



The land acquired nearly 30 years ago for establishing an industrial area of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation in Satashia area in Muktagachha upazila of Mymensingh is being grabbed by influential people as the project is yet to start.

PHOTO: STAR

LAND ACQUISITION ENDS 3 DECADES AGO BSCIC industrial area not yet ready

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

The land acquisition process was completed around three decades ago for establishing Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation's (BSCIC) industrial area in Muktagachha, but the project is yet to be started.

With a view to setting up the industrial area at Satashia, beside Mymensingh-Tangail highway in Muktagachha, 5.20 acres of agricultural land was acquired in 1991. Later, only the earth filling of the land was done.

Now, vested quarters are grabbing the land but the authorities concerned have taken no steps to protect it from the grabbers, locals alleged.

The area is near the borders of Mymensingh, Jamalpur and Tangail and is well-connected with the district town and Dhaka, so the project can be successful, said Zakir Hossain Babul, a fish trader in Muktagachha.

Huge quantity of agricultural products and fruits, including banana, jackfruit and pineapple, are grown in the upazila, and there are also lots of fruits in adjacent Madhupur Forest in Tangail, locals said.

Establishing agri-based industries here will be very beneficial as the upazila also has gas facility, they said.

If the project is completed, entrepreneurs

of Mymensingh and outside would be benefited, creating job opportunities for hundreds of people, said Kumargata Union Parishad Chairman Md Akbar Ali Sarker.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Subarna Sarkar said a portion of the land has been grabbed as it has been lying unused for a long time.

The UNO said she and other officials of the upazila administration visited the site recently and asked Assistant Commissioner (AC-land) Razib-Ul-Ahsan to measure the land and submit a report to the concerned ministry. The grabbed land will be recovered soon, she said.

Preferring not to be named, an official of BSCIC, Mymensingh, said the Muktagachha project taken for fruit processing and storage of different vegetables was gazetted in 2015 for allocation of 38 plots. The cost of the project is around Tk 26.35 lakh, he said.

The entrepreneurs are not showing much interest as the government fixed the price of land at Tk 2 lakh per decimal, and 70 percent of the total price has to be paid as down-payment, which the entrepreneurs think is too costly, the official said.

They usually allocate the plots to the entrepreneurs after ensuring necessary facilities, including road and supply of electricity and water, but no such facilities are available now, he added.

Road to recovery

Mymensingh schoolgirl with spinal injury walks again

MD AMINUL ISLAM with ANDREW EAGLE

When thirteen-year-old Hajera Akhter from Chaurapara village in Mymensingh Sadar upazila fractured her spine in a road accident last November, it seemed all hopes for her life were dashed. Her family couldn't afford her treatment. Thankfully, after her plight was highlighted in a 22 December 2017 report in this newspaper, a multinational offered to fund her recovery. Now Hajera can walk again. She looks set to rejoin her school soon, with renewed zeal to study.

School has always been of particular significance to Hajera. An adept student, she hoped that with a successful education she could help her mentally unwell father and impoverished family. Thus it was particularly harrowing last year when an auto-rickshaw ploughed into the rickshaw van carrying her and her friends, on their way to sit for the Junior School Certificate exams.

At the time of the accident, Hajera's brothers Aynul and Monsurul Islam were both employed as garment workers, though Aynul had to leave his job to look after his sister. The family tried their best to cover her medical expenses, but it proved beyond their means.

"We sold our goats and chickens and borrowed money," says her mother Safia Akhter. "We spent Tk 50,000 but it didn't help."

Doctors suggested she may need to be treated in India.

Hajera was bedridden at home for over a month without any hope of further treatment. She had bedsores, her future in the hands of fate.

Following The Daily Star's report, the authorities of a multinational company generously came to Hajera's aid. On 27 December 2017 she was admitted to a private hospital in Dhaka where she underwent treat-

ment for a month.

Still on the road to recovery, Hajera can already walk again, with support.

"The doctors gave advice about nutritious food to hasten her recovery," says her brother, Aynul. "We would like to do that but it isn't easy since we have difficulty in general to provide daily meals for our eleven-member family."

Nevertheless Hajera's confidence in her future has returned. "I am really hopeful that I can return to school soon and meet my friends again. I feel much better and I definitely want to sit for my Junior School Certificate this year."

The chairman of the local Char Sirta union council, Saifuddin Ahmed Bakul, says he is regularly updated concerning Hajera's progress and has also taken initiative to offer financial assistance.



Road accident victim thirteen-year-old Hajera Akhter with spinal injury can walk now.

PHOTO: STAR

Labour crisis hits Boro harvest

Rain, threat of saline water also worry Bagerhat farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Shortage of farm labourers is hampering harvesting of Boro crop in the district this season, creating problems for the growers.

The price of one maund of paddy is Tk 550 to Tk 600, while the daily wage of a day labourer is Tk 650 to Tk 700.

Harvesting began in late April and will continue till June, but unavailability of farm labourers has left the farmers uncertain about timely reaping of Boro paddy, said farmers and agriculture officials.

"Farmer as well as day labourers are very busy reaping, husking, transporting and preserving their paddy as it rains daily," said Sanatan Das, a farmer of Sandgia village in Kachua upazila.

"Saline water could submerge our land at any time if someone breaks the protection dam to let in saline water

for cultivating shrimp," he added

"We hired day labourers from Jatrapur Haat. They come from Naogaon, Chapainawabganj and Natore. We are selling the paddy at Tk 550 to Tk 600 per maund," said Swapan of Biskhali village in Morrelganj upazila.

"We have to pay the labourers Tk 650 to Tk 700 and give them meals three times daily. But we are still not getting enough labourers for cutting, transporting and husking the paddy as well as preserving the straw for our cattle," he added.

"We get about 45 maunds to 50 maunds of paddy from one bigha of land. Four to 10 labourers are needed only to cut the crop on one bigha. Then more labourers are needed to carry the paddy from the field to the house," said Gopal Das.

"We are not getting sufficient labourers to save our ripe paddy from

the rain and storm," he added

"I have cut down my paddy and it is in the field as I could not get more labourers to carry it to my house," said Mrinal Mondal of Bagmaravillage in Sadar upazila.

"We have got bumper production, but it is getting rotten in field due to the labour shortage," he said.

"A total of 56,055 hectares of land were brought under Boro cultivation in the district this year, and we have got bumper production. Most of the farmers have got 40 maunds to 45 maunds of paddy from one bigha of land," said Additional Director of Bagerhat Department of Agricultural Extension Aftab Uddin.

"Boro harvesting is being hampered due to shortage of labourers. We are not able to use the combine harvesters as they need plain land. It is difficult to drive the harvester from one plot to another. We are using some small rice cutters introduced by ACI," he added.

Farmer, nephew electrocuted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A farmer and his nephew were electrocuted at Fanurgram village in Ishwarganj upazila yesterday.

The victims were farmer Chand Mia, 55, and his nephew Mistarul Islam, 25.

Mistarul was a student of Government Ananda Mohan College.

Chand was electrocuted when he came in contact with a live electric wire while harvesting paddy in a nearby field, said Ishwarganj Police Station Officer-in-Charge Badrul Alam Khan.

Mistarul was also electrocuted when he tried to save his uncle, the OC said.

Lemon farming a blessing for Sreemangal farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Lemon farmers in Sreemangal upazila of the district are very happy due to a bumper yield and good prices of the popular citrus fruit this year.

Harvesting is going on while buyers from different areas are coming to buy the fruit.

The prices are almost the double compared to last year, farmer Mizan Mia of Jamburacherra of Srimangal upazila told this correspondent during his visit to the area.

"I started lemon cultivation in the area around 10 years ago. I got a bumper yield due to the availability of water, favourable weather, suitable land and cheap labour cost,"

said Milon Mia, a farmer of Jamburacherra village in same upazila.

After seeing his success, many farmers started cultivating lemon on their land in Sreemangal area.

"Earlier I depended on fishing or work as a farm labourer to maintain my family. Then I took job at a lemon garden. Two years ago, I started lemon farming in hilly area and got profit. I will extend my farm as per profit," Md Mustafa Khan of Krishnachura village said.

Many people, especially marginal farmers, are being benefited by lemon farming, said Shaymal Deb Borna of Tipracherra.

Hazi Jasim Uddin, president of local pineapple and lemon whole-

salers' association, said now the wholesale price of 1000 pieces of lemon is Tk 4000-5000 while it was only Tk 1500-2000 last year.

Lemons produced at Sreemangal commanded a better market price due to its quality and taste.

Bijoy Banerjee, chairman of Rajghat Union Parishad in Sreemangal, said, farmers had been cultivating lemon at Tipracherra, Jerin, Harincherra, Biddabeel, Alubari, Kalacherra, Fulcherra, Longlia, Modonmohonpur, Sisilbar and Kanlenji villages for decades but its cultivation has increased largely during the last few years.

According to a statistics of the Department of Agricultural

Extension (DAE), Moulvibazar, lemon has been cultivated on 1655 hectares of land in the district this year while it was 1625 hectares last year.

The district's lemon production was 17,875 tonnes in last year while the target is 19,860 tonnes this year.

In Sreemangal upazila, last year's production was 13,406 tonnes, while this year's target is 14,895 tonnes.

"The soil of Sreemangal is suitable for lemon farming. Many people are now engaged in the profitable cultivation on previously fallow lands and we provide necessary assistance to the growers," said Md Shahjahan, deputy director of Moulvibazar DAE.



A grower shows lemon, brought for sale at Jamburachhara in Sreemangal upazila of Moulvibazar. The area sees good yield of the citrus fruit this season.

PHOTO: STAR

Bullet-hit body recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

A bullet-hit body of an alleged robber was found under a bridge on Monday at Luterchar of Meghna upazila.

Meghna Police Station Officer-in-Charge ASM Samsuddin said the deceased, Jahangir, 35, son of Abul Hashem of Boro Baipara village of the upazila, was wanted in several robbery cases under different police stations.

Locals said they called the police after they found a body lying in muddy water under the Luterchar bridge. Later, police recovered the body.

The body bore marks of three bullet injuries in chest, right hand and left leg.

AL LEADER MURDER

Accused beaten dead in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

An accused in the AL leader Swapna murder case was killed in a mass beating in Nabinagar upazila early hours of Tuesday.

The incident took place around 2:45am as he was caught while trying to steal in the house of one Farid Mia of Laor Fatehpur village.

The victim was identified as Abu Sayeed, 36, alias 'Saiddya Chora', son of late Abdus Salam of Charpara village.

Sayeed was arrested on charge of killing Nabinagar upazila Awami League Women Affairs Secretary Swapna Akter in Bayazid area of Chattogram city on November 25 last year, said Nabinagar Police Station Inspector (Investigation) Razu Ahmed.

"Sayeed had entered the house of Farid for stealing and stabbed a woman as she sensed his presence. The family members and the neighbours caught him red-handed as the woman started screaming. They beat Sayeed indiscriminately, leaving him dead on the spot," he said.

Sayeed was an accused in five cases, including those for Swapna murder and a gang-rape in Chattogram, the OC added.