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Farmers prematurely harvesting crops on Dubail haor in Sunamganj's Dharmapasha upazila yesterday as flash floods caused by torrential rain upstream inundated the fields.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

FLASH FLOODS IN HAORS

Farmers in despair

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, back from DHARMAPASHA, SUNAMGANJ

Hundreds of farmers in the northeastern region of the country continued to suffer immensely because of the flash flood.

Suruj Miah, 65, a farmer in Netrakona's Mohonganj upazila, cultivated Boro around 3 acres of cropland but all of it submerged in the flash flood.

"I'm trying to save as much as I can for feeding my family and the cattle," he said while yielding rotten and half-ripen paddy at Chandra Shonar Thal haor in Sunamganj's Dharmapasha upazila.

The haor submerged on April 4 after the Dubail levee broke after a flash flood triggered by torrential rainfall hit the area early this month.

While visiting the haor areas in Sunamganj, this correspondent witnessed how the farmers were struggling to protect their produce.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), a total of 7.08 hectares of cropland in Sunamganj, Sylhet, Netrakona and Kishoreganj districts were submerged.

The farmers in the areas claimed to have lost around 80 percent of their produce and the remaining were not in good condition. They were also in a fodder crisis.

Rabia Bibi, a female farmer at Rajapur village in Dharmapasha upazila, said, "I have 15 cows and am worried about the fodder as I lost all my harvest."

On top of that, most farmers are indebted as they borrow money to harvest.

Mohammad Amir Hossain, a farmer of the same

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ANOTHER STORY ON PAGE 11

PARKINSON'S TREATMENT Implant installed in brain here

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Doctors successfully implanted a device inside the brain of a patient with Parkinson's disease.

A team of specialists, led by Indian surgeon Anirban Deep Banarjee, conducted the operation at the National Institute of Neurosciences and Hospital (NINSH) yesterday.

Contacted, Prof MS Jahirul Hoque Chowdhury, head of the movement disorder unit at NINSH's clinical neurology department, said, "We have successfully implanted the device inside the patient's brain."

"The patient is in good condition now. We have planned two more surgeries tomorrow [today]."

Prof Jahirul also said that each deep brain stimulation (DBS) surgery costs as much as Tk 30 lakh.

"The treatment is only for patients who do not respond to medications. We're offering the surgery free of cost at this point," he said.

According to the medical professional, this surgical intervention is needed mostly for patients aged 60 and above.

In 2017, Bangladesh-born UK surgeon Tipu Aziz successfully implanted devices inside two patients' brains using the same technique at the same hospital.

According to NINSH authorities, they have been preparing for more similar surgeries in the future.

According to www.mayoclinic.org, DBS is an established treatment for people with movement

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DRAFT OTT REGULATIONS

They will be a threat to free speech

Speakers say at a webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government's draft regulation for digital, social media and OTT platforms will be a threat to freedom of speech and people's basic rights, experts said yesterday.

Addressing a webinar organised by Moulik Odhikar Surokha Committee, they said the draft regulation contradicts the country's constitution and the government's vision of a Digital Bangladesh. They stressed on redrafting it.

The event was held to share the committee's "primary observation" on the draft of "Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) Regulation for Digital, Social Media and OTT Platforms-2021".

The government published the first draft of the regulations

in February for comments from different stakeholders.

Eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said concerns remain that the new regulation will be a tool to curb people's rights at a time when the government is in denial regarding the incidents of enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killings.

There is an attempt to create fear among people in everything regarding the hurting of religious sentiments, he said, adding there is room for further concerns over whether the new regulations will be applied for this.

"Nowadays, laws are being formulated and applied to harm people instead of ensuring their wellbeings."

He said different provisions of the Digital Security Act that curb freedom of speech or create fear have been used to file hundreds

of cases while the proposed anti-discrimination law remains "hollow".

Although the government has said that laws are formulated with the best intentions, with time, it is seen that most of the laws are not helping democracy flourish but are rather preventing it, he added.

Quazi Mahfujul Hoque Supan, a teacher at Dhaka University's law department, said the second and third chapters of the draft BTRC regulation have been drafted on a "whim" to "control the freedom of speech".

Under chapter two, the intermediaries providing OTT (over-the-top) services will be made to remove the data encryption applied to protect user's privacy, he said, adding that it will be done so that the

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Powerful space laser detected

CNN ONLINE

Astronomers have detected a powerful radiowave laser, known as a megamaser, in space.

This record-breaking megamaser is the most distant one ever observed at 5 billion light-years away from Earth.

The light from this space laser traveled a whopping 36 thousand billion billion miles (58 thousand billion billion kilometers) to reach our planet.

An international team of astronomers, led by Marcin Glowacki, observed this light, using the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory's MeerKAT telescope. (MeerKAT is shorthand for Karoo Array Telescope, preceded by the Afrikaans word for "more.")

Glowacki is a research associate at the Curtin University node of the International Centre for Radio Astronomy Research in Australia.

Megamasers are created when two galaxies crash into each other. It is the first hydroxyl megamaser that MeerKAT has observed, Glowacki said.

Hydroxyl, a chemical group consisting of one hydrogen atom and one oxygen atom, can be found inside galaxy mergers.



Family calls 999 for help, gets beaten up Three cops suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A family called 999 for police help, but three of its members were beaten up by the law enforcers instead. Another member of the family has been behind bars for a week in a case filed by those accused of attacking the family.

This happened in Bibir Bagicha of the capital's Jatrabari on April 8. Three cops of Jatrabari Police Station were suspended yesterday in connection with the incident.

Abul Khair of the victim family said he had a dispute with his neighbour Nurul Islam over the possession of a private road in Bibir Bagicha. He said they have been using the road for 20 years, but Nurul claimed that it was built on his land.

Abul alleged that Nurul recently set up a wall in front of his building blocking the road and the water supply connection to his home was also snapped. This caused suffering to 16 families living in the building.

After Abul's family dialed 999, the national emergency service, to lodge a complaint, three police members of Jatrabari Police Station and an ansar man

went to the house on April 8, they beat up Abul and his family members and took three of them to the police station.

Later that day, a case was also filed by Nurul against Abul and his family members over attempted murder. Abul's son Yusuf is now behind bars in the case.

After a television channel reported the incident on Friday, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday suspended the three cops for their unprofessional behaviour, DMP Deputy Commissioner (Wari Division) Shah Iftekhar Ahmed told The Daily Star.

He claimed that Abul's family called 999 around 10:00am on April 8 and asked for help. A police team visited the house and helped the family. After the police left, the two families scuffled with each other. A case was filed around noon.

"Police then went to the house to arrest the accused. But some police members behaved unprofessionally at that time."

Iftekhar said a three-member probe body, led by DMP Additional Deputy Commissioner (Wari Zone) Kamrul Islam, was formed yesterday to probe the incident.

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Ignoring safety measures, workers tearing down an old structure at the Paikpara government officers' quarters in the capital's Mirpur-1. Such carelessness poses serious risks and may lead to fatal accidents. The photo was taken yesterday noon.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON