

Rain upsets vegetable seed growers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Untimely and incessant rain throughout this month is worrying vegetable seed producers in two upazilas as their seedbeds are being attacked by pests, which may lead to a fall in seed production this year.

An official of the Department of Agriculture Extension said a large number of farmers are involved in producing seeds of bitter melon, tomato, brinjal, chilli and cauliflower in 15 villages under two upazilas.

Around 550 bighas of land have been prepared in these villages for producing vegetable seeds this year, while it was 480 bighas last year, the official said.

Farmers said they prepare the seedbeds in January and harvest the seeds in April-May. They need to spray pesticide from mid-March to mid-April, but cannot do so due to incessant rain.

Nazir Hossain, 48, of Fulgachh village in Lalmonirhat Sadar said he has prepared 60 decimals of land for producing tomato seeds with the target of producing 30 kg of seed as he got 20 kg from 40 decimals last year. "Last year, I sold tomato seeds to a seed company for Tk 10,000 per kg," he said,

adding that he has already spent Tk 1.38 lakh for producing seeds on 60 decimals this year. "I'm very much concerned that I will not get expected seed production due to pest attack," he added.

Hazrat Ali, 45, of Karnapur village said they need to spend Tk 4,000 for producing brinjal seeds on one decimal of land. "We can produce 4 kg of brinjal seeds from one decimal of land, and sell them at Tk 3,000 per kg to a seed company," he said, adding that he has spent Tk 80,000 for producing brinjal seeds on 20 decimals of land this season. "I am facing problems spraying pesticide on the seedbeds due to untimely rain this year, but it is essential to protect the seedbeds from pest attack," he said.

Atul Chandra Roy, 38, a seed producer at Durakuti village said they never had rain during the Bangla month of Chaitra before, but it is different this year and it is having a very bad impact on seed production. "We are still hoping to earn profit in spite of the untimely rain, but if there is a hailstorm it will dash our expectation," he added.

Upazila Agriculture Office Enamul Haque said they are advising farmers to use polythene covers to protect the seedbeds from rainfall after spraying pesticide.



A woman plucks tomatoes, grown mostly for seeds, a bit earlier, as pests started attacking vegetable seedbeds amid unusual rain for weeks. The photo was taken from Fulgachh village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. PHOTO: STAR

ROOPPUR NUCLEAR PLANT Influential people stop earth filling

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Local influential people allegedly backed by the ruling party men have stopped the earth filling work by a local company at Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (RNPP) site in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila on Wednesday.

On April 19, they took away a dredger of the sub-contractor Civil Engineers Limited when they went to the site with 15 dredgers, said Marzid Harun, project coordinator of the company.

The dredger was later seized by the law enforcers on Wednesday, he said.

Marzid also lodged a complaint with Ishwardi Police Station in connecting with the incident.

Officer-in-Charge Abdul Hai of Ishwardi Police Station said both the sub-contractor and a group of local influential people claimed to have got the sub-contract of the earth filling work.

Ruhul Kuddus, in-charge of RNPP site office, said Russian company Atomstroyexport is operating the earth filling and site development work there.

The Russian company later appointed a number of local sub-contractors that led to the dispute among them, Ruhul said.

We, however, did not receive any complaint from Atomstroyexport in this regard yet, Ruhul added.

Engineer found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Fariapur

The body of a man was found floating in the Madhumati river at Char Jajira area under Kashiani upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased, Md Delwar Hossain, 59, was an assistant engineer of the Public Works Department (PWD) in Narail. He lived in Dhaka with his family. He hailed from Comilla.

Sub-Assistant Engineer Md Ibrahim said, "Delwar's family lives in Dhaka often, so he went there. He was going to Dhaka on Tuesday night. We did not hear anything from him after that."

Delwar's daughter Sayma Delwar said, "My father's mobile phone was switched off for the last two days."

OC of Kashiani Police Station, AKM Ali Nur said, "Police recovered a body from the river and identified him from an identity card in his pocket."

Rejoinder and our reply

Syed Abdul Aziz, principal of Panchagarh Government Technical School and College, sent a rejoinder of the report titled 'Principal's residence at lab' published in The Daily Star on April 12.

"The ground floor of the building (Surovi Bhaban) has been renovated as Career Guidance and Employment Centre which is being used for the purpose. The first floor is now being developed as guest rooms as per the authority's directions," the rejoinder said.

There is no principal's residence in the campus, it added.

Regarding keeping the portraits of Bangabandhu and Rabindranath Tagore on the floor, the principal said that those were not the official portraits. Those were drawn by students on the occasion of an innovation fair.

The official portraits of the father of nation and the prime minister were hung on the wall above the principal's chair at his office, the protest letter said.

OUR REPLY

This correspondent visited the college following complaints from the sources of the institution regarding the anomalies.

The report was prepared as per statements of the institution's teachers and staff and officials of Education Engineering Department.

This correspondent has enough evidence including video footages of conversation with the principal and phone conversation with officials of Education Engineering Department, which proves that the principal is living in Surovi Bhaban.

Earlier, the ground floor of the building was used as drawing lab. After completion of its first floor in the middle of 2014, it was supposed to be used as classrooms.

But the principal started residing on the first floor of Surovi Bhaban, so the students have to attend drawing classes at different rooms, depending on vacancy.

This correspondent himself saw no signs of its use as guest house.

Rather, there was residential arrangement of the principal there (video shows it).

Although he is using the floor as his living quarters he does not pay any rent to the government. Instead, he submits a declaration every month stating that he does not live in any government building.

Regarding the portraits of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Nobel laureate poet Rabindranath Tagore, which were kept on the floor, the report by this correspondent did not say whether those were official portraits.



TEACHER'S CRUELTY ON KID: Samiur Rahman Samin, 11, a Class VI student of Chandpur Hasan Ali Government High School got his right elbow bone fractured as a school teacher beat him mercilessly with a duster as punishment for his talking with a fellow in the class on April 19. Chandpur Deputy Commissioner Md Abdus Sabur Mondol said he has ordered investigation for action against the alleged perpetrator. PHOTO: STAR



Khumuria Government Primary School in Pirojpur town has hardly any open space for the students' free movement, let alone games and sports. Most other primary schools in the municipality area are in the same boat. PHOTO: STAR

Children denied playing facilities at school

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Children of most of the government primary schools in Pirojpur are deprived of sports and recreation facilities due to lack of sufficient playgrounds or open spaces.

"We do not get any chance of playing before or after school hours as there is no playground in our school," said Shakib, a Class V student at Mukterkathi Government Primary School in Pirojpur Sadar municipality.

Like Shakib, most of the primary school kids pass their leisure playing indoor games like Ludu or Carom as the do not have outdoor games facilities in schools due to absence of fields.

"We come here about half an hour before the class starts, but we cannot go for any outdoor games as instead of a playground there is a pond in front of our schoolhouse," said Class V student Swarna of the same institution.

"After completing schooling around 4:00pm we do not get enough time for playing as we have to attend coaching classes after school hours," said Shompa Mondal, a Class IV student at Panchpara Government Primary School in Sadar upazila.

"Due to the construction of a building in the school premises there is no space left for the children's playground," said Humayun Kabir, assistant teacher of Mukterkathi Government Primary School.

Humayun said students of the school have to take part in different sports competition without proper practice as they do not have any playground.

According to the government law, 33 decimals of land is a must for establishing a primary school in rural areas while in municipality areas it is 20 decimals, said Abdul Latif Majumder, district primary education officer (DPEO) in Pirojpur.

Prior to 1990, there was no separate ministry for primary education, consequently there was none to monitor or guide the sector, said the DPEO.

The DPEO said well-off people used to donate their personal lands for establishing educational institutions without maintaining proper documents.

After their deaths and considering the growing value of the donated lands, their relatives took back most of the lands by claiming ownership due to the fault in papers, the DPEO added.

MAN'S 2ND MARRIAGE First wife kills self

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A young woman allegedly committed suicide following an altercation over her husband's second marriage in Saturia upazila of the district on Wednesday.

The deceased was Tumpa Begum, 19, wife of Yasin Ali of Baliati village in the upazila.

She took her life by hanging herself from the ceiling of the house in the evening, said police.

The body was sent to Manikganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Tumpa often engaged in altercations with her husband over his second marriage, said Officer-in-Charge of Saturia Police Station Aminur Rahman.

Rice mill on reservoir land

Kalapara farmers deprived of using water from BADC-dug well

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Farmers are being deprived of the benefits of a well meant for preserving rain and tube-well water for use in agriculture in Kalapara upazila under the district as the donor of the land has set up a rice mill there.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) dug the well locally known as 'kua' at a cost of Tk 13.99 lakh on 1.5 decimals of land at Mostafapur village in 2014-15 fiscal year under its Integrated Agriculture Productivity Project.

Around 100 farmers could use the water from the well for agricultural purposes, especially in the dry season.

A 30-member farmers' team was formed with Abdur Rob Howlader as team leader to ensure its services, said BADC Executive Engineer Md Sajjad Hossain Bhuiyan.

Howlader, also superintendent of Mostafapur Dakhil Madrasa, donated the land for the project.

The reservoir was created with a view to storing rainwater and water from deep tube-well for agricultural purposes through drainage system.

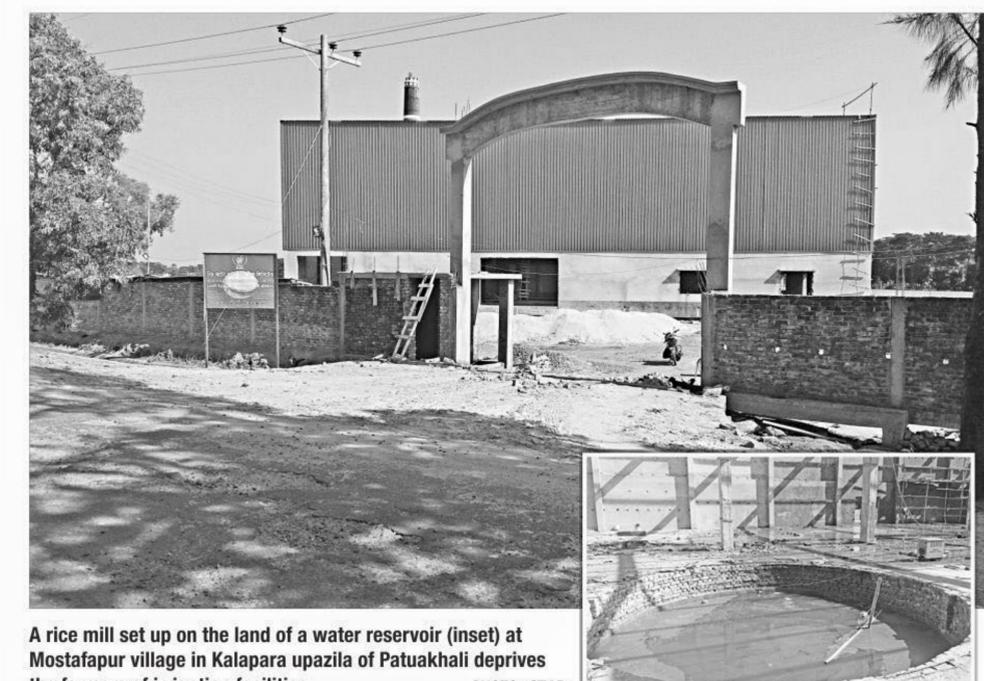
Farmers cultivated crops, including hybrid paddy aloron, by using water from the well in 2015, but at the beginning of 2016, Howlader set up a rice mill occupying the land of the project. Since then farmers are not getting water from the well.

Howlader said water from the well has become unfit for use as saline water comes out of the tube-well, which is why he set up a rice mill on the land.

He said he set up the mill, informing the BADC authorities of the matter.

Engineer Sajjad said they dug two wells at a cost of around Tk 28 lakh -- one at Mostafapur and another at Kakchira village in Barguna.

Farmers at Kakchira are benefiting from the well while Mostafapur farmers cannot use the well as the land donor has set up a rice mill there, he added.



A rice mill set up on the land of a water reservoir (inset) at Mostafapur village in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali deprives the farmers of irrigation facilities. PHOTO: STAR