

Flood turns arable land sandy

Lalmonirhat farmers worried

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The prolonged flood last year covered farmlands in two villages of Sadar upazila with a huge quantity of sand, worrying farmers as they are not sure if they can plant crops on the lands.

Around 300 farmer families of Nagartari and Falimari in Mogholhat union are upset as their 2,300 bighas of arable lands have turned into sandy land where crop farming is uncertain. These arable lands were used to grow different crops, mainly paddy, before August in 2017, but they are lying unused now as they are covered with sand carried by floodwater from upstream last year.

Afsar Ali, 63, of Nagartari village, said he has eight bighas of arable land, but they have turned into sandy land. "Huge quantities of sand were dumped on arable lands by the floodwater of the Dharla river last year, but the sand was not washed away and the lands turned sandy," he added.

"I cultivated Boro paddy on our five bighas last year, but the land is unused this year as farming paddy is not possible," said Nur Mohammad, 58, of the same village.

"People of 300 families in two villages are dependent on agriculture, and now we do not know how we will manage our livelihood," he said.

"It is not possible to remove sand from the lands manually, so we do not know when they will be fit to grow different crops, especially paddy," said Nazrul Islam, 50, of Falimari village, adding that they are preparing to cultivate crops that can grow on sandy land.

Mogholhat Union Parishad Chairman Habibur Rahman said sand has covered the land in two villages of his union, so many villagers are going to the capital and other areas of the country for managing jobs. "A few farmers have started farming sandy land crops, but most of the lands are unused," he added.

Upazila Department of Agriculture Extension Deputy Director Bidhubhushon Roy told this correspondent that if farmers can remove the sand from their lands they can farm paddy and other crops, otherwise they should go for farming sandy land items like onion, garlic, maize and banana. "It takes 15 to 20 years for the sand to be naturally washed away from the arable lands," he added.



Paddy and other crops were cultivated on this land in Nagartari village in Mogholhat union under Sadar upazila of Lalmonirhat, but no crops can be grown now as it is covered with sand deposited by the prolonged flood last year. The picture was taken a few days ago. PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Happiness is a gerbera

Two Jhenidah farmers grow the flower for first time in district

AZIBOR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

Happiness is a gerbera: so thought the Victorians of the tropical flower that was originally domesticated in South Africa and is now commonplace worldwide. To the Egyptians gerberas symbolised closeness to nature. The Celts believed this flower could ameliorate the sorrows and stresses of daily life. Relatively new to Bangladesh and first cultivated in Magura, two pioneering farmers in neighbouring Jhenidah are now trying their hand at growing happiness.

"We started farming gerberas in mid-2017 with seeds collected from India," says Tipu Sultan, who together with his friend Nur Mohammad has introduced the variety to Jhenidah, on three bighas of land in Chhoto Ghighati village, in Trilochonpur union of Kaliganj upazila. "Each plant

begins to flower after three months, and will continue producing flowers for about three years."

Perennial gerberas are available in a wide range of bright colours, from deepest red to warm yellows, creams, whites and shades of peach. They have the ability to remove various toxins from the air and while other flowers slow down photosynthesis during evening hours, gerberas continue to release oxygen, which has earned them a reputation for promoting sound sleep.

"They are quite expensive to grow," says Tipu. "We spent around Tk 33 lakh to get established, including fertiliser, medicines, shade cloth, fences and labour. But gerberas promise to be profitable. Already by January we have sold Tk 15 lakh worth of the flowers; and currently around 1,000 gerberas are harvested

daily. Each flower fetches around Tk 15."

The flowers, which stay fresh for up to fifteen days after harvest, are shipped to markets in Dhaka, Chittagong and Sylhet, where there is reliable demand.

With 320 hectares dedicated to flower production, Kaliganj upazila is hardly new to floriculture. Tuberose, marigolds and gladioli are among established varieties popular with farmers. But according to the local agriculture officer Jahidul Karim, this is the first attempt to commercially produce gerberas. He believes the area's soil will prove conducive to a healthy harvest.

Understandably, the gerbera plot has stoked curiosity. Many farmers from neighbouring villages have taken the time to inspect the gerberas; it seems inevitable that in Jhenidah, this particular species of happiness will soon spread.



INDIGENOUS TEA WORKERS

Languages, cultures at stake

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Small indigenous groups living in tea gardens of Sylhet division are gradually losing their own languages and cultures as the hard-pressed people have very little awareness about the matter.

Around seven lakh people live in 158 tea gardens in Sylhet division, according to Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union, an organisation of tea workers.

Use of own languages by the indigenous tea workers, generally introduced as 'Cha Jonogoshi' (tea people), sees a decline as the people belonging to different ethnic and language speaking groups generally speak Bhojpuri or Bangla for communication with other groups.

"Our children do not want to learn Mundari language as we often use Bangla. Our new generation do not know much about their own identity, language, culture and heritage," said British Munda, 45, a tea worker of Miringa tea garden in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar.

His neighbour Dipali Kanda, 34, echoed the same.

"With a daily wage of Tk 85, we tea garden

workers struggle for existence. There is hardly any scope to think of anything else," said Satyajit Mahali, head of a five-member family at Deoracherra tea garden in Kamalganj.

Mamata, a Santali girl residing at the tea garden, said she knows Santali dance but she cannot speak her language.

Mesbah Kamal, professor of history at University of Dhaka, said he has so far identified 15 different language speaking communities and 131 ethnic groups among the people living in tea garden areas of Sylhet region.

Indigenous tea workers are not able to practise their own culture and lifestyle due to their poor living conditions, he said.

The government should come forward to protect the languages and cultures of small indigenous groups so that their original identities are not lost in course of time, said ASM Zakaria, acting head of anthropology department at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.

Jyoti Sinha, district cultural officer of Moulvibazar, said, "As part of the government's steps to protect the tea people's languages and cultures, we are trying to constantly interact with them."

Urea production resumes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Urea production at Jamuna Fertilizer Company Ltd (JFCL) in Sarishabari upazila resumed on Sunday after the production got halted as the supply of natural gas to JFCL was stopped by the authorities concerned on January 31.

Directed by Petrobangla, Titas Gas and Transmission Company withdrew the gas from JFCL to provide it to gas-fuelled power plants for adequate power generation to keep the power-run irrigation pumps running during this boro-season, said Mahbuba Sultana, managing director of JFCL.

After 15 days of the withdrawal, the transmission company released the gas supply to JFCL on February 15, and the factory started urea production on Sunday afternoon, said Mahbuba.

DRIVER MURDER Seven-day ultimatum to arrest killers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Transport owners and workers here yesterday gave a seven-day ultimatum to the authorities concerned to arrest the killers of a driver. Driver Shajahan Mia, 45, was stabbed to death during a robbery in a bus on February 12.

Tangail District Bus-Minibus Owners' Association and Bus-Minibus Workers' Union leaders gave the ultimatum at a press conference at Tangail Press Club.

They also demanded strengthening of security on the Dhaka-Tangail highway.

They said they will enforce transport strike in the district on February 26 if their demands are not met by the deadline.

Tangail District Bus-Minibus Owners' Association President Iqbal Hossain, Bus-Minibus Workers' Union President Ahsanul Haque Pitu and General Secretary Mominul Islam Lavlu spoke at the press conference.

Mother dies after caesarean

Dead foetus found in her womb, doctor, hospital owner absconding, two staff held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A woman died on Sunday at a private hospital here, hours after a caesarean, due to negligence allegedly by the hospital authorities while foetus was found dead in her womb.

Victim Sreemati Putul Rani, 30, wife of Shibben Haldar, was resident of Jhajjar village in the upazila.

Meanwhile, police raided the hospital on Sunday night and arrested clinic manager Aminur Islam and staff Yousuf Ali in connection with the incident.

Earlier on the same night, deceased's husband Shibben Haldar filed a case with Sherpur Police Station accusing four people, including hospital owner Dr Akhtarul Alam Azad and Gynaecologist Surgeon Dr Lutfun Nesa.

Deceased's family members said, Putul Rani was admitted to Pulse General Hospital, located beside Dhaka-Bogra highway, with severe labour pain around 2:00am.

There was no doctor at that time at the hospital but the manager admitted the patient, ignoring importance of the case, they said.

Unattended for hours, finally Dr Lutfun Nesa, a hired doctor, visited the patient around 8:30am and conducted a caesarean operation but failed to save the foetus, victim's husband Shibben said.

As the patient's condition was deteriorating quickly the clinic authorities sent her to Bogra Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital by a hired microbus, where the doctors declared her dead around 3:00pm, he said.

Police are conducting drives to arrest the other accused in the case, Officer-in-Charge of Sherpur Police Station Rafiqul Islam said, adding that they will take necessary steps in this regard after investigation.

Trader found murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A trader was found murdered in Rangpur's Mithapukur yesterday, a day after he went missing from Pirganj.

The deceased was Rashedul Islam, son of Abu Bakkar Siddique of Sahapur village in Mithapukur. He ran a small shop at Baradarga village in Pirganj.

Locals said Rashedul went out of his shop after receiving a phone call on Sunday evening and remained missing since then.

Informed by locals, police recovered the body from Rashidpur in Mithapukur upazila. The body was sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Rangpur Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Criminals tortured Rashedul to death, said Mozammel Haque, officer-in-charge of Mithapukur Police Station.

They are raiding different areas to arrest the killers, said the OC.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (RAJUK)
Ministry of Housing and Public Works
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Memo No. RAJUK/Purbachal/PPP/Water/01/2018 Date: 15 February 2018

Notice for Invitation for Bid (IFB)

Development of Water Distribution and Supply Facilities at Purbachal New Town Through Public Private Partnership

Rajdhani Unnayan Karttripakkha (RAJUK), under the Ministry of Housing and Public Works, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, intends to undertake a project for the development of the water distribution and supply facilities at Purbachal New Town on a PPP basis (the Project) and hereby invites Registered Entities to submit bids in response to the IFB, wherein a private partner (national and/or international) will be selected to develop the Project.

The IFB and other relevant documents are available at <http://www.pppo.gov.bd>. The interested bidders have to purchase the IFB on payment of a non-refundable fee of Bangladesh Taka fifty thousand (BDT 50,000) or US dollars six hundred (USD 600) to be paid in the form of Pay Order/Bank Draft in favour of Chairman, RAJUK from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh (for local currency-BDT) or wire transfer in favour of Chairman, RAJUK, FCAD-161012, Sonali Bank Ltd., Wage Earner's Corporate Branch, 62, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000, SWIFT code-BSONBDDHWEB (for foreign currency-USD), and email the scanned copy of the payment receipt to pdppurbachal@rajukdhaka.gov.bd.

Interested bidders, who have purchased the IFB, have to register through an online process at <http://www.pppo.gov.bd/> to access all project related documents and participate in the bidding process (Registered Entities). A pre-bid meeting will be held on 8 March 2018, details of which will be duly notified to the Registered Entities through the online process. The details of the bid submission process and requirements have been set out in the IFB. The bids must be submitted on or before 1200 hours BST, 16 April 2018 to the following address:

Chairman, RAJUK
RAJUK Board Room, 3rd Floor, Rajuk Bhaban, Motijheel, Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh.
RAJUK reserves the right to accept, reject and/or re-invite the bids or to annul the bidding process at any time, without any liability and assigning any reason thereof.

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