



FARMERS IN 2020

Hit hard, yet RESILIENT



ZYMA ISLAM

They say trouble never comes alone, and to farmers around the country this saying could not have rung truer for the year that passed.

First, there was Cyclone Amphan which damaged crops worth Tk 6.72 billion, according to the agriculture ministry.

Then there was what scientists call the longest flood in around 20 years, completely upending the crop schedule of Aman rice and staple root vegetables.

A statement from the agriculture ministry

last week estimated that 1,05,000 hectares of the Aman rice harvest was ruined last year, leading to a production shortfall of 20 lakh tonnes.

Despite counting heavy losses due to extreme weather conditions and natural disasters, farmers still managed to pull through -- keeping the nation fed with no major food or grain crisis on their watch.

"After the major flood of 1998, we had the longest flood this time, with a duration of over 40 days," said Professor AKM Saiful

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Children are all smiles as they head home from school with new textbooks in Bogura's Dhunat upazila yesterday. The government is distributing over 34 crore free textbooks among 4.5 crore students of primary and secondary levels for the academic year of 2021. The authorities did not hold a textbook festival on the first day of the new year due to the pandemic.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Students get free textbooks

No festivity at schools amid pandemic

BSS, Dhaka

Distribution of free textbooks among the students of classes six to nine started yesterday, the first day of the new year.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally inaugurated the textbook distribution through a video conference from the Gono Bhaban on Thursday.

The book distribution ceremony was held at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

Despite the novel coronavirus pandemic, the government has already taken all-out measures to distribute new textbooks among 4.5 crore students of the primary and secondary levels free of cost.

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2020: PLIGHT OF MIGRANT WORKERS

Moments of despair, times of uncertainty

3.76 lakh workers returned home since April

1.5 lakh workers came home on holiday and later found it difficult to return to their workplaces

Overseas employment dropped by nearly five lakh from what it was in 2019

Despite the pandemic, migrants sent record amount of remittance in 2020

JAMIL MAHMUD

The coronavirus pandemic that brought global human mobility to a near standstill for most of last year hit the country's vast labour migration sector hard.

Yearly overseas employment dropped by nearly five lakh from what it was in 2019 -- with a little over two lakh workers getting jobs abroad by mid-December last year.

Some 3.76 lakh workers returned home in eight and a half months since April, says government data.

Moreover, an estimated 1.5 lakh workers who came home on holiday found it difficult to return to their workplaces due to suspension of regular air communications.

Thousands of migrant workers and their family members back home faced economic hardships because of the income and work opportunities lost due to the pandemic, according to surveys conducted by various migration-related organisations.

Despite the volatile situation, the country, however, saw a significant surge in remittance inflow in the second half of 2020.

According to government estimates, more than one crore Bangladeshis live in

over 160 countries.

COVID-19 IMPACT

Since the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world early last year, many Bangladeshi migrant workers faced economic hardships due to lockdowns enforced on economic activities by the host countries.

Bangladeshi workers returned home in large numbers, either after job losses or seeing no job opportunities in the host countries.

Around 3.76 lakh Bangladeshi expatriates returned home between April 1 and December 17, according to expatriates' welfare ministry data.

The returnees experienced reintegration challenges, including difficulties in securing employment, financial problems, and health-related issues, says an International Organisation for Migration (IOM) report published in August last year.

In its study, the United Nations migration agency said around 70 percent of 1,486 returnees in 12 migration-prone districts were found to be unemployed.

A Brac study in May said around 87 percent of 558 returnees did not have income opportunities amid the pandemic.

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Long road to justice

It took five years for Arman's family to prove him innocent

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

The family members of Benarasi weaver Mohammad Arman, who was wrongly arrested five years ago, are counting the minutes for his release.

The 35-year-old man has been in jail for almost five years since the capital's Pallabi police arrested him in what officers said was a case of mistaken identity.

The High Court in a verdict on Thursday pronounced him innocent and ordered that he be released.

"We never thought it could take five years to get an innocent man released," Arman's mother Sohor Banu told The Daily Star after the verdict was announced.

She still shudders at the thought of her harrowing journey over the last five years.

After he was picked up, Arman remained traceless for five days. The family members started looking for him at different offices

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India okays Oxford vaccine

WHO grants emergency validation to Pfizer-BioNTech shots

AGENCIES

India's drug regulator yesterday approved a coronavirus vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University for emergency use, two sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

The decision clears the vaccine's rollout in the world's second-most populous country which, after the United States, has the highest number of Covid-19 infections.

India wants to start administering the vaccine soon, most likely by Wednesday, said one of the sources, both of whom declined to be named

ahead of an official announcement.

A representative of India's Central Drugs Standard Control Organization (CDSCO), whose experts are meeting for the second time this week, declined to comment.

Britain and Argentina have already authorised the AstraZeneca vaccine for urgent public use.

The CDSCO is also considering emergency-use authorisation applications for vaccines made by Pfizer Inc with Germany's BioNTech, and by India's Bharat Biotech.

Cheaper and easier to distribute than rival shots, the AstraZeneca/

Oxford vaccine could be a game-changer for global immunisation.

Countries with relatively basic health infrastructure have high hopes for a shot that, unlike Pfizer's, can be stored and transported under normal refrigeration, rather than supercooled to -70 degrees Celsius (-94 Fahrenheit).

India has reported more than 10 million Covid-19 cases, though its rate of infection has come down significantly from a mid-September peak. The country hopes to inoculate 300 million of its 1.35 billion people in the first six to eight months of 2021.

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Mohammad Ibrahim has turned his school van into a makeshift saplings shop to earn a living. He used to operate several vans to transport students, but he lost his income after all educational institutions were shut in March last year due to the pandemic. Struggling to survive in the city with his family, Ibrahim has already sold his four vans. Bottom, saplings on the roof of school vans. The photos were taken in the capital's Azimpur yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



শেখ হাসিনার বাংলাদেশ
জীববৈচিত্র্যসমৃদ্ধ উন্নত পরিবেশ

গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি

**সেন্টমার্টিনের বিরল জীববৈচিত্র্য ও প্রতিবেশ
সুরক্ষায় পরিপালনীয় বিধি-নিষেধ**

বাংলাদেশের একমাত্র প্রবালসমৃদ্ধ দ্বীপ সেন্টমার্টিন সরকার ঘোষিত একটি প্রতিবেশগত সংকটাপন্ন এলাকা। অনিয়ন্ত্রিত পর্যটন এবং পর্যটকদের অসচেতনতা, দায়িত্বহীনতা, পরিবেশ এবং প্রতিবেশ বিরোধী আচরণের কারণে সেন্টমার্টিনের বিরল প্রতিবেশ এবং জীববৈচিত্র্য এখন ধ্বংসের দ্বারপ্রান্তে উপনীত। দ্বীপের পরিবেশ, প্রতিবেশ ও বিরল জীববৈচিত্র্য পুনরুদ্ধারসহ দ্বীপটিকে টিকিয়ে রাখার লক্ষ্যে পরিবেশ সংরক্ষণ আইন ১৯৯৫ (সংশোধিত ২০১০)-এর ০৪ ধারার ক্ষমতাবলে এ দ্বীপে ভ্রমণের ক্ষেত্রে নিম্নলিখিত কার্যক্রমসমূহ নিষিদ্ধ ঘোষণা করা হলোঃ

- ▶ দ্বীপের সৈকতে সাইকেল, মটর সাইকেল, রিক্সা, ভ্যানসহ সকল প্রকার যান্ত্রিক ও অযান্ত্রিক বাহন চালানো;
- ▶ দ্বীপের সৈকত, সমুদ্র এবং নাফ নদীতে প্লাস্টিকসহ সকল ধরনের বর্জ্য ফেলা;
- ▶ পশ্চিম পার্শ্বের সৈকতে কোনোপাড়ার পর দক্ষিণ দিকে এবং পূর্ব পার্শ্বের সৈকতে গলাচিপার পর দক্ষিণ দিকে পরিভ্রমণ;
- ▶ দ্বীপের চতুর্পার্শ্বে নৌ-ভ্রমণ করা;
- ▶ জোয়ার ভাটা এলাকায় পাথরের উপর হাঁটা;
- ▶ সামুদ্রিক কাছিমের ডিমপাড়ার স্থানে চলাফেরা, রাতে আলো জ্বালানো এবং ফ্ল্যাশ লাইট ব্যবহার করে ছবি তোলা;
- ▶ সৈকতে রাতের বেলা কোন প্রকার আলো বা আগুন জ্বালানো, আতশবাজি ও ফানুস উড়ানো;
- ▶ সৈকতে মাইক বাজানো, হে-চে এবং উচ্চস্বরে গান-বাজনা করা, বার-বি-কিউ পার্টি করা;
- ▶ ছেঁড়া দিয়া দ্বীপে স্পীড বোট, কান্ট্রি বোট, ট্রলার বা অন্যান্য জলযানে যাতায়াত এবং নোঙ্গর করা;
- ▶ সংরক্ষণের উদ্দেশ্যে সরকার কর্তৃক অধিগ্রহণকৃত ছেঁড়া দিয়া দ্বীপ ভ্রমণ;
- ▶ প্রবাল, শামুক, বিনুক, সামুদ্রিক কাছিম, পাখি, তারা মাছ, রাজকাঁকড়া, সামুদ্রিক ঘাস, সামুদ্রিক শৈবাল এবং কেয়া ফল সংগ্রহ ও ক্রয়-বিক্রয়;
- ▶ জাহাজ থেকে পাখিকে চিপস বা অন্য কোন খাবার খাওয়ানো;
- ▶ দ্বীপে সুপেয় ভূগর্ভস্থ পানি সীমিত বিধায় পানির অপচয় করা;
- ▶ সেন্টমার্টিন দ্বীপের প্রতিবেশের জন্য ক্ষতিকর যে কোন কার্যক্রম গ্রহণ করা;

উল্লিখিত বিধি-নিষেধের লঙ্ঘন আইনত দণ্ডনীয় অপরাধ।

**আসুন বাংলাদেশের একমাত্র প্রবালসমৃদ্ধ দ্বীপ সেন্টমার্টিনকে সংরক্ষণ করি।
বর্তমান ও আগামী প্রজন্মের জন্য টেকসই পরিবেশ গড়ি।**

মহাপরিচালক
পরিবেশ অধিদপ্তর