

Giant tree falls in Gaibandha storm

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Communication on Gobindaganj-Dinajpur highway remained disrupted for about eight hours as a high velocity storm uprooted a gigantic tree that fell across the road at Chasokpara in Gobindaganj upazila yesterday.

Locals said the storm lashed the upazila around 8:00am, damaging a number of houses and uprooting trees and electric poles. At that time, a roadside big tree was uprooted and fell across the highway disrupting road communication between Gobindaganj-Dinajpur roads, said locals.

Power supply remained suspended as the storm ravaged the area for six hours. A fire fighting unit rushed to the spot and removed the tree from the road. Communication was restored around 4:00pm.



PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN
Sonail flower blooming in a tree at Power House More in Chapainawabganj town offers an impressive sight to the passers-by. The indigenous flower, although a bit less available than other popular flowers of the season, is a unique attraction for nature lovers.

Farmers all smile

Growers in six districts are happy for bumper paddy yield as well as good price

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Farmers of six southern-western districts are beside themselves with joy due to bumper production of paddy and satisfactory prices this year.

Additional Director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Jessore Chandi Das Kundu said 3,14,995 hectares of land had been cultivated in six SW districts in the 2015/16 season, while it was 3,55,973 hectares in 2016/17 season.

Paddy was cultivated on 1,51,805 hectares of land in Jessore, 83,455 hectares in Jhenidah, 31,785 hectares in Magura, 3,3235 hectares in Kushtia, 33,548 hectares in Chuadanga and 22,145 hectares in Meherpur this year.

The target was 1,51,888 hectares in Jessore, 82,020 hectares in Jhenidah, 36,060 hectares in Magura, 3,60,10 hectares in Kushtia, 33,396 hectares in Chuadanga and 21,846 hectares in Meherpur.

Iqbal Hossain, a farmer of Sundarpur village in Kaliganj upazila, said he cultivated paddy on two bighas of land this year. He will get around 60 maunds of paddy from two bighas, which he will sell for Tk 55,000, he said, adding that he has not harvested so much paddy for ten years.

Farmer Shahinur Rahman of Bagachra village under Jessore Sadar upazila said he got 63 maunds of paddy from two bighas.

Deputy Director of Jhenidah DAE Shah Akramul Haque said farmers are happy as they have got high yield of paddy and good price this year. The price of paddy is Tk 900 to Tk 1,000 per maund, he added.

As Harijans take meal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Eatery owners in Khansama upazila of Dinajpur kept their shops closed since Monday due to absence of general customers after the owners allowed people of the Harijan community to take meals with others at their restaurants recently.

Locals said generally Harijan people are barred from taking meals with others in any eatery and had to take food sitting outside the hotels or restaurants.

In an attempt to break the culture, Khansama Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohammad Sajebur Rahman convinced the restaurant owners to allow Harijans to eat inside the eateries.

As part of the initiative, the UNO invited the Harijan people living in the upazila at those hotels on May 1 and shared food with them.

Afterwards, Harijan people started entering the eateries frequently and taking their meals sitting with others, which made the latter unhappy, said Ranajit Roy, general secretary of Pakerhat Hotel Traders Association.

For the last couple of days people from the other communities started boycotting the eateries that ended in serious customer crisis, Ranajit said.

Finding no way out, owners decided to shut their business to avert further losses and wait for the UNO's decision, Ranajit added.

UNO Sajebur Rahman said he talked with the local public representatives, restaurant owners and Harijan people and trying to find a satisfactory solution to the problem.

'ABUSE' THRU' FACEBOOK 2 Kushtia journos sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A court yesterday sent two journalists to jail for their alleged derogatory Facebook post against a local daily editor.

Senior Judicial Magistrate FM Mezbaul Haq passed the order after Hasan Ali, Kushtia correspondent of Bangla Vision and bdnews24.com, and Aslam Ali, staff correspondent of local Bangla daily Darpan, sought bail.

Hasibur Rahman Rizu, editor and publisher of local Bangla daily Satya Khabor, also Kushtia correspondent of private TV channel Asian TV, filed a case against Hasan, Aslam and tea stall employee Miraz Ali on March 30 with Kushtia Model Police Station, alleging that the trio made a Facebook post abusing him from Facebook ID named Sultan Islam. Miraz Ali was owner of the ID.

Police arrested Miraz who told the court that Hasan and Aslam called him on March 27, took his mobile, entered his Facebook ID and made a derogatory post against Rizu.

Nawab, an innovative farmer

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Nawab Mia has set a unique example of innovative farming, bringing quality onion seeds to farmers' doorsteps for fair prices.

Faced with extreme poverty, Nawab, 28, of Shahpara village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila went to Dhaka to earn livelihood by plying rickshaw four years ago.

"Working for one year, I saved some money, returned home and leased 40 decimals of land to do farming in an innovative way," Nawab said.

"Many farmers of my village cultivate onion but they have to collect seeds from traders of other districts at high prices. Sometimes portions of the seeds do not sprout well.

"I decided to produce onion seeds here. I took foundation onions from Nasir, local representative of a seed company and Majedul Islam Biplob, local sub assistant agriculture officer of the government's agriculture department, provided technical support for

Nawab Mia gains solvency, supplying quality onion seeds to local farmers for fair prices.

the purpose," he said.

Nawab's wife Morsheda Begum, 24, who also worked with her husband in the onion field, said they took loan from an NGO to manage the initial cultivation cost.

It was an exciting experience as flowers bloomed and seeds developed inside onions after the plants gained maturity, Nawab said.

"In 2015, I spent Tk 40 thousand as

production cost (in 40 decimals) and harvested 120 kg of onion seeds. I sold all to Nasir's seed company at Tk 850 per kg and made a net profit of Tk 62 thousand," he said.

In 2016, he cultivated onion seeds on 60 decimals of leased land and made net profit of Tk 1.20 lakh by selling seeds in open market at Tk 1000 per kg.

This year, Nawab cultivated onion on 90 decimals of land and got net profit of Tk 1.74 lakh from open market sale.

Nawab, now a solvent farmer, has already bought seven decimals of land, built two tin-shed rooms there and bought two cows, alongside arranging schooling for his two children.

Local farmer Abtar Ali said now they can collect quality onion seeds from Nawab for fair price and have not faced sprouting problem in it.

With his support, now several unemployed youths have started onion seed cultivation, said Mosirat Fakir, chairman of local Tupamari union parishad.

60 kg shrimp with jelly in belly seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A mobile court here seized at least 60 kilograms of shrimps with jelly in their bellies from Chasi bazar of Shah Foteh Ali fish market in the town yesterday.

Being informed about the presence of the shrimps in the market, the mobile court seized the shrimps and fined four traders Tk 40,000 for cheating customers by increasing the weight of the shrimps.

Executive Magistrate Mobasher Alam conducted the mobile court.

Mizanur said Habil, Baquee, Habibur and Abdul Khaleque filled the shrimps with jelly to increase their weight, thus cheating the customers.

Ataur said the traders, however, were released after paying the fine.

DELAY IN OLD BHUAPUR ROAD REPAIR People's woe increases

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The much awaited repair work of Old Bhupur Road under Elenga municipality in the district has not started even ten months after inauguration of the project, increasing suffering of the people.

Repair work of the 1,430 metre-long road from Elenga Bus Stand to Bangabandhu Bridge Road, construction of a 1,493 metre-long RCC drain from Elenga Bus Stand to Pathailkandi Canal, and setting up of street lamps along both sides of the road were inaugurated on June 30 last year under Municipal Governance and Services Project, project sources said.

Bangladesh government and International Development Association (IDA) are funding the project while Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED) is implementing it under the supervision of Elenga Municipality, they said.

The contractor firms SECL-NC-KC (JV) are jointly doing the works, which are scheduled to be completed by September 28 this year as per agreement, they added.

The firms started the drain construction work first, which has not been completed so

far, locals said.

The road is the main way to go to local colleges, schools, markets and highway police outpost. Besides, there are banks, insurance companies, hospitals and business centres on both sides of the road, they added.

"Thousands of people, including students and teachers of local schools and colleges, who use the battered road regularly have been facing untold sufferings," said Principal of Shamsul Haque Government College Anwarul Kabir.

"It is a pity that the construction work of the drain has not been completed and repairing work of the road has not started so far," he added.

Contractor Shamsul Alam Khan said they have not started repair work of the road due to changes in its design. "We will start the work after getting the new design from the project director's (PD) office," he said.

Mayor of Elenga Municipality Shafi Khan said he met the project director on Monday and talked to him.

"The contractor is bound to complete the works by the deadline for getting the bills. We are supervising the works closely," he added.



PHOTO: EAM ASADUZZAMAN
Innovative onion seed grower Nawab Mia at his field of Shahpara village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila.



PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

Rakhal Chandra Taranidas and his family members weave winnowing fans on their house premises at Patnipara of Boroirra village in Tangail Sadar upazila as the item sees heightened demand during the paddy harvesting season.

Heyday for Patnipara kula makers

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

The people of Boroirra village in Sadar upazila are busy making *kulas* (winnowing fans) as the demand for those increases during paddy harvesting season.

A *kula* is made of bamboo strips and is used for separating chaff and dust from corn or grains. People of the Hindu community in Patnipara village have been earning their livelihood by making *kulas* for about one hundred years.

During the off-season, the villagers ply boats or catch fish in the adjacent Elongjani river, a tributary of the Jamuna river.

Mongol Chandra Taranidas, 80, of the village has been making *kulas* from his boyhood. Nowadays, he is suffering from different old age complications, but he still does the work with his expert hands.

Mongol said he is still engaged in the work as he does not want to be a burden to his sons. "Previously, I had plied boats and caught fish in the river

People of the Hindu community in Patnipara have been earning their livelihood by making kulas for about a century.

during the rainy season, but I can't do it now due to my bad health. Moreover, the river remains dry for most of the year, while the fish have almost vanished," he added.

Rakhal Chandra Taranidas, 45, of the village said about 100 people in the small village are engaged in making *kulas*.

"I can make four to five *kulas* a day. It takes around Tk 20 to make a *kula*, and it can be sold for around Tk 70," he said.

"I buy bamboos for Tk 500 and make *kulas* worth Tk 2,000 with it. My wife and son also assist me in their leisure time," Rakhal said.

Rakhal's wife Dolly Rani, their 12-year-old son Apu and 14-year-old nephew Shuvo, students of Class VII and VIII in a local school, were also seen making *kulas* with him under a tree in front of their house.

"A *kula* is made by cutting the bamboo in thin strips and then weaving and binding them after processing," Dolly said.

"The *kulas* are sold at different local markets, especially at the weekly Karatia market in Sadar upazila," she added.

"Though the people of the village have been making the bamboo items for decades, none of the community could become solvent, so the children of the local craftsmen have started going to schools for changing their ancestral profession," said Rekha Rani, 70, of the village.

"Though winnowing fans could not winnow our poverty, we the people of Patnipara are still hanging on to our ancestral profession. We want nothing from anyone and have no complaint against anyone," she added.