



One of the irrigation pumps, set up along the nearly dried up Chikondiya river in Goalnagar area in Brahmanbaria's Nasirnagar upazila, has remained inoperative due to inadequate flow of water in the river this season.

PHOTO: MASUK HRIDROY

Drying of river hampers Boro farming in B'baria

MASUK HRIDROY, Brahmanbaria

Boro cultivation on 4,000 bighas of land in six villages of Nasirnagar upazila has been facing a serious setback this year due to insufficient flow of water in the dried up Chikondiya river.

In such a situation, at least 20 irrigation pumps in those villages have become inoperative and farmers could not irrigate their fields during the ongoing Boro season.

As a result, fear of food shortage has been looming upon the 40,000 inhabitants of the six villages.

Upazila Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer Habib Hasan said the 2.5 kilometre-long river, a branch of the Meghna river, has been silted due to the ongoing unplanned dredging in the Meghna in Kishoreganj.

Although Chikondiya river has always maintained a normal water flow in the previous dry seasons, this year it is already dried up, he said, adding that, as a result, Boro farmers in Sonatola, Kadamtoli, Maijkhola, Jamarbali, Simerkandi and Laluartok villages under Goalnagar union have been facing serious crisis of irrigational water.

Farmer Abdun Noor of Sonatola village said, "Due to the acute crisis of irrigational water many farmers in the area couldn't go for Boro cultivation this year, though the situation was not that worse last year."

Brick kiln owner Shahjahan Mia of the village said as his brickfield is on the bank of Chikondiya and it doesn't have any road communication facilities, he used to carry his produce by boats earlier.

But this year, due to the navigation crisis he has stopped the production and incurring a huge loss as well, he said, adding that the situation has thrown over 100 labourers of the brickfield towards unemployment.

Goalnagar Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Azharul Haque Chowdhury, who appealed to the Water Development Board (WDB) to take steps to make the river free-flowing once again, said if the dredging of the river is not conducted immediately, farmers will have to face serious problems.

They have prepared a list of all the dried up rivers and canals in the district, Brahmanbaria WDB Executive Engineer Mohammad Shahinuzzaman said, adding that steps will be taken to restore the water flows through dredging.

Polan Sarker laid to rest beside his library

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Ekushey Padak winner Polan Sarker, also known as 'the walking library', has found his final resting place next to the library he had built at his village home Bausa in Rajshahi's Bagha upazila.

Yesterday around 10:15am, before the burial, thousands from near and far poured in at the playground of Harunur Rashid Shah High School that also had his contribution during its founding.

They gathered there to offer namaz-e-janaza and to show last respect to the man revered for his life-long passion for disseminating knowledge through lending books, by walking on foot for miles.

Many of the school's present and former students paid solemn tribute to Polan Sarker for touching their lives through books that they had received from him for their outstanding results at the school each year.

Rajshahi Deputy Commissioner SM Abdul Kader was present on the occasion with a floral wreath. He conveyed a condolence message from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to Polan Sarker's family members.

The DC also announced that he would take initiatives for nationalising the school and for naming a building of the school

after Polan Sarker.

Rajshahi Superintendent of Police Md Shahidullah said the country is mourning the death of Polan Sarker.

Admirers from all walks of life including political, business, cultural and social personalities from surrounding areas attended the janaza.

Polan Sarker breathed his last at his home around 12:30pm on Friday, aged 98.

Born as Harez Uddin in Natore's Bagatipara upazila on September 10, 1921, Polan Sarker was a self-made man with a passion for learning.

After his father's death, Polan could not continue schooling after class six. But his eagerness to learn did not wane.

He developed a habit of buying books from local libraries, gradually becoming a voracious reader.

Soon Polan became skilled enough in Bangla to be hired for writing legal deeds, business agreements, and keeping meeting minutes.

After he was diagnosed with diabetes in his 80s, he was told to walk at least three kilometres a day. He used this as an opportunity to walk to villagers' homes and lend them his own books.

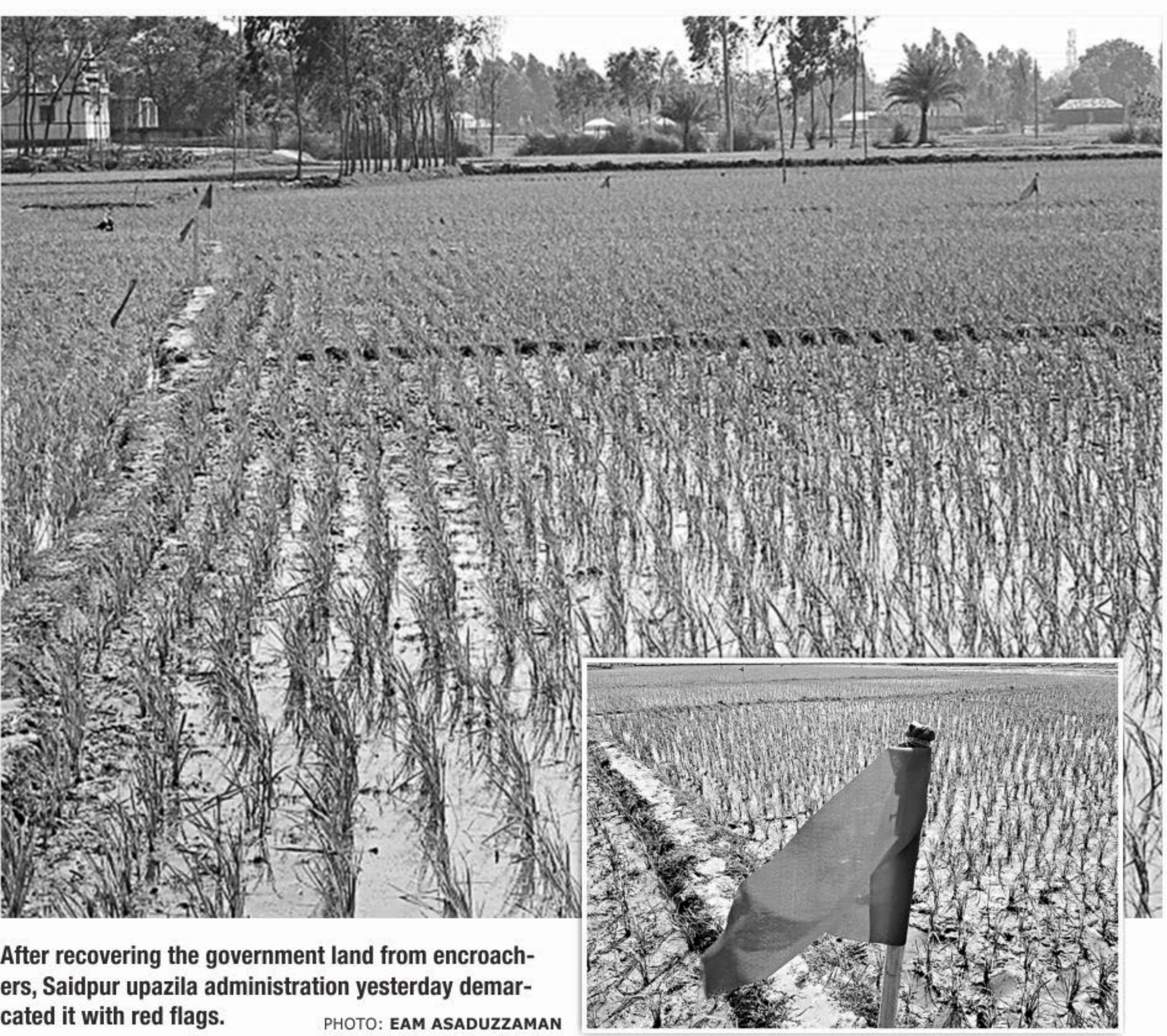
He continued to hand-deliver the books for almost three decades.

In 2008, he built the library on his own land.



A section of the crowd that thronged Harunur Rashid Shah High School premises in Rajshahi's Bagha upazila where namaz-e-janaza of Polan Sarker was held yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR



After recovering the government land from encroachers, Saidpur upazila administration yesterday demarcated it with red flags.

PHOTO: EAM ASADUZZAMAN

5.16-acre govt land freed from grabbers in Saidpur

The encroachers had illegally sold part of the land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Around 5.16 acres of government land worth about Tk 6 crore was recovered in a drive yesterday from illegal occupation in Saidpur municipality.

Saidpur upazila assistant commissioner (AC) of land led the drive in Dhalagas mouja.

AC Land Ashikur Rahman said the encroachers sold earth from the land to brick kilns and cultivated paddy there. They also illegally sold a portion of the land to a large industrial unit adjacent to the piece of land and were making preparations to sell the remainder of the land to the same buyer.

The encroachers are -- Ziko Ahmed, former chairman of neighbouring Kamar Pukur Union Parishad; Ziko's brother; Motiar Rahman, former LGED upazila engineer of Sadar upazila; Abdul Mazid, a retired official of Saidpur land office; and one Aminul Islam, said the official.

Porimal Kumar Sarker, AC land in Saidpur, said although there had been some objections initially, the drive completed successfully.

"Red flags have been posted around the recovered land [to demarcate it and] to prevent trespassing," he added.

However, one of the encroachers, Aminul Islam, said they extended full cooperation to the government team during the drive.

Contacted, Saidpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer SM Golam Kibria said, "We're planning to rehabilitate impoverished landless people by setting up a housing project on the recovered land."

GANG RAPE OF SCHOOLGIRL One of the four accused arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Projoipur

Police on Friday detained a youth in connection with a case for gang raping a schoolgirl in Mathbaria upazila on November 30 last year.

Following a case filed by the victim's mother with Mathbaria Police Station against four local youths under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act on Friday, police detained Ismail Jamaddar, 20, from his house.

According to the case statement, one Saiful Jamaddar of the upazila deceived the victim, saying that he had some talks to share when the girl, then a Class IX student at a local high school, was going to attend her tuition class on November 30 afternoon and took her to a nearby house.

Later, Saiful and three of his associates, who had been waiting there, gang-raped her and captured the incident in cellphones.

The culprits also threatened the girl not to disclose the matter to anybody.

On February 24, the gang waylaid the girl on her way to school, told her to give them another chance and threatened her to upload the captured video in the internet if she refuses.

After returning home, the girl told her family members of the incident, who lodged the case with Mathbaria Police Station.

"We detained Ismail on Friday afternoon and are trying to arrest the three other accused Saiful, Shawon and Nazmul," said Mathbaria Police Station OC Sawkat Anwar Islam.

AL faces 'rebel' candidates in seven Faridpur UZs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Awami League (AL) nominated candidates in seven out of nine upazilas in Faridpur are facing rebel candidates in the upcoming upazila parishad election.

Ten rebel candidates in Alfadanga, Bhanga, Sadarpur, Nagarkanda, Saltha, Charbhadrasan and Boalmari upazilas will vie for chairman post in the election to be held on March 18.

In Alfadanga, AL-backed candidate SM Akram Hossain, president of the upazila unit of AL, is facing three rebel candidates -- SM Jalaluddin, incumbent upazila parishad chairman and a member of district AL, Kazi Harunur-Rashid, president of Bana union Krishak League and AKM Zahidul Hasan, former member of the upazila unit of Jubo League.

SM Jalaluddin said, "SM Akram Hossain got party nomination but he has no acceptance among locals. So, local people urged me to take part in the polls."

In Bhanga, AL nominated candidate Zakir Hossain Mia, vice president of Bhanga upazila AL, is facing two rebel candidates.

The rebel candidates are Sahadat Hossain, incumbent chairman of the upazila parishad and former joint secretary of AL central sub-committee, and Kazi Hedayat Ullah, presi-

dent of Bhanga upazila AL.

In Sadarpur, Shahedid Gamal is AL nominated candidate and his rebel candidate is Kazi Safikur Rahman, incumbent Sadarpur upazila chairman and also the general secretary of the upazila AL.

In Nagarkanda, AL nominated candidate is Monirujaman Sorder, vice president of district AL, and his rebel candidate is Kazi Saha Jaman, former joint secretary of AL central sub-committee.

In Saltha, Delower Hossain is the AL nominated candidate while the rebel candidate is Abdul Wadud Matubbor, general secretary of Gotti union.

In Charbhadrasan, Md Kowsar, general secretary of the upazila AL, is the party-backed candidate and his rebel candidate is Anwer Ali Mollah, former joint general secretary of the upazila AL.

In Boalmari, AL nominated candidate is MM Mosharaf Hossain, running chairman of Boalmari upazila parishad, and also the president of Boalmari upazila AL, while his rebel candidate is Monirujaman alias Liton Mridha, a member of district Jubo League.

Syed Masud Hossain, general secretary of district AL, said the party can take action against those who will contest against the party nominated candidates.

2 teenagers return from Indian jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Two teenage boys returned home through Benapole check post yesterday after serving two years in an Indian jail.

Indian police handed them over to Bangladesh immigration police at Benapole.

The returnees are Sujoy Mandal, 15, son of Kiron Mandal of Monikhalhi village and Milon, 16, son of Bimol of Chankhali village in Satkhira.

Trafficers took the two to India alluring them of giving good job two and a half years ago, said police.

Officer-in-Charge Abul Basar of Benapole check post immigration police said Indian police arrested the boys from Kolkata town for entering the country without necessary documents.

The arrestees were later produced before an Indian court that sentenced them to two years' imprisonment.



Farmers hurriedly pick potatoes in a bid to save whatever they can at a field of Baluchar area in Sirajdikhan upazila of Munshiganj yesterday as unexpected spring rain during the last couple of days caused damage to the crop in different areas of the famous potato producing district.

PHOTO: FARHANA MIRZA