



Farmers in Boromchal area of Moulvibazar's Hakaluki haor harvest paddy as rivers in north-eastern districts started to inundate low-lying areas of the region on Saturday.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

FLOODING IN NORTH-EASTERN HAORS

Boro harvest in full swing

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Haors and low-lying areas of Sunamganj and Moulvibazar are getting flooded as almost all major rivers in the country's north-eastern districts and in the Indian state of Meghalaya are swelling up due to heavy rains, triggered by Cyclone Fani.

However, officials at Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) do not anticipate that the flooding will be able to cause any significant damage to local agriculture as most farmers have already harvested paddy from croplands before Fani swept through the country on Saturday, reports our Sylhet correspondent.

According to a bulletin, issued yesterday, by Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC) of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB), level of water in all major rivers in north-eastern region of the country is on the rise.

The Kangsha river is flowing 109 centimetres above the danger level, while the Jadukata is flowing above 57 centimetres of the danger level, says the FFWC said.

While speaking with our correspondent in Sylhet, DAE Deputy Director in Sunamganj Bashir Ahmed Sarkar said, "Water is rising in all haors including Tangua, Shoni, Matian and Korcha. However, most farmers have already harvested their crops before the water level started to rise in the haors."

"Only a small number of farmers in Tanguar haor area fell behind. But hopefully, they will not face any trouble harvesting their crops [before the haors get flooded]," he said.

He also said around 13,12,500 tonnes of Boro, more than their estimated target, were harvested this season in Sunamganj.

In April 2017, flash floods in Sylhet region washed away Boro paddy before those could be harvested. Farmers in Sunamganj were the worst affected by the floods that year.

According to DAE, Boro has been cultivated on 2,24,440 hectares of land in the district this year and the figure is 2 thousand hectares higher than the previous year.

Farmer Abdul Hakim from Kotamara village in Jamalganj said, "We reaped a

good harvest this year despite fear of flash floods and rains triggered by the cyclone."

However, the selling price of paddy is not satisfactory, considering the additional cost they had to incur due to shortage of labourers, he added.

Meanwhile, our Moulvibazar correspondent reports that a handful of farmers, who could not manage to harvest all their crops in Hakaluki haor before the Cyclone Fani lashed out on the country, are working in full swing to harvest the remainder of their crops before the floods hit the area.

Some farmers said flood water has started gushing in inside the Hakaluki haor since Saturday.

Ranendra Shankar Chakraborty, executive engineer of Water Development Board (WDB) in Moulvibazar, told this correspondent that low-lying areas in haors are getting submerged as water level in the Kushiya river is rising every day.

WDB has been advising farmers to harvest their crops from the area to minimise losses due to the imminent floods, he also said.

Mohammad Shahjahan, additional

director of DAE in Sylhet division, said Boro production in the region is expected to reach 19 lakh tonnes this year. The production last year was 18.5 lakh tonnes.

Harvesting of paddy in haor areas of four districts under Sylhet division is in its final stage and so far, more than 85 percent of paddy has already been harvested, he said, adding that DAE has been making announcements over loudspeakers, asking farmers to harvest their paddy as soon as possible.

Farmer Monir Mia, a resident of Boromchal area in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar, said till Friday, he harvested paddy from three out of his four acres of cultivated land.

After the Kushiya started to inundate haor areas since the afternoon of Saturday, he was running against time to harvest paddy from his remaining one acre of land, he added.

Mobossir Ali, another farmer in Hakaluki haor area, said although he is yet to harvest 20 percent of his crops, his losses this year would remain lower than that during the flash floods in 2017.

Ex-UP member 'tortured' by moneylender

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A former female union parishad (UP) member was confined to a house and tortured allegedly by a local moneylender and his men in Rayer Bazar area of Habiganj's Baniachong upazila on Saturday.

The victim is Kanon Bala Dev, 35, wife of late Sunil Chandra Dev, and a former member of Dakkhin-Pashchim UP. She is now undergoing treatment at the upazila health complex.

Kanon said she borrowed Tk 1 lakh from Tonu Mia of the village for her daughter's marriage five months ago. At the time, she gave two blank bank cheques bearing her signature to the moneylender as security.

"Later, I paid Tk 78,000 as interest. Failing to repay the capital, I also had a piece of land registered in the name of Tonu but he did not return my blank cheques then," Kanon said at the hospital bed.

"Instead, Tonu demanded more money from me," she said.

Around 5:30pm on Saturday, Tonu and his gang picked up her from Pukurpar area in the village, said Kanon, adding that they later confined her to the house of Tonu and tortured her physically.

Informed by locals, police rescued Kanon while Tonu and his wife Dolon Begum fled the scene.

Md Rashed Mobarak, OC of Baniachang Police Station, said action will be taken after a case is filed in this regard.

11 injured in clash over temple land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

At least 11 people, including six women, were injured in a clash between two rival groups over a disputed temple's land at Mathabhanga village in Charbhadrasan upazila on Saturday.

Locals said there was a longstanding conflict between Sunil Mandal, president of Mathabhanga Durga Temple Committee, and Haripado Mandal, cashier of the committee, over ownership of the land.

The temple was built on three decimals of land at the village in 2005. Sunil sold his eight bighas of land, including the temple's land, to one Kabir Mollah of the same village last year.

Sunil went to remove the temple from the land on Saturday afternoon. At the time, the supporters of Sunil and Haripado locked in a clash with lethal weapons, leaving at least 11 people from both sides injured. The injured were taken to the upazila health complex.

Contacted, Sunil said he sold his land where the temple was built.

Haripado said "I gave three decimals of land to the temple last year, but Sunil sold it to a local resident."

Md Harun-ur-Rashid, officer in charge of Charbhadrasan Police Station, said on information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.



This recent photo shows a Boro field affected by blast disease at Bilborni village in Kalihati upazila of Tangail.

PHOTO: STAR

Blast attack worries Tangail Boro growers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Boro growers in all the 12 upazilas of Tangail are worried as vast tracts of their croplands have been attacked by blast disease and the insecticides or antidotes advised by the agriculture officials are not working.

Farmers are bewildered as the sudden blast attack has damaged huge standing Boro paddies only a couple of days before the harvesting.

Local agriculture officials said abnormal weather condition, especially at night, and early plantations are the main causes behind the outbreak.

Boro paddy, hybrid and other local varieties, was cultivated on 1,71,702 hectares of land this season, Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer at Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Tangail Shariful Islam said.

Boro paddies on at least 135 hectares of land in 12 upazilas were affected by blast disease this

year, he said.

Of the affected land, 11 hectares are in Sadar upazila, 27 hectares in Sakhipur, eight hectares in Basail, 13 hectares in Kalihati, 21 hectares in Ghatail, 13 hectares in Mirzapur, two hectares in Nagarpur, 14 hectares in Madhupur, seven hectares in Bhuapur, two hectares in Delduar and 12 hectares in Dhanbari upazila, he added.

Of them, Sakhipur upazilas is the most affected.

A number of farmers like Abul Hossain, Abul Kashem, Abdul Mazid and Kaiyum Ali, in the upazila, said due to the blast attack portions of the affected paddy fields turned reddish and are drying up within a few days.

Farmer Mintu Miah of Bilborni village in Kalihati upazila said he cultivated BRRI-28 variety on his eight bighas of land and all the paddies are totally damaged due to the blast disease attack.

Jahangir Hossain of Palima village

in the upazila said after taking training from the local agriculture office he cultivated BRRI-58 and BRRI-81 varieties on his two bighas of land.

"As per advise of the agriculture officials, I sprayed medicines, but to no result," he said.

Farmer Nazrul Islam of the village alleged that although local agriculture officials visited the area during the plantation period, they are not seen after the blast disease attack.

Tangail DAE Deputy Director Abdur Razzak said they were providing necessary support and advice to the affected farmers.

"It is tough to protect the crop once it is attacked by blast disease," he said.

He said there is nothing to be panicked as the disease attacked only a portion of BRRI-28 variety, he said, adding that about 90 percent of the paddies are already harvested."

Schoolboy electrocuted in Khulna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A 12-year-old schoolboy was electrocuted in the city on Saturday morning.

The deceased was Sujon, 12, a student of Class VII at Provati High School in Khalishpur area, and son of Bellal Hossain of Alamnagar rail line area in the city.

Sarder Mosharraf Hossain, officer in charge (OC) of Khalishpur Police Station, said Sujon came in contact with an electric pillar while he was playing carrom board in Alamnagar area.

Locals sent him to Khulna Medical College Hospital where on-duty doctors declared him dead, said the OC.

CYCLONE FANI Power line technician dies at DMCH

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A power line technician, known as 'line man', of West Zone Power Distribution Company Ltd (WZPDCL) died from his injuries at Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) early yesterday.

The technician, Saidul Islam, 35, from Kirtipasha village in Sadar upazila of Jhalakathi, sustained severe injuries in Patuakhali town on Friday when he was repairing a power line that was damaged by a tree, toppled over during Cyclone Fani.

Saidul was immediately taken to Barishal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital. After his condition deteriorated, he was transferred to DMCH the same day.



The embankment on the Payra river at Mehendiabad village in Mirzaganj upazila of Patuakhali lies badly damaged while a portion of Mathbari Union High School on the bank of the Bishkhali river in Jhalakathi's Rajapur upazila gets devoured by water surges impacted by Cyclone Fani that hit the country's southern region on Saturday.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN, M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL