

Where there's a will there's a way



People in a remote area of Khagrachhari collecting food relief distributed by Sampari, a non-profit social charity organisation.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

There had been times when relief workers from government or renowned aid organisations failed to reach inhabitants of remote villages in hill district of Khagrachhari after a natural disaster or a humanitarian crisis.

But the villagers in those areas know that Khagrachhari's very own Shapla Devi Tripura will be there for them by any means, as she had been for the past 25 years.

During the months of Covid-19 lockdown last year, when many daily wage earners across the country were rendered jobless, Shapla roamed around all over the district and handed out food relief -- bags containing rice, pulses, onion, salt, potato, soap and some

cash -- to over 1,000 families in distress.

While distributing relief materials, she also made the locals aware of health safety measures to curb the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

A resident of Khagrachhari town, Shapla, in her forties, runs a clothing store in the town. Her husband Kallol owns a transport services company and various other businesses in tourism and hospitality industry.

The couple had been making financial contributions for her philanthropic work from their own business earnings before she established a non-profit social charity organisation named Sampari in 2016.

Now people from all walks of

life, from home and abroad, also make donations to Sampari for conducting numerous social and charity work. A dedicated team of volunteers take part in the social activities conducted under by Sampari.

The organisation through its 'Sampari Charity Home fund' has been providing assistance to marginalised population for their children's education, financial and medical support to victims of social injustice and domestic violence, and child birth expenses for helpless mothers.

A good number of students who received assistance from Sampari are now serving the country in different sectors.

In 2018, Department of Women Affairs in Khagrachhari presented

'Joyeeta' award to Shapla for her exemplary contribution in women's empowerment. She received Mother Teresa Memorial Award 2020 for her outstanding role towards upholding women's rights.

"There are many inaccessible areas where relief is not reaching. That's why I am trying to bring in as much relief as possible to those areas. It gives me a sense of satisfaction when I'm able to help them," said Shapla Devi Tripura.

Assuring that she will ensure supply of food relief for the hungry in the remote areas, she also said if the affluent came forward and joined hands to help out the needy in those areas, no soul would go hungry for even one day.

REVIVAL OF ICHHAMATI RIVER IN PABNA TOWN

Eviction drive set to resume this month

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Overcoming legal hurdles on the much-awaited eviction drive along the Ichhamati river, running through Pabna town, the district administration is set to resume the drive on March 31.

The extensive drive that started on December 23 last year stumbled after illegal occupants of the river's land filed eight lawsuits, seeking legal bar on the eviction.

Kabir Mahmud, the deputy commissioner (DC) of Pabna, said, "We've faced and won all the eight cases. Now there's no legal constraint on the freeing of the river."

The drive will be based on the cadastral survey (CS) records, completed in the British era, and after scrutinising the records, the administration already identified around 1,200 structures that are illegally encroaching on the river's land along the nine-kilometre stretch of the river within Pabna municipality area.

Following the eviction drive, the river's water flow will be revived through dredging. Its banks will be widened to a minimum of 30 metres and be demarcated with paved walkways, the DC said, adding that the entire process will be implemented under the Water Development Board (WDB).

WDB Assistant Director in Pabna Mosharrif Hossain said they issued a Tk 3-core work order to an engineering firm for conducting the eviction drive and also for constructing paved walkways along the banks of the river, between Banglabazar

and Sardarpara points along the nine kilometres stretch of the river in Pabna town.

The process of selecting a qualified bidder in another tender, estimated at Tk 6 core, for dredging the same length of the river is currently underway and the work order for it might be issued by March 31, he also said.

About 38 kilometres of the 84-km-long Ichhamati river -- originating from the

The extensive drive that started on December 23 last year stumbled after illegal occupants of the river's land filed eight lawsuits, seeking legal bar on the eviction.

Padma at Shibrampur of Pabna and ending after falling on the Jamuna in Bera upazila -- has turned almost non-existent due to encroachment and unabated pollution.

According to the CS records, the total area belonging to the river running through Pabna town had 88.58 acres of land. In the Bangladesh Survey (BS) records map drawn in 2013, the area was found to have diminished to only 54.53 acres.



PHOTO: STAR

While mindless dumping of garbage in the Ichhamati river has constricted its flow in Pabna town, inconsiderate and short-sighted development -- such as this low-height bridge with its columns erected in the middle of the waterway -- by the authorities and the townspeople has made it impossible to use it as an affordable medium of transport.

Univ student's success in squash farming

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

After failing to find a job due to coronavirus outbreak, Shakil Ahmed, a B.Sc honours student of agriculture department at Noakhali Science and Technology University, did not sit idle and started farming and found success in it.

Shakil returned to his village at Gomjani in Tangail's Delduar upazila after the university was declared closed in March last year due to coronavirus situation. His honours results were published in June.

"Failing to find a job due to the pandemic, I decided to cultivate squash on my father's land," Shakil said.

"At the university, I did some research on vegetable cultivation. So, I decided to cultivate new vegetable squash on 40 decimals of land of my father," Shakil said.

He spent Tk 32,000 for the cultivation and sold squash worth Tk 92,000 at local markets -- Tk 12 per kilogram at the beginning of the season and Tk 8 at the end.

"In order to reduce costs, I was thinking of cultivating with advance technology called 'mulching film' so that moisture remains on the soil and no extra irrigation and labour is required for taking care of the land," Shakil said.

However, cultivation with this method (mulching paper) is completely new in the area.

After Shakil applied the method on his squash field, local farmers started criticising him seeing whole land being covered with polythene. Shakil, however, did not pay any heed to those negative criticisms.

"They have seen the benefits of mulching paper after my success. Now they themselves have become interested in it," Shakil said.

Jahidur Rahman Jahid of the same village was also sitting idle after getting unemployed after returning to the village from Malaysia due to corona situation. After getting encouragement from Shakil, he also cultivated squash on his 12 decimals of land and got success.

"Shakil also advised me to cultivate wheat on our 60 decimals of land where Boro paddy was cultivated previously," Jahid said adding that "Shakil also showed me how I can get more profit from the wheat cultivation than Boro paddy."

Not only Jahid but also several other farmers in the village including Selim



PHOTO: STAR

University student Shakil Ahmed works at a farmland in Tangail's Delduar upazila.

Miah, Abdul Latif, Masud Miah and Jiar Ali have also cultivated wheat and maize on their lands this year in place of Boro paddy following advice of Shakil.

"In addition to vegetable cultivation, farmers of my village cultivate only paddy, although paddy cultivation is now not so profitable," Shakil said.

"Then I arranged yard meeting and advised them to cultivate three crops on their lands. Now, under my advice and supervision, some local farmers are cultivating maize, wheat, potato and mustard on the lands," he said.

"Through the yard meeting, Shakil has also assisted us in the implementation of LLP (Line, Logo, Perching) project of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE)," said Abdul Hannan, sub-assistant agriculture officer in Atia union.

Shakil said although he has already cultivated cucumber, watermelon and muskmelon on the land after harvesting squash, he is actually waiting to take admission in soil science department of Bangladesh Agriculture University.

"After completion of my study, I would like to make my career in agriculture and contribute to the development of this sector," he added.

Appreciating Shakil's initiatives, Shoyeb Ahmed, upazila agriculture officer, said the agriculture sector in the country will see more development if educated youths like Shakil come forward and get involved in the sector.

Dead tigress recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Forest Department recovered a dead tigress from the Sundarbans on Friday night.

Forest guards spotted the tigress carcass in Dhunchebaria Char of the Bhola river under Sharankhola Range of the Sundarbans around 8:30pm, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of the Sundarbans East Division Mohammad Belayet Hossain said.

The decomposed body has been kept at Sharanthola Range Office and it will be buried after conducting an autopsy, he said. The tigress, aged around 14 to 15 years, might have died two to three days ago.

Assistant Forest Conservator Joynal Abedin said they will send the samples to the forensic lab in Dhaka to find out the reason behind the death.

Shrimp fry seized

A CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Coastguards seized huge quantity of shrimp fry from a passenger bus in Louhajang upazila early yesterday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of coastguards searched a Chattogram-bound bus from Khulna at Shimulia Ferry Terminal around 2:00am and seized 16 plastic drums filled with 4 lakh shrimp fry worth around Tk 12 lakh.

The seized fry were later released in the Padma river.

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