



A flock of ashy woodswallows was found sitting on an electric wire in Khulna yesterday. These large-headed birds are usually found perched on wires or flying around in search of insects, and can be spotted all over Asia.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

230 primary schools in Jhenidah without headteachers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

The posts of headteacher at 230 government primary schools in all the six upazilas of Jhenidah has been vacant for a long time, disrupting academic activities.

Moreover, administrative work at those institutions is also being badly hampered due to the shortage of headteachers.

According to Jhenidah District Primary Education Office, 42 schools in Sadar, 60 in Shaillkupa, 33 in Harinakundo, 26 in Moheshpur, 21 in Kotchandpur, and 48 in Kaliganj upazilas are running without headteachers.

A number of teachers of those institutions said in absence of a regular headteacher other assistant teachers are at times reluctant to follow the instructions of the acting headteacher.

The absence of a regular headteachers also hampers coordination among the assistant teachers, they alleged.

Shilpi Khatun, assistant teacher at Raghunathpur Government Primary School in Kaliganj upazila, said a headteacher is the ultimate authority of an institution, who maintains all the

administrative work and guides other teachers as well.

A headteacher also takes a few classes that relieve the other teachers from the extra burden, she added.

Another assistant teacher Atiar Rahman of Bagirgachhi Government Primary School said classes are being

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badly hampered in absence of a regular headteacher, depriving the children from proper education.

Jhenidah District Primary Education Officer (DPEO) Jahangir Alam said due to lack of initiative for direct recruitment, the posts of headteacher at 230 primary

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Journos protest attack on fellow by 'AL leader'

Form human chain demanding case be recorded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Local journalists formed a human chain in Lalmonirhat yesterday, protesting the attack on one of their fellows allegedly by an Awami League leader and his supporters three days ago.

They said Nural Amin, general secretary of Sindurna union unit of AL, and his followers beat Hazrat Ali, Hatibandha upazila correspondent of the Daily Bhorer Awaz, at Champaful area on Thursday night.

Nural, a chairman candidate of the December 29 by-election of Sindurna Union Parishad, along with his followers was pressurising the Hindus to cast their votes for him, said the journalists.

Hazrat came under attack with sticks as he was covering the incident, said the speakers at the human chain at the Hatibandha Upazila Parishad entrance.

The injured journalist was taken to Hatibandha Upazila Health Complex, they said.

They alleged that police were yet to record the case against Nural and his men.

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JAMUNA CHANNEL

A well-oiled operation to lift sand illegally



MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Illegal sand extraction is going on unabated along Jamuna river in Tangail's Bhuapur upazila. Locals fear that unless authorities intervene in time, this will lead to erosion in the upcoming rainy season.

According to local sources, banned dredgers are being used to extract sand at several locations along a 7-kilometre stretch -- from Sarpalshia area, at the east end of Bangabandhu Bridge, to Gobindasi area -- hampering the river's navigability.

Jigatala, Kosthapara, Bhalkutia, Chituliapara, and Patitapara are some of the locations that fall within the area.

Besides, excavators are being used to extract sand from the river's dried-up channel at various

locations along Bhuapur-Tarakandi road, from Kuthir Boira to Nalin Bazar areas, said locals.

They claimed that a group of local ruling party members and government representatives are engaged in this.

The syndicate of sand traders also built dirt roads to transport the sand in trucks. They, however, did not mention any names out of fear.

According to sources, these heavy trucks are not only damaging roads and embankments but also causing accidents.

Farman Sheikh, a rights activist and resident of Bhuapur,

claimed that in recent years, the river has devoured thousands of homes, other buildings, rural markets, vast expanses of cropland, a number of roads, and embankments. One of the primary reasons of the catastrophe is indiscriminate sand lifting.

The local government occasionally conducts mobile-court drives to stop the sand extraction, fining or imprisoning those

who were found there, but the sand traders remain out of the fray and resume their operations after a short while, said locals and environmentalists.

Asked about the situation, Md Sazzad Hossain, executive engineer of Water Development Board (WDB) in Tangail, told The Daily Star that there is no dredging taking place in Bhuapur at present.

However, a few legal sand ghats (a place where extracted sand is kept) still exist in the region, he said. "So, we will have to see who are extracting the sand from where. Necessary steps will be taken in this regard after an investigation."

Md Belal Hossain, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) in Bhuapur, told The Daily Star that he has already received complaints over the matter. "The issue will be discussed in the monthly law-and-order meeting, and mobile court drives will also be launched soon."



Shefali finds success in chemical-free vegetable farming

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Cultivation of chemical-free vegetables round the year has dramatically changed the fate of Shefali Begum.

The 40-year-old homemaker, from Chunga Pasha village in Kalapara upazila, is now earning extra money by cultivating different varieties of vegetables on 15 decimals of land beside her house and helping her family to sustain.

Alongside helping Shefali at the vegetable field, her husband Osman Gani sells the produced vegetables in the upazila market.

In the last four years, Shefali has purchased 36 decimals of land and bought a cow from her income, which made her self-reliant.



During a visit to the area, this correspondent saw Shefali's garden was booming with seasonal vegetables like red leafy greens, cucumber, gourd, pumpkin, cauliflower, cabbage, bitter melon and watermelons.

Shefali said as her husband had no agricultural land, it was quite difficult for them to manage the family.

But now she is earning around Tk 10,000 per month by cultivating different kinds of seasonal vegetables in the backyard of their homestead on 15 decimal land.

Four years ago, a field worker of Friendship, a non-governmental organisation, came to their village and advised her to cultivate vegetable on the land beside her homestead, Shefali recalled.

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Mustard cultivation on rise in Jhenidah

AZIBOR RAHMAN

Anyone visiting Jhenidah and Magura will notice a certain change in the scenery: the croplands look like yellow and green canvases.

This means that the mustard plants are in full bloom.

Mustard farming is increasing rapidly there due to the price hike of edible soybean oil in the market.

According to sources at the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), in 2022-23 season, 11,112 hectares of land have been used to cultivate mustard in six

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upazilas of Jhenidah. The amount of land was 9,119 hectares in 2021-22 and 9,916 in 2020-21.

This year, 3,200 hectares of land are being used for mustard farming in Sadar, 3,118 in Shaillkupa, 2,544 in Harinakundo, 800 in Moheshpur, 400 in Kotchandpur, and 1,050 in Kaliganj upazilas.

Meanwhile, 16,355 hectares of land have been brought under mustard farming in four upazilas of Magura. Of the land, 8,160 hectares are being used

in Sadar, 910 hectares in Sreepur, 2,275 in Mohammadpur, and 5,010 in Shaillkupa upazilas.

In 2021-22 and 2020-21 seasons, the amount of cultivated land was 13,309 and 13,495 hectares, respectively.

Toaj Ali, a farmer of Raghunathpur village, said he had cultivated mustard in only 10 decimals of land last year. "Due to the high price of edible oil, I decided to farm mustard in two bighas of land this year. It will also save me oil cost."

Farmers Rezaul Islam of Ghighati village in Jhenidah's Kotchandpur upazila and Sohrab Hossain of Bezra village in Magura's Mohammadpur upazila echoed the same.

Contacted, Asgar Ali, deputy director of Jhenidah DAE, said they are inspiring farmers to cultivate mustard as per the direction of the premier. "We are working to grow crops ourselves so that we can become self-sufficient."



As authorities are encouraging farmers to grow crops to become self-sufficient, the ones in Jhenidah and Magura have taken to cultivate mustard, as according to them, the high price of edible oil is a huge boon for them.

PHOTO: STAR