

Probe into eviction of indigenous families begins

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Natore*

The three-member probe committee, formed on May 5 to investigate eviction of 15 indigenous families in Naldanga upazila, visited the spot yesterday.

Chief of the committee Joint Secretary Saidur Rahman of Cabinet Division along with two deputy secretaries, Abu Hena Mustafa Zaman of Home Ministry and Mahbubur Rahman of Law Ministry, went to Madhnagar village and talked to the evicted families and alleged land grabber Bazlur Rashid.

A Natore court on Tuesday directed the authorities concerned to maintain status quo on the disputed land until the verdict of the pending case is pronounced following a petition filed by the district administration, Natore Deputy Commissioner Shahina Khatun said.

After getting a court order over the ownership of the land in his favour, Bazlur's men dismantled the indigenous people's houses on May 2, local UP chairman Dewan Amzad Hossain said.

Lawyer arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Manikganj*

A lawyer was arrested in the district on Tuesday night.

The arrestee is Towhidur Rahman Babu, 42, son of Lutfar Rahman of Manikganj municipality.

Towhid Babu is member of Manikganj unit of Bangladesh Awami Jubo League.

Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Towhid around 10:00pm from his house during an anti-drug drive, said Shahin Parvej of Manikganj DB police.

The law enforcers also recovered a pistol, one bullet, two magazines and 50 Yaba tablets from his house, Shahin said.



Farmers dry straws and stubble collected from Shanir Haor area of Tahirpur upazila in Sunamganj. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: DWOHA CHOWDHURY

Fodder crisis in Sunamganj

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, back from Sunamganj

Severe shortage of fodder has turned into a crisis in the haor areas as the recent flash flood damaged almost all the Boro crops in the north-eastern part of the country, with the district being the worst hit.

The government has not provided fodder to help farmers feed their cattle, and the rotten straw and stubble are not fit for consumption by the cattle, said District Livestock Officer (DLO) of the Department of Livestock Services (DLS) Dr Md Belal Hossain.

Twelve-year-old Abdul Baten and his younger brother were cutting submerged stubble from Shanir Haor in Dakkhin

Bardhal union under Tahirpur upazila and then drying them for fodder.

"We are having a hard time feeding our three cows as the fields are submerged, the straw has become rotten and the stubble is damaged," Baten said.

In a recent visit to the haor areas of the district, this correspondent found that there are hardly any places to keep cows and scarcity of fodder has hit the district badly.

Anhar Uddin of Janigaon village in Laksmanshree union under Sadar upazila is keeping five cows in a small field near Dekhar Haor.

"During this time of the year, we used to have acres of open green land in the haor area to keep cows, but there is only a small

field now. Moreover, cattle fodder was damaged due to the flash flood," he lamented.

The flash flood that hit the district during the last week of March, 15 to 20 days before Boro harvesting time, damaged almost 100 percent of the crop, which also caused a severe scarcity of fodder.

According to the DLS, there are 9,91,650 cattle in the official record, though the number may be much higher.

Days after the flash flood hit, thousands of farmers sold their cattle at very low prices to meet the fodder crisis, though they are now trying to keep the remaining cattle.

Jahir Uddin of Borodol village in

Tahirpur upazila said, "I had five cows and sold two after the flash flood hit. Now I am trying to keep the rest."

To meet the fodder crisis, the livestock services department in the district has already sent a demand order to the ministry of fisheries and livestock, seeking 3,08,760 tonnes of straw, grass and fodder, but they have not got any response yet.

DLO Belal Hossain said the farmers are feeding their cattle rotten straw, which is very unhealthy and might cause diarrhoea, but they can feed them dried straw and stubble.

"We are trying our best to stand by the farmers and are giving suggestions on what to do during this crisis," he added.

Man assaulted by BCL leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pirojpur*

A Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader allegedly assaulted a man yesterday when the latter protested the breaking of his son's leg with his motorcycle in Nesarabad upazila.

The victim, Kamrul Islam, 32, is a resident of Jagannathkathi village in the upazila.

Kamrul's brother Shamim Hasan said around 2:00pm his brother was standing at Swarupkathi Bazar along with his eight-year-old son Mahadi.

At one stage, Anu Acharya, general secretary of BCL's Swarupkathi municipality unit, who was passing the area on a motorbike, hit Mahadi with his vehicle and broke his left foot.

After exchanging hot words with Anuj, Kamrul took his son to Nesarabad Upazila Health Complex for treatment, he said.

After a while, Anuj along with five to six others went to the hospital and started beating Kamrul mercilessly. He was later saved by the locals.

Inspector Shahidul Islam of Nesarabad Police Station said he heard about the incident but none had complained in this regard yet.

Girl saved from early marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jamalpur*

A girl was saved from early marriage at Simarpar village in Bakshiganj upazila of the district on Tuesday.

The girl, 15, was going to be married to Mizan Mia, 20, when police stopped the marriage, said Officer-in-Charge of Bakshiganj Police Station Aslam Hossain.

Police detained Mizan and the bride's uncle Majnu Mia. They were released yesterday after promising not to commit the offence again, the OC added.

Sweet potato gains popularity

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, *Nilphamari*

Farmers in the district are inclining to cultivating sweet potato for its high yield and good market prices.

Besides, it costs little to produce and is almost immune to diseases.

An official of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Nilphamari said 185 hectares of land were brought under sweet potato cultivation this year at a production target of 18 tonnes a hectare, while it was 170 hectares last year.

Farmers said they prefer to grow sweet potato as its yield and price are higher than potato's, and the production cost is one-fifth.

Kishoreganj Upazila Agriculture Officer Enamul Huq said, "Production cost of potato is around Tk 14,000 per bigha, while it is only Tk 3,000 for sweet potato."

Sweet potato requires no seeds and can be cultivated on high, sandy land at very little cost by planting



small pieces of the bushy plant which are preserved in a particular way after harvesting the previous year. The crop needs only small amounts of fertilizer and pesticide, Enamul said.

Farmer Golam Mostofa of Angarpara village said, "I cultivated sweet potato on one bigha of land this year by spending Tk 3,000 and

got 54 maunds yield," adding that he sold it for Tk 32,400 at the market price of Tk 600 per maund.

Farmers Anjufor Prodhan of Domar upazila and Fozol Kadir of Kishoreganj lamented that they are compelled to sell the crop just after harvesting as there is no specialised cold storage in the area for preserving it for a longer period to sell at a

time when the price is higher.

They urged the government to set up a specialised cold storage in the region so that farmers could preserve sweet potato and other perishable crops.

"Sweet potato is very nutritious food item as it contains a special type of carbohydrate which even diabetic patients can consume," said Nilphamari Civil Surgeon Dr Abdur Rashid.

Nilphamari agriculture officer Md Mazedul Islam said, "The agriculture department encourages farmers to go for crop diversification, and they accepted our call by cultivating sweet potato on a large scale."

"Very good quality starch, an important item for the readymade garment sector, can be prepared from sweet potato. This can save foreign currency as we presently import starch from abroad at very high price," Mazedul said.

Doctor, nurse poisoned to death in Pabna

Says police investigation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

The death of a doctor and a nurse of Pabna's Kazipur Upazila Health Complex was a planned murder by a hospital staff, police investigation revealed.

"Dr Moniruzzaman often harassed Laki Khatun sexually, which made her angry. Laki, a temporary maid at the hospital, along with her boy friend Tomser Ali, relative Ashraf Ali Sheikh and maid China Khatun made a plan to kill the doctor," Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Sirajganj Detective Branch (DB) of Police Md Waheduzzaman told The Daily Star, quoting the confessional statements of the arrestees.

Kazipur Upazila Health Officer Dr Md Moniruzzaman and nurse Jobaida Khatun died on April 25 after taking homemade meal from the house of the head clerk of the hospital.

Laki mixed poison with the food before serving it to the doctor, nurse and head clerk, Waheduzzaman said, quoting the arrestees' statements.

Moniruzzaman, Jobaida and Alamgir fell sick and were taken to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital where Moniruzzaman and Jobaida died the same night, while Alamgir is undergoing treatment.

Assistant Health Officer Iqbal Hossain filed a case with Kazipur Police Station on the day. Police arrested Laki on May 2 while Sirajganj DB arrested three others on Monday.

The arrestees are Tomser Ali, 35, Ashraf Ali Sheikh, 65, and China Khatun, 35.

Tomser brought the poison from Ashraf and Laki mixed it with the food, Waheduzzaman said, adding that they mentioned the names of a few other people involved in the killing.

"The three arrestees gave their confessional statements to the Senior Judicial Magistrate Nazrul Islam's court on Tuesday. The court recorded their statements and sent them to jail," he said. The court, however, granted two days remand for China Khatun, Waheduzzaman added.

Quest for self-reliance

MAMUN-UR-RASHID, *Bogra*

Three unemployed youths started rearing ducks in the Karatoa river three months ago to materialise their dream of becoming self-reliant.

The close friends started their venture at Rahimabad Dakkhinpara in Aria union under the upazila through taking loans from banks and individuals.

The youths are Nayan Mia, 24, son of Sabed Ali, Ariful Islam, 23, son of Iman Ali of Rahimabad village, both are students at Government Azizul Haque College, and Golam Mostafa, 23, son of Abu Jar Ali of the village and a student of local Demajani Degree College.

They encircled six decimals of land on the bank of the Karatoa River at Demajani area and have been rearing over six hundred ducks there.

Nayan said they started rearing ducks at the suggestion of the livestock department in the district, adding that they borrowed Tk 1.5 lakh.

They feed wheat, maize and vitamin-

enriched food to the ducks, and the ducks have been vaccinated, added Nayan.

Mostafa said they have 80 male ducks and 520 female ducks, adding that the females will start laying eggs within two months, which will continue for six months. They will lay eggs again after two months, and this will continue for two years. They are hopeful of getting good profit selling eggs, Mostafa added.

"Initially, some ducks became sick and died, but the 600 ducks we have are well as they have been vaccinated," added Mostafa.

His father of Abu Jar said they are very excited about the attempt of his son and his two friends to remove joblessness.

Aria Union Parishad Chairman Atiqur Rahman Atik said the three youths are an example for the unemployed youths of the district.

Upazila Livestock Officer Dr Nargis Khanom said they have been advising the owners of the farms to vaccinate 40-day-old chicks.



Three unemployed youths rear ducks in the Karatoa river. The photo was taken at Demajani Southpara in Shajahanpur upazila of Bogra recently.

PHOTO: MAMUN-UR-RASHID