

Risky living

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Back From Jessore

Around a hundred people belonging to the families of the officers and employees of Jessore Jute Mills Limited are living amid life risk in a four-storied dilapidated building.

Visiting the spot recently, this correspondent found that different parts of the building have developed cracks and chunks of plasters are falling off.

The users have set bamboo poles in an attempt to 'prevent' fall of the roof.

This building named "Bakul" at Rajhat in Noapara upazila in Jessore was constructed in 1979, office sources said.

It has become quite unfit for living, but 96 people of 24 families are living there as there is no alternative near the jute mill, said Md Mohsin Sheikh, member of Jessore Jute Industry Workers Federation.

"Rainwater seeps through the roof and wets the floor. We can hardly sleep during rain at night," said Kazi Mahifur Rahman, an employee of the mill, living there for five years with his family.

Lovely Begum, a housewife, said, "I along with my husband and children am living here for ten years although this building is quite unfit for living. Meanwhile, earthquakes have occurred several times, making us all the more panicked."

Another housewife Rikta Begum said, very often brick dust falls on the floor and spoils our foods.

Workers said three other residential buildings of Jessore Jute Mills Limited under Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation are also in dilapidated conditions but those are not declared abandoned yet.

Md Mehedi Hasan, assistant engineer (additional in charge-construction) of the jute mills, said, "Earlier two risky residential buildings had been vacated upon direction from the higher authorities. Decision will be made about the other buildings when the situation demands."

Md Sazzad Hossain, DGM of the jute mill, said "Bakul" building will be declared abandoned when the engineering department terms it unfit.

The building will be repaired when fund is provided, he added.



PICTURE TELLS THE TALE: This dilapidated residential house, used by the workers of Jessore Jute Mills Ltd in the district's Noapara, gives constant worry and pain for the dwellers, as chunks of plaster often fall off and water seeps through the roof during rain.

PHOTO: AZIBOR RAHMAN

Lightning claims nine

STAR COUNTRY DESK

At least nine people were killed by lightning in three districts yesterday.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reports that five people were struck by lightning in Naogaon yesterday.

Police in Atrai upazila said farm workers Md Milon, 22, and Ratan Islam, 20, were struck by lightning while cutting paddy at Darshan village in the upazila on Saturday afternoon. They died on the spot.

In Naogaon Sadar upazila, Amzad Hossain, 14, and Rafiqul Islam, 15, were collecting fallen mangoes at Sharizpur village in Sadar upazila when lightning struck them, leaving them dead on the spot.

In Mohadevpur upazila, Arafat Hossain, 8, went out of his home to bring the grazing cattle when a storm started. He was injured by lightning. Locals rushed him to Mohadevpur Health Complex, where he died soon after admission.

Away in Brahmanbaria, a farmer and his two cows died after being struck by lightning at Rustompur village in Nasirnagar

upazila of the district yesterday, our correspondent reports.

Jalal Miah, 45, son of Harunur Rashid, was plowing the crop field with two cows around 8:30am. A thunderbolt hit Jalal and he died on the spot, police said quoting locals.

Officer-In-Charge of Nasirnagar Police Station Md Abu Zafar said an unnatural death case was lodged.

In Khagrachhari, a woman and two men were killed by thunderbolts in Sadar upazila yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The dead are Sanu Marma, 27, a farmer of Kaladeva para in the district town, Nowmrachong Marma, 45, and her son Towipru Marma, 20, of Mrachanai Karbari para under Bhaibonchhara union of Sadar upazila.

Chigmay Pru Marma of Kaladeva para said that lightning struck Sanu Marma while he was working in the field amid heavy rain.

Mrachatoi Marma, an employee of Khagrachhari Hill District Council, said Nowmrachong Marma and her son Towipru Marma were hit by lightning in their house.

Mother with child ends life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A woman allegedly committed suicide with her child by jumping under the wheels of a running train between Panchagarh and Nayaniburuj railway station at Bakultala village in Panchagarh Sadar yesterday.

The deceased were Shyamoli Basak, 23, and her two-and-half-year-old daughter Pabitra Sen Maya of Baroawlia Basakpara village in Atwary upazila.

Locals said Shyamoli was walking on the rail track with her child.

When a Panchagarh-bound train reached the place, she jumped under the train wheels and both died on the spot.

The victim's father Arun Basak of the village said his daughter Shyamoli married Prodip Kumar Sen of Thakurgaon Sadar three years ago.

After one year of their marriage, Shyamoli came back to her paternal house due to family feud.

Yesterday morning, Shyamoli left house with her daughter saying she was taking her child to Disable Welfare Centre in Panchagarh.

Unknown disease kills 25 cattle

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

At least 25 cattle have died at different villages in Thanchi upazila of the district in the last three days due to an unknown disease, creating panic among the local farmers.

Fifteen cows and 10 goats were killed by the disease at Naidari Para, Sandak Para, Thanchi Headman Para, Boi Aung Headman Para, TNT Para and Morium Para villages.

Meanwhile, fearing further loss farmers have started selling their cattle at low prices in local markets.

The affected cattle start trembling first and within a short time its stomach swells up, said farmer U Hla Koi Marma, adding, an affected cow dies within one and a half hours while a goat dies in 20 to 30 minutes.

U Hla Koi said he lost two cows

and a goat due to the disease, adding, he sold three cows and four goats at low price fearing further loss.

Farmer Jasim Uddin said he had to bring medicine for his cattle from Alikadam upazila as there is no veterinary doctor available at Thanchi Upazila Livestock Office.

Ching Kyaw Mro of Boi Aung Headman Para said, "We have no idea about how we will save our cattle from the mysterious disease as we are not getting any advice or treatment from the livestock officials as they remain absent most of the time."

Thanchi Upazila Livestock Officer Kazi Ashraful Islam said as the villages are in remote areas it takes time to reach there, adding that they are trying to find out the reason behind the deaths of so many cattle.

Woman killed: Two youths arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two youths were arrested yesterday on charge of stabbing a woman to death in Mymensingh town on Friday.

The deceased Anwara Begum, 45, was wife of Nazrul Islam of Akua Chowrangi area of the town.

Officer-in-Charge Kamrul Islam of Sadar Police Station said they arrested the two from Churkhai area in the town, adding they are conducting drives to arrest the other members of the group.

The OC, however, did not disclose the names of the arrestees for the interest of the case.

Quoting locals and deceased's family members, Mymensingh Additional Superintendent of Police Noor-e-Alam said an altercation took place when Anwara told a group of local youths not to play songs through loud speakers near her rented house on Thursday evening.

Around 7:30pm on Friday, when Anwara along with her mentally challenged daughter Kushi, 18, came out of their house, two youths waylaid them and locked in an altercation over Thursday's issue, the ASP said.

At one stage, they stabbed Anwara on the chest and fled the scene, leaving her seriously injured. Kushi also sustained stab injuries while trying to save her mother from the attackers.

Hearing screams, locals rescued them and took them to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) where the doctors declared Anwara dead.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to MMCH for autopsy.



Growing papaya at a farm of Moyur Khumi Para in Rowangchhari upazila under Bandarban. The hill area sees increasing cultivation of the fruit, replacing traditional jhum farming.

PHOTO: SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

Papaya replaces jhum farming

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA, Bandarban

Commercial farming of papaya has been gaining popularity among the indigenous farmers in the district as it is more profitable than other crops.

Around 6,005 hectares of land have been brought under papaya cultivation this year with a production target of 1,38,115 tonnes, said Deputy Director (DD) of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in the district Altaf Hossain.

Indigenous farmers who used to cultivate jhum are now more interested in papaya cultivation as it can bring good profit with small investment.

It also needs less fertiliser and irrigation compared to jhum, the indigenous farmers said.

Papayas are largely grown at Ruma, Rowangchhari, Thanchi, Lama, and Sadar upazilas of the district, Altaf said.

Mainly two varieties of papaya -- red lady and local -- are being cultivated.

Demand for the local variety is very high in the markets as those are sweet with thick flesh. A papaya tree yields fruits for about three years.

Indigenous farmers in Bandarban now interested in the fruit cultivation as it brings good profit with small investment

A kilogram of green papaya is being sold at Tk 10 to Tk 12 per piece in the local markets. A big size, ripe high-breed papaya is sold at Tk 50 to

Tk 60 while the local variety is only Tk 20 to Tk 40, farmers said.

Lar Nam Kim, 55, of Bethni para under Bandarban Sadar, told this correspondent that she started papaya farming in December last year. She said she spent Tk 50,000 for making the orchard and has already sold papayas worth Tk 25,000, adding that she expects to earn around Tk 1.5 lakh from some 400 papaya trees in her farm.

Pulu Prue Marma, a papaya cultivator at Bgmaria area, said he earned Tk 50,000 by selling papaya last year, and expects more this year from 200 trees.

A total of 1,32,000 tonnes of papayas were produced last year and about 12,000 farmers are engaged in papaya cultivation in the district, the DD of DAE said.

Papaya cultivation on commercial basis started in 2002, and is increasing rapidly, he added.

Altaf said papaya and other seasonal fruits are grown there as soil fertility is high in the hilly lands.

HOUSEMAID MURDER Autopsy report today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The autopsy report in the housemaid murder case in the district will be submitted to the police today.

The poor parents of a housemaid, who was allegedly murdered after being raped by her employer, were crying at their home at Dakkhin Gobdha village under Aditmari upazila of the district as they fear that they might not get fair probe and justice.

The incident occurred on May 4 but police are yet to trace out the reason behind the killing of their teenage daughter Sonali Rani, said her parents Sorfullo Chandra Barman and Gita Rani.

Investigation Officer of the case Sub-Inspector of Adimari Police Station Ashraful Alam said police will take steps after getting the postmortem report.

Cops foil Pirojpur BNP meeting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A special meeting between central and divisional BNP leaders was forcibly postponed as police charged batons on the activists of the party in the district yesterday.

Pirojpur district unit BNP organised the meeting. BNP men said Asaduzzaman Ripon, special secretary of central unit of BNP, Barisal Divisional Organising Secretary Bilkis Jahan Shirin and some other leaders of the party went to the party's district office in the town around 11:30am to attend a special meeting there with the leaders of the district unit.

As there was not enough space inside the party office to accommodate all the party men, some leaders were standing outside the party office chanting slogans.

At that time, the law enforcers asked them to enter the office and started charging batons on them.

At least 30 activists were injured during the incident, said Gazi Nuruzzaman Babul, president of district unit of BNP.

Later, central leaders postponed the programme and left the party office.

"To stop our programme, police attacked our party men," he said.

The law enforcers took some steps to avoid any untoward situation, said SP Md Walid Hossain.

Meanwhile, convention of the activists of Bogra BNP was postponed half-an hour after inauguration of the programme due to party confronts in the town the same day, reports our correspondent.



Bangladesh Mahila Parishad staged a demonstration in Thakurgaon town yesterday demanding punishment to the perpetrators, including the local union parishad chairman Alauddin, who brutally tortured a woman in Sadar upazila on May 7.

PHOTO: STAR