



Jarina Begum milks her cow at her home in Tengrakandi of Gaibandha. Like many other women farmers in the area, she has changed her life by forming a cooperative to sell milk locally. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: KM REZAUL HAQUE

Stronger together

FROM PAGE 1

Almost all village women in Tengrakandi rear cows for milk. The economic improvement brought about by the cooperative has raised living standards across the community. Milk is collected by cooperative members from 10am to noon each day, to be on-sold to milk traders; and milk from the shoals is popular with town residents for its superior quality. Key buyers include sweetmeat shops, bakeries and other

retail food outlets that require milk.

Local milk trader Golap Paiker says he buys milk from the cooperative at Tk 35 per litre to sell on the mainland for up to Tk 45. "It used to be very difficult to buy milk on the shoals," he recalls, "moving door to door, speaking to each producer. Now it is possible to collect milk in bulk from a stipulated location."

SKS Foundation is also providing the women with financial help. "Our

aim is to help empower shoal-dwelling women to change their fate," says organisation coordinator Bahram Khan. "We hope they can stand on their own feet through cattle rearing."

District livestock officer Abdul Latif says Tengrakandi's women have set an example on how to produce and effectively market fresh milk. "Their efforts have even created employment in the remote shoal lands."

Flood hits schools hard

FROM PAGE 16

Jahangir Kabir Ahmed, deputy director of secondary and higher education department in Sylhet division, said some 48 high schools in Moulvibazar and 32 in Sylhet have so far suspended half-yearly exams. Around 45,000 students are studying in these schools.

In Lalmonirhat, students of 48 primary and five high schools at Teesta river basin villages and char areas in four upazilas have not been turning up for last two days due to floods. However, the teachers are keeping the institutions open.

Sirajul Islam, a teacher at Nodi O Jibon Junior High School at Teesta River Char Sholmari in Kaliganj upazila, said none of their 188 students attended classes in last two days as floodwater surrounded the school.

"Only four out of nine teachers could come to the school," he said.

Nur Amin, a teacher at Dawabari Government Primary School at Char Dawabari under Hatibandha upazila, said, "All the classrooms are under at least one foot water. The school premises are under two to three feet water at some places. We stopped giving classes since Monday."

Soleman Miah, a guardian of two primary students at Teesta Char Gaddimari village, said they had taken shelter at a safer place as floodwater inundated their house. "How will I send

my children to their school?" he asked. Echoing the same view, another guardian Majidul Islam said, "Sending our children to school in the flood is very risky."

Nabezz Uddin Sarker, district primary education officer, said teachers were instructed to keep the schools open, but academic activities could not continue without students.

In Bogra, at least 80 education institutions in Shariakandi, Dhunat and Sonatola upazilas have been facing difficulties to continue with the classes for last one week.

The floodwater has entered these schools' premises and even reached several classrooms. Neither the students were going to schools nor the teachers could hold classes in the water, he added.

Only 12 affected schools could take alternative measures to hold classes but did not get any students, according to district administration.

Moyna Khatun, a third grader of Shimulbari Government Primary School, said her classes remained suspended for a week as none went to the school.

However, a few students were seen wading through the water to attend classes at Fakirpara Government Primary School of Chandanbaishia village under Kamalpur union.

Jibonnahar Begum, acting

head teacher of Shimulbari Government Primary School in Dhunat, said it was extremely difficult to take classes.

In Kurigram, 67 government primary schools in the char areas were forced to stop academic activities as flood situation worsened in last three days.

DPEO Swapan Kumar Roy Chowdhury said only eight of those schools were trying to conduct classes through alternative arrangement.

LAWMAKER BLASTS MINISTERS

Ruling Awami League lawmaker M Ihsrafil Alam yesterday blasted the water resources minister and his deputy for "sitting idle" at a time when different parts of the country were hit by flood causing sufferings to people.

The lawmaker was speaking at parliament on a call attention notice submitted by him on taking emergency measures to repair damaged flood control and protection embankments in his constituency.

Ihsrafil said Water Resources Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud and State Minister Muhammad Nazrul Islam didn't visit any flood affected area where crops and houses were damaged and the victims were living in misery.

"Flood hit my constituency almost every year in the last eight years. But I've never seen the respective minister or the state minister visiting my area," he added.

Most of them were "forcibly disappeared" from Tejgaon, Gulshan, Airport, West Nakhalpara, East Nakhalpara, Mugda, Uttar Badda and Sajibbagh areas, said Rizvi.

He alleged that law enforcers made at least 50 people disappear from the capital and its adjoining districts before the January 5, 2014 national election.

"Most of the missing people were involved either with the BNP or Chhatra Dal," he added.

Four injured

FROM PAGE 16

Medical College Hospital while the three others were undergoing treatment at a local hospital, said Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Narayanganj Model Police Station.

Cultural personality Rafiur Rabbi, who presided over the rally, said those who were in favour of the power plant and against the Sundarbans carried out the attack.

GM cyborg

FROM PAGE 16

Medical Institute performed Dragonfly flight tests at the Janelia Research Campus in Virginia.

The insect could soon be used to carry payloads, according to Jesse Wheeler, a senior biomedical engineer at Draper which collaborated with the Howard Hughes Medical Institute to carry out the Dragonfly program.

The expert told Spectrum IEEE: "Beyond tracking, the Dragonfly system offers new miniaturized technology to equip a wide range of insects with environmental sensors and potentially guide important behaviours, like pollination."

To create the Dragonfly, engineers had to develop a way of genetically modifying the nervous system of the dragonfly so it can respond to pulses of light.

To do this, the team gave the insect a gene which added light-sensitive proteins called opsins to the neurons.

This then allowed the neurons to be activated by the light - sent by an interface in the 'backpack' called an optrode.

The neurons then kicked into its usual routine of sending signals to the wings to encourage the insect to fly.

Wheeler said: "In order to begin guidance of dragonflies, several key technologies needed to be developed."

"Howard Hughes Medical Institute focused on developing gene delivery methods specific to the dragonfly to make special 'steering' neurons sensitive to light."

Draper developed a miniaturized backpack for autonomous navigation and a flexible optrode to control the modified neurons by guiding light around the dragonfly's tiny nerve cord.

"Our first-generation system is based upon early mockup backpacks that were fitted to dragonflies to test ergonomics and weight limits."

"I can't go to school. But I want to go again with my sister," said Muktamoni.

Concern over

FROM PAGE 2

The eminent citizens are—Prof Dr Serajul Islam Choudhury, Badruddin Umar, Dr Zafnullah Chowdhury, M Hafiz Uddin Ahmed, Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, Dr Swapan Adnan, Prof Dilara Chowdhury, Shireen Huq, Firdous Azim, Dr Shahdeen Malik, Dr CR Arbab, Prof Anu Muhammad, Dr Shahidul Alam, Prof Amena Mohsin, Dr Salimullah Khan, Rehnuma Ahmed, Prof Asif Nazrul, Dr. Azfar Hussain, Nur Khan Liton, Adilur Rahman Khan, Syeda Rizwana Hasan.

Farhad Mazhar's wife demands proper probe

With many confusing and contradicting information cropping up centring

Bleeding from bad loans

FROM PAGE 1

Experts think there is a lack of political will to deal with loan defaults, on which India has been cracking down for the last two years.

Prof Mustafizur Rahman, distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), said growing bad loans were impeding further economic growth as banks' lending capacity gets tightened and good clients could not get loans at lower rates.

Taking mortgage or collateral against loans at inflated price has become another big problem for banks that fail to sell mortgaged assets whose market prices are much lower than the loans, he added.

State-owned BASIC Bank is the victim of this practice as many little-known businesses took loans giving mortgages at inflated prices between 2009 and 2013 when Sheikh Abdul Hye Bacchu was chairman.

"We have been pursuing the government for the past three years to set up a commission for banks. But it did not pay any heed to the proposal," said Prof Mustafizur.

If the commission was mandated to reform the sector, accountability, transparency and governance would have improved in the crippled banking industry, he added.

poet and writer Farhad Mazhar's disappearance, his wife yesterday demanded proper investigation into the incident.

"We are demanding professional investigation. Any irrelevant issues can drive the investigation of the abduction case out of track," she said responding to the query on the judicial statement of a former female colleague of the writer.

Talking to The Daily Star outside the cabin in Birdeem Hospital, where Farhad Mazhar is being treated, Farida said they would brief media about the whole incident after recovery of her husband.

On July 4, Farhad, in a judicial statement before another magistrate, said several unidentified men forced him into a microbus and blindfolded

him minutes after he came out of his Adabor house to buy medicines in the early hours of July 3.

Later, law enforcers found him on a bus of Hanif Paribahan in Jessor's Noapara around 11:30pm on the same day.

Meanwhile, investigators are yet to be sure of how Farhad Mazhar journeyed to Khulna from Dhaka on July 3.

Hafiz Al Asad, senior assistant commissioner of west division of the detective branch of police, told The Daily Star that they are investigating the case with professionalism.

"We did not find any evidence that he went to Khulna on a microbus."

fessor at the Bangladesh Institute of Bank Management.

About the court orders, the veteran banker said banks had to overcome the problem with the help of the court.

Analysts also cited the example of India, which has been dealing with bad loans effectively in recent years.

Last year, India's central bank decided to clean up the balance sheets of Indian banks, which are collectively saddled with Rs 6 lakh crore bad loans, equivalent to 9 percent of the total outstanding loans in the economy.

After the Reserve Bank of India's order, banks have started cracking the whip on Indian companies for repayment of loans. Leading corporate houses, including Reliance, Tata, Birla and Essar, were forced to sell their prized assets to repay their bank loans.

Analysts also point out that enforcement of laws in India is much stronger than in Bangladesh.

For example, liquor baron Vijay Mallya, who is accused of defaulting Rs 9,000 crores in loans, was arrested from London in April.

Subrata Roy, chief of Sahara Group, which was the sponsor of India's national cricket team for years, is in jail for over two years now, for allegedly embezzling Rs 24,000, which he did not pay back to investors.

Helal Ahmed Chowdhury, former managing director of Pubali Bank, said a taskforce could be formed to heal the ailing banking sector.

"But political will is a must for that," said Helal, also a supernumerary pro-

minent in the affected hand which is infested with parasitic worms.

"We gave her homeopathy treatment too, for nearly one and a half years, but it did not work," he said.

She was taken to different hospitals in Satkhira, Jessor and Khulna. She even went to CRP Savar where she was recommended a specialist in Dhaka.

The specialist provided her with some medicines but in three months, no changes were seen. Her family had spent almost taka four lakh. According to her father, to bear the rising costs, they had to sell their cattle and take loan from relatives and friends.

Finally, around two and a half years ago, she was admitted to a hospital in Khulna where doctors said that she could not be cured and suggested her family to take her home.

As hopelessness set in, her father resorted to taking the help of a herbal treatment known as "Kabiraji medicine" which is cheap and generally availed by people less well-off. They also went for other non-traditional medicines but nothing seemed to work.

But later on, as Muktamoni's story was picked up by different news media, she was brought to DMCH, said Ibrahim.

Muktamoni's mother Ayesha Khatun said, "I couldn't tolerate the condition of my daughter."

She said the villagers, and even their relatives, do not visit their house as the affected hand is slowly rotting and emanating a bad odour.

Muktamoni said the disease causes an itch and is very painful, adding that the pain gets more acute during summer and winter.

"I can't go to school. But I want to go again with my sister," said Muktamoni.

Musa's family repeatedly alleged that law enforcers picked him up on June 22. The whereabouts of Musa and Kalu are still unknown.

Two masons die of suspected suffocation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two masons died of suffocation after they got down into an under-construction water tank in the capital's Gabtoli yesterday, police said.

The tank was left abandoned for long and the two men probably inhaled some toxic gas.

Mainuddin, 27, and Limon Hawlader, 22, went inside the tank around 12:00pm. As they were not returning, a third worker was about to go inside as well. He, however, sensed something was wrong. Selimuzzaman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Darussalam Police Station, told The Daily Star.

Fire fighters later went to spot and rescued the two men from the tank. Doctors at Dhaka Medical College Hospital, however, declared them dead after they were taken there, added the OC.

The report said the freedom fighter scrutiny could not be completed due to neglect of lawmaker for Chandpur-5 constituency sector commander Maj (retd) Rafiqul Islam Bir Uttam and Hajiganj upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Mohammad Mahbubul Alam.

The complainants termed the report "false" and "fabricated" and said it had hurt local freedom fighters, conscious citizens and the general

Journo, freedom fighter

FROM PAGE 16

correspondent Mohammad Shahjahan and freedom fighter Mozammel Haider Chowdhury under section 57 over the same allegations.

Anwar Hossain of Shahresti Nizamehar area filed one case with the Judicial Magistrate's Court, Shahresti on Sunday.

Prof Md Farhad Hossain of Hajiganj Sendra area filed the other case with Hajiganj police on May 22.

The plaintiffs in the cases said a report was published on page 9 of Prothom Alo on May 9 headlined "Freedom fighter scrutiny suspended in Hajiganj."

The report said the freedom fighter scrutiny could not be completed due to neglect of lawmaker for Chandpur-5 constituency sector commander Maj (retd) Rafiqul Islam Bir Uttam and Hajiganj upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Mohammad Mahbubul Alam.

In the case, Melon said Swapan had used vulgar words "intentionally" in a bid to "tarnish" his journalist.

Officer-in-Charge Nasir Uddin said they could not arrest Swapan.

"We are looking for him," he said.

Police yet to find

FROM PAGE 2

unnamed others of carrying out the attack.

Meanwhile, some 200 journalists and students formed a human chain in