Upazila Social Welfare Officer in Saidpur Nusrat Fatima handed over the card to Rupbani at the railway station, where she lives with Saleha, in presence of local elites

and journalists.

An article regarding the life of Rupbani and Saleha, under the title 'Saleha, a symbol of humanity,' was published in the Country page of The Daily Star on March 15.

Nusrat said she allocated the card at the directive of the higher authority.

After getting the card for Rupbani, Saleha expressed gratitude to all who helped her in getting the needed support. She added that now it would be easier for her to bring up Rupbani with the allowance money.