



A large number of vehicles stuck in a long queue at Mirzapur of Tangail on Dhaka-Tangail highway due to poor road condition and break downs ahead yesterday. Most vehicles heading for northern Bangladesh from Dhaka use this highway.

PHOTO: STAR

Wind flattens Aman paddy

Lalmonirhat farmers to count heavy loss

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

On-going harvesting of early variety of Aman paddy at many villages in the district has been badly affected by strong wind in the last two weeks.

"As I decided to harvest the reaped Aman in three to four days, strong wind has flattened the paddy on the fields," Farmer Taher Ali, 55, of Khochabari village in Sadar upazila, said, adding that the stagnant rainwater also hampered his preparation.

"I may not get expected Aman production as all the paddy plants on my three bighas of land have been flattened due to strong wind in the last two days," said Meher Ali, 48, another farmer of the village.

Farmer Delwar Rahman, 63, of Bhelaguri village in Hatibandha upazila, said "Many farmers in my locality have no alternatives to overcome the loss this year."

"I cultivated early variety Aman on five bighas of land and managed to harvest the paddy from only two bighas a week ago but could not harvest the rest due to the bad weather," said Nabir Hossain, 48, of the village.

Deputy Director (DD) Bidhubhushon Roy of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat said harvest of early variety Aman has been almost completed.

"The rest of the paddy which is still in the fields have been damaged by the recent wind," the DD added.

For plucking a pomelo!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A farmer, who was stabbed for plucking a pomelo from a tree on a disputed land in Khansama upazila on Friday, died yesterday.

The deceased was Dhaneshwar Chandra Roy, 35, son of Hebba Kanta Roy of Brojopara village. Family sources said Dhaneshwar went to the pomelo garden around 5:30pm on Friday.

When he was returning home after plucking a pomelo, family members of Bhombal Chandra Roy all of a sudden started beating and stabbed him.

Critically injured Dhaneshwar was rushed to the upazila health complex and then shifted to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital where he died early yesterday.

Tk 11cr road repair work stalled amid protest

Massive irregularities alleged

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Sunamganj

Amid locals' protest against low quality work, the authorities have stopped the work for repair and widening of Chhatak-Doarabazar road in Sunamganj.

Tender was called for widening the 14-kilometre Chhatak-Doarabazar road (from existing 12 feet to 18 feet) in July last year and Sohel Mia, proprietor of Yunus A-Brothers in Sylhet, started the work under a Tk 10.64 crore work order in mid-October. Most of the work has already been done.

"Seeing the nature of the work, it seems the road will not last even a year. The road work should be done with three-inch sand and three-inch stone, but the contractor applied four-inch sand and one-inch stone. And the compacting work should be done with 8-inch stone, but it is being done with two to three inch stone," said Gurudas Dey, a resident of Khamarpotti area in Doarabazar upazila.

Abul Mia of Nanegaon in the same upazila said carpeting is supposed to be 40-millimetre-thick but it is 16 to 17 millimetres. Although half-inch stones are supposed to be used in the carpeting, low quality smaller stones are being used.

As locals raised serious protest against the matter, Doarabazar Upazila Parishad Chairman Idris Ali Bir Pratik informed the executive engineer of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) about the work on Tuesday.

"We cannot allow such low quality work. And so, the work has been closed," said Idris Ali. Shafiqul Islam, executive engineer of RHD in Sunamganj, said, "Following allegations, I have asked for stopping the work. I will take decision after visiting."

Contractor Sohel Mia said, "The tender was for road widening. Later, repair work of the middle part of the road was included as it was damaged due to the flood in March this year. But the allocation for the work has not been increased."

Three die in wall collapse

UNB, Dhaka

Three people, including a minor boy, were killed and three others injured in separate incidents of wall collapse in Gazipur and Kushtia yesterday.

In Gazipur, a woman and a two-year-old boy were killed in Kainjanul and Pubail area of Sadar upazila.

The deceased are Selina Akhter, a readymade garment worker and wife of Erajul Haque of Thakurgaon, and Jahid, son of Sumon Miah of Bajitpur upazila in Kishoreganj.

Selina was killed and another injured when a wall of an adjacent house collapsed on her house at Kainjanul village, said Shah Alam, member of ward No 7 under Bhawal Mirzapur union.

Councillor Hossain Ara Siddiq of ward No 40 said a wall of an adjoining house collapsed on a room around 3:00am, leaving Jahid dead on the spot and his mother and aunt injured.

Away in Kushtia, Rupchand, 52, was killed when a portion of a mud-wall of his house fell on him at Chithalia Mallikpara in Mirpur upazila, said Chithalia UP Chairman Gias Uddin.

Two girls kill selves for cellphones

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Two schoolgirls killed themselves in Nilphamari and Dinajpur in the last two days. A 15-year-old girl allegedly committed suicide as her parents took away her cellphone at Rupahara Balapara village in Nilphamari's Dimla upazila on Friday.

The deceased was Bakul Rani, daughter of Bibhuti Roy of the village, and a student of Class IX at Dimla Government Girls' High School, reports our correspondent.

Police and family sources said Bokul's parents rebuked her in the evening as she used to talk over mobile phone till midnight regularly, hampering her study. They also took away her cellphone.

After the incident, Bakul went to her room and took pesticide. She later died at the upazila health complex.

An unnatural death case was filed in this regard, said Moazzem Hossain, officer-in-charge of Dimla Police Station.

In Dinajpur, a eighth grader took her life by hanging herself as her parents seized her mobile phone in Parbatipur upazila of the district yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The deceased was identified as Rajanya Paul, 14, daughter of grocer Koushik Paul of Kholahati village. She was a student of Ganangkur Model High School.

The girl's mother Aporna Paul, a primary schoolteacher, said her daughter used to talk over mobile till late night every day.

As Rajanya's JSC examinations will begin from first November, her parents took away the cellphone from her yesterday which angered her.

As the parents went out of home keeping their daughter alone in the morning, the girl took her life by hanging herself from the ceiling of her room, said police.

Double crop farming

Lalmonirhat farmers cultivate two crops at same time for the same cost as for one item

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Simultaneous cultivation of two crops on the same land is gaining popularity among farmers in the district as they get better profit for the same expenditure as for one crop.

Many farmers are getting the benefits of the method of farming, and many others are getting interested in it. Agriculture officials are also creating awareness and interest among the farmers for fallow crop farming.

Anowar Hossain, 46, of Durakuti village in Sadar upazila said he started the innovative farming, locally called *sathi fasal*, two years ago after seeing its benefit in neighbouring villages. "I have cultivated beans on 50 decimals of land and also cucumber in the same field at the same cost as for one crop,"

he said, adding that he spends extra only for additional labour.

"Bed system is essential for such farming and there is no shortage in production of crops in this system," said farmer Meherul Islam, 52, of the same village. "In this system, farmers should take proper care of the cropland," he added.

Farmer Surendranath Barmon, 58, of Kamlabari village in Aditmari upazila, said he has cultivated pumpkin on 85 decimals of land and also chilli on the same land at the same cost. "I have been enjoying the benefit of double crop farming for the last four years," he said, adding that he advises local farmers to cultivate in the way to increase their earning.

"We especially avoid using chemical fertilisers and pesticides in fallow crop

fields, and use compost instead," said Khoka Miah, 55, of the same village. "We use the bed system of cultivation as it helps us to get bumper yield of crops," he added.

Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Enamul Haque said agriculture officials always encourage farmers to cultivate crops, especially vegetables, using bed system. "The double crop farming is enriching our agriculture sector," he added.

Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in the district Bidhubhushon Roy said farmers are earning better profit from farming crops, especially vegetables, on the same land at the same cost. DAE officials are popularising the two-crop farming among the farmers, he added.



A farmer working in his fallow crop field in Durakuti village under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Internet to be slow

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seconds' interruption could cause huge damage". But slow internet is quite better than remaining completely without it, Mahmood added.

The country's first under-sea cable, SEA-ME-WE-4, will be shut down for at least three days starting from the early hours of October 23 for running a lot of maintenance work at a depth of 115 kilometers in the Bay of Bengal from the cable landing station in Cox's Bazar.

This will be the first time the cable will be fully shut down in its history of 12 years, said Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Ltd (BSCCL).

The consortium of SEA-ME-WE-4 made the announcement of maintenance

a few months back but BSCCL could not organise any alternative connectivity for the period.

They issued a public notice, signed by Mashiur Rahman, managing director of BSCCL, on October 19 stating that the maintenance work might lead to customers getting slow internet speeds.

This correspondent could not reach Rahman yesterday despite several attempts.

Currently Bangladesh is using about 450 Gbps of bandwidth. BSCCL supplies 250 Gbps and an additional 200 Gbps is imported from India.

Of BSCCL's 250 Gbps, about 200 Gbps is supplied through SEA-ME-WE-4.

Bangladesh is currently

using about 200 Gbps of bandwidth through SEA-ME-WE-4. However, all this bandwidth cannot be routed through a recently connected second submarine cable (SEA-ME-WE-5) of the country.

Emdadul Hoque, general secretary of the Internet Service Provider Association of Bangladesh, said BSCCL can hardly route 100 Gbps through SEA-ME-WE-5 and they have not arranged any other alternative.

So there will be a shortage of 100 to 120 Gbps of bandwidth in the country for the next three to four days, he said. "This will cause internet speeds to slow down in the country," said Hoque.

What customers currently can do within 30 minutes will take 40 to 50

minutes when SEA-ME-WE-4 is shut down and there will be no other problem, Hoque also added.

Earlier in January the country experienced a temporary disruption in internet services due to maintenance work on the submarine cable.

At that time BSCCL had no other alternative submarine cable connection. Internet users of the country also experienced the same in October last year.

As of August, the country's total internet connections reached 7.71 crore, of which 7.19 crore connections come from mobile operators, according to a Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission report.

MAHALCHHARI FISH LANDING STATION

Fishers give revenue, denied govt facilities

SAIKAT DEWAN, Khagrachhari

Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation (BFDC) collects a large amount of revenue every year through the fish landing centre in Mahalchhari upazila of the district, but fishermen and fish traders do not get any facilities from the government.

Mahalchhari fish landing centre is one of five landing centres on the bank of Kaptai lake. Although the government collects revenue from the centre every year, there has been no development of the centre. The BFDC office is run with only five employees, while the ice factory there never went into production, and there is no arrangement for fish packaging.

The government imposed restrictions on fishing in Kaptai lake in the fish breeding season (from May to

July). Officer-in-Charge of Mahalchhari sub-station of BFDC Nasir Ullah Ahmed said BFDC earned Tk 32.43 lakh in August and September after lifting of the ban, while the catch was 2 lakh 17 thousand 643 kg.

Leaders of Mahalchhari Fisheries Association said there are 1,688 registered fishermen in the upazila. Apart from this, many fishermen catch fish in Kaptai lake every day. The fish are sent to Feni, Comilla and Dhaka.

The leaders of the association complained that they pay revenue to the government but get little benefit. There is no shed for fish packaging and the BFDC ice factory is not in operation, they said, adding that they cannot preserve the fish due to lack of ice.

Rabiul Islam, a leader of the association, said the ice problem is very seri-

ous in Mahalchhari. Ice is needed during storage and transport of fish, but the necessary quantity is not produced there.

There are several private ice factories in Mahalchhari, but they cannot meet the needs of the fishermen, he said, adding that the BFDC ice factory could have met the demand as its production capacity is more.

Mahalchhari Fisheries Association General Secretary Abul Khayer said the fishermen live in want during the ban period, but the government does not have any incentive for them, while the fishermen of Rangamati get benefit from the government.

Nasir of BFDC said the centre needs more manpower.

District Fisheries Officer Abdul Rauf acknowledged the problems of the fishermen in the upazila.