



A damaged mustard field at Dighi village in Manikganj Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Untimely rain damages crops on vast areas across the country

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Crops, especially winter vegetables, on vast areas have been damaged due to the untimely rain that lashed different districts across the country in the last three days.

Many growers, who were taking preparation to harvest their vegetables, are now in fear of incurring losses.

The damaged crops include Aman paddy, Boro, different winter vegetables, fruits, spices and pulses, said the affected farmers and officials at Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

"Light rain is likely to occur at one or two places in Dhaka, Barishal, Sylhet, and Chattogram divisions. The weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere across the country," according to a government weather bulletin yesterday.

Our Khulna correspondent reported that around 70 percent of

Aman paddy, cultivated on about 93,170 hectares of land have gone under water.

DAE said of the 70 percent crops on vast areas have already been damaged.

Moreover, different vegetables on nearly 12 hectares of land in the district have been badly affected by the rain water.

"I cultivated Aman on 13 bighas of land, but about 20 percent of the paddy have been completely damaged," farmer Prabir Roy of Khalishibunia village in Batiaghata upazila said.

"Due to the stagnant water caused by the untimely rain cultivation of the next crop will also be hampered," Khulna DAE Deputy Director Hafizur Rahman said.

In Patuakhali, standing crops on around 3,000 hectares of land have been damaged due to the rain in the last few days, reports our correspondent.

Patuakhali DAE Deputy Director AKM Mohiuddin said further damages can be averted, if water recedes quickly otherwise the extent of loss will keep increasing.

Our Faridpur correspondent reports, crops and vegetables on vast areas have been damaged due to the untimely rain.

"I cultivated grass pea on 53 decimals of land, spending Tk 45,000. The untimely rain has damaged most of my crops," said farmer Sheikh Sorman of BS Dangi village in Charbhadrason upazila.

Faridpur DAE Deputy Director (DD) Hazrat Ali said they will distribute seeds and fertilizers among the affected farmers at free of cost.

In Pirojpur, Aman paddy on around 61,630 hectares of land have been damaged by the rain, according to the officials at DAE.

"Almost all the paddy fields in our area have gone under knee-

deep water. We fear that around half of the paddy have been already damaged," farmer Abdur Rahman of Chalisa village in Sadar upazila said.

Pirojpur DAE DD Dr Mohammad Nazrul Islam Sikder said the rain has not only damaged paddies, it also causing fodder crisis.

Away in Manikganj, crops on around 20 hectares of land have been badly affected by the rain.

While visiting Dighi, Natun Basati, Koyra and Chhutibhatbaur village in Sadar upazila yesterday this correspondent saw farmers were trying to remove water from their croplands using different methods.

Besides, standing crops on nearly 60,000 hectares of land have been damaged in different upazilas of six districts under Barishal division, said Toufiqueul Alam, DD at Barishal DAE.

‘Got selected as a police constable at Tk 130’

Flashes of good governance in constable recruitment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A total of 75 candidates—64 male and 11 females—have been primarily selected for the post of trainee constables of police in Tangail district spending only Tk 130 each.

The candidates had to spend Tk 100 for the application fee and 30 for the processing fee.

The selectees were elated after the list containing their names was made visible at Tangail police lines on November 26.

One of the selectees, Tania Islam, daughter of a farmer at Nandutia village in Gopalpur upazila, said that despite taking part in the exams, she could not imagine that she would get the job by spending Tk 130 only.

"Now, I will be able to contribute to my family and stand beside my poor father," Tania said with tears of joy in her eyes.

Sirajul Islam of Matikata village in Bhuanpur upazila, also one of the selectees, said his father is a small trader and he is very happy getting the job.

"I have had to spend only Tk 130 for the application purpose to get the job. Now, I can serve the nation as a proud member of

the Bangladesh Police," he added.

Meanwhile, a total of 3,000 candidates applied for the post of trainee constables and 75 of them were selected through several processes in steps.

After revealing the lists of the selectees, Sarkar Mohammad Kaiser, superintendent of police (SP) in Tangail, congratulated and welcomed the selectees with flowers at the multipurpose shed of police lines.

The SP that the constable recruitment exams were completed following the new rules in line with the direction of the prime minister, home minister and IGP for making the recruitment process transparent.

"We had promised to the district people to complete the recruitment process transparently and we have kept our promise," the SP said.

"All the candidates have been selected as trainee constables through the recruitment process in Tangail completely based on their talent and competence," he added.

Last month, the senior police officials in the district, including the members of the recruitment board, were present on the occasion.



The new batch of 75 trainee constables poses after getting selected through a recruitment process in Tangail.

PHOTO: STAR

India derides UN proposal for ceasefire

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expressed strong reservations about the terms proposed by the General Assembly. A Pakistani delegate said, "It's up to India to stop; they are aggressors."

In a speech to the Assembly, Agha Shahi of Pakistan, referring to the resolution's call for "efforts to bring about conditions necessary for the voluntary return of the East Pakistan refugees to their homes," said his government refused to negotiate with Bangalee rebels.

Although the resolution received overwhelming support from the members of the General Assembly, it was not binding on the combatants.

BANGLADESH URGES FOR RECOGNITION

Humayun Rashid Choudhury, Bangladesh mission chief in New Delhi, in a letter addressed to all heads of diplomatic missions, urged them to accept the realities and accord recognition to the new People's Republic of Bangladesh. He personally met the envoys of Hungary and Poland today to urge

their government's recognition to the new republic.

KISSINGER'S MEMORANDUM

In a memorandum presented today to US President Nixon, his Assistant for National Security Affairs Kissinger informed, "the consensus among veteran military observers and reporters is that the end of the Pak Army's effective resistance may come sooner than expected".

"The CIA estimates that the Indians and guerrillas now probably control about half of the province and are progressively isolating the Pak Army as they gain control of strategic points. Our consul general in Dacca comments that the 'noose is obviously getting tighter'," he added.

Referring to CIA's review of China's military position, Henry Kissinger commented that the Chinese were not militarily prepared for major and sustained involvement in the Indo-Pak war.

ON THE WAR FRONT

Comilla and Brahmanbaria was captured by Mitro Bahini today. A number of other places—including

Magura, Elliotganj, Natundaha, Dangpra—had also fallen in other parts of Bangladesh.

Fighting in the western frontier also intensified, although India had not yet launched a major counter-offensive. The Pakistanis mounted two substantial drives into Kashmir. There was fighting to the south on the Punjab plain. The Indians had, however, penetrated at least 15 miles into West Pakistan in the direction of Karachi. Both sides continued to make air strikes on the western front, but neither yet gained the upper hand.

An Indian spokesman claimed that Indian fighter-bombers had knocked out nine Pakistani tanks today and that Pakistani losses had been "severe." He termed Indian casualties "moderate."

All merchant ships docked in Bangladesh ports had been warned not to move out in view of operations by the Indian Navy off the Bangladesh ports.

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Winning all

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over so many candidates being elected unopposed. The BNP and many other political parties are not taking part in the polls.

EC sources said 71 chairman, 63 general member and six member candidates for reserved seats for women were elected unopposed in the first phase on June 21 and September 20. A total of 364 unions went to polls in that phase.

As many as 81 chairman, 203 general member and 76 member candidates for reserved seats for women were elected unopposed in the second phase of UP elections to 835 unions on November 11.

In the second phase, no election was held in five unions of Cumilla's Laksham upazila as all the chairman, general member and member candidates for reserved seats for women were elected unopposed.

Again, 100 chairman, 337 general member and 132 member candidates for reserved seats for women won the UP polls unopposed in the third phase on November 28 when 1,004 unions went to polls.

In the third phase, no election was needed in 14 unions of Chattogram's Raazan. All the chairman candidates there were from the AL.

Election Commissioner Mahub Talukdar had expressed resentment over so many candidates getting walkovers.

"I want to say metaphorically that election is now in ICU [Intensive Care Unit] and democracy is on life support as its side effect. Literally, this cannot be called an election. There is no election when there is no competition," Mahub said on November 14.

Experts said such a large number of candidates is winning the polls unopposed as people believe that victory of a ruling party nominee is inevitable.

Hafizuddin Khan, president of Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), said, "The number of candidates elected unopposed are on the rise as many hopefuls are unwilling to take part in the polls considering that the ruling party nominee will win the elections."

He said people now consider taking part in polls as a waste of time and money.

A total of 707 unions will go to polls in the fifth phase of UP polls on January 5. The EC will announce the schedule for the sixth phase of the election by this week, said EC sources.

Cronyism raising inequality

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observations at a session titled "Towards a just society" of a virtual international conference to reflect on 50 years of Bangladesh's independence.

Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) in collaboration with South Asia Program of Cornell University organised the event that began on Monday.

MM Akash, professor and chairman of Department of Economics at Dhaka University, said Bangladesh's progress is termed "a surprise example of development" in terms of high growth and a few key indicators of human development.

"But we observe that there were very large negative deviations from our Liberation War ideals enshrined in the original 1972 constitution of the country. We have become a more unequal and a more divided nation economically, communally, and politically."

He said Bangladesh has now a more unequal society in terms of income, wealth and social power and security.

The DU teacher said access to quality education, quality health services, cheap and adequate finance, employment opportunities and democratic fundamental rights as described in detail in the constitution remain largely unrealised for majority of the citizens from the lower rungs of the society.

Akash said Bangladesh's Liberation War was mainly directed against regional and class inequality.

These inequalities arose through the twin process of resource transfer from Eastern zone of Pakistan to the Western zone and monopoly exploitation by a small elite group, he said, citing 22 super rich houses of the then Pakistan.

"Almost a similar pyramidal power structure is fast growing in Bangladesh," he said, "The system is known as crony capitalism, where cronies flock together and use the state monopoly power to serve each other -- cronies generally constitute a ruling class based on a triangular coalition."

He said a few handpicked powerful members of the business class, bureaucrats and politicians create a network and through their recruited clients exercise a monopoly power in all areas of the ongoing development processes.

"The structural dynamics of such a nexus of economic, political and state power perpetuates inequity and inequality in all the fields of development," said Akash.

He said the current development process in Bangladesh enables in general a more or less absolute development of all classes, but with a very unequal speed and therefore, relative inequality continues to rise which

is now generally recognised to be non-sustainable in the long run.

There cannot be growth with equalities in Bangladesh unless cronyism is broken and a broad based political regime is established, he added.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairman of Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC), said although economic development has stunned many, there has not been much political development.

This deficit in political development is holding Bangladesh back from realising its foundational dream of building an inclusive and humane society, he said.

Zillur said systematic weakening of political accountability, encroachment into social space, extreme intolerance of non-sanctioned political activities and corruption created a "new normal" of political governance.

The consequence is, he said, there is an extraordinary sense of official complacency on development performance and disregard for reform priorities. "There is an elitist over focus on growth at the expense of quality of life."

Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said monopolisation of political space is most important predicament against democratic and accountable governance.

"Institutions of democracy and national agencies such as Election Commission, administration, law enforcement agencies and Anti-Corruption Commission have been significantly politicised and their effectiveness compromised, presenting governance deficits and a culture of impunity," he said.

Any criticism of the government and exercise of constitutionally guaranteed freedom of expression and dissenting views is branded as aligned to the enemy camp and conspiracy against regime, he said.

Binayak Sen, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), in his paper said non-farm occupation, education, ownership of cultivable and non-farm land, household size, savings and remittance had been the drivers that enabled people to get out of poverty in rural areas.

SR Osmani, professor of developmental economics at the Ulster University, said Latin American countries could reduce inequality through concerted efforts. The nations there could cut inequality by ensuring broad based access to quality education and vast programme of cash transfers.

It was followed by all regimes, he said, adding that countries with better democracy reduced inequality.

Refugees sue Facebook for \$150b

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fuelled by hate, division, and misinformation, has left hundreds of thousands of devastated Rohingya lives in its wake."

The mainly Muslim group faces widespread discrimination in Myanmar, where they are despised as interlopers despite having lived in the country for generations.

A military-backed campaign that the United Nations said amounted to genocide saw hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas driven across the border into Bangladesh in 2017, where they have since lived in sprawling refugee camps.

Many others remain in Myanmar, where they are not

permitted citizenship and are subject to communal violence, as well as official discrimination by the ruling military junta.

The legal complaint argues that Facebook's algorithms drive susceptible users to join ever-more extreme groups, a situation that is "open to exploitation by autocratic politicians and regimes."

Next gen to lose \$17tn

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Younger students had less access to remote learning and were more affected by learning loss than older students, especially among pre-school age children in pivotal learning and development stages.

The detrimental impact on learning has disproportionately affected the most marginalised or vulnerable. Learning losses were greater for students of lower socioeconomic status in countries like Ghana, Mexico, and Pakistan.

Initial evidence points to larger losses among girls, as they are quickly losing the protection that schools and learning offer to their well-being and life chances.

"The Covid-19 pandemic shut down schools across the world, disrupting education for 1.6 billion students at its peak, and exacerbated the gender divide. In some countries, we're seeing greater learning losses among

girls and an increase in their risk of facing child labour, gender-based violence, early marriage, and pregnancy. To stem the scars on this generation, we must reopen schools and keep them open, target outreach to return learners to school, and accelerate learning recovery," said UNICEF Director of Education Robert Jenkins.

The report highlights that, to date, less than 3 percent of governments' stimulus packages have been allocated to education.

Much more funding will be needed for immediate learning recovery. Reopening schools must remain a top and urgent priority globally to stem and reverse learning losses. Countries should put in place learning recovery programmes to assure that students of this generation attain at least the same competencies as the previous generation.

Improved ventilation and the use of masks should be a standard at all primary schools as part of a safe learning environment, while avoiding school closures and remote learning, the regional director said.

Vaccine mandates

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children themselves," Kluge added, noting that children risk passing the infection to parents and grandparents in the home.

‘Black box’ to gather climate data

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indestructible to the climate crisis itself and is meant to outlive humans.

Eventually, its creators hope, the black box will tell future civilisations how humankind created the climate crisis, and how we failed or succeeded to address it.

"The box will act as an indestructible and independent ledger of the 'health' of our planet," Jonathan Kneebone, artist and director of the artistic collective Glue