

Rain boosts sapling trade in Rajbari

SUZID DAS, Faridpur

The ongoing Aman paddy planting season has sparked a surge in paddy sapling sales at Khankhanapur market in Rajbari's Sadar upazila, following recent bouts of rain.

According to the Khankhanapur Bazar management committee, as well as dealers and buyers of paddy seedlings, this market is one of the largest and most prominent paddy sapling trading centres in Rajbari. Sellers and buyers, along with paddy growers and traders from various districts, gather at the market twice a week (Tuesdays and Fridays) from the first week of July to mid-September.

Numerous varieties of Aman paddy saplings, such as BR-17, BR-33, BR-75, BINA-7, BINA-17, Golden-1, Dhanigol, Sorna, Babusorna, Binashail, and Latishail, are sold at the market.

During a recent visit, paddy sapling growers from different regions were seen gathered along both sides of the Khankhanapur-Kamaldia road at Khankhanapur Bazar, displaying their saplings for eager buyers. Sellers were also seen negotiating prices with the buyers.

Raju Sheikh, 46, a paddy sapling grower from Charbasantapur village, said, "I spent Tk 9,500 to cultivate paddy saplings on my



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Every monsoon, Jharna Das collects water lilies from the wetlands of Khulna to earn some extra income. Popular for enhancing the flavour of fish dishes, the lilies are in high demand. Each morning, she ventures into the Amtala Beel in Abhaynagar of Jashore by boat, gathering 120-150 bundles, which she sells for Tk 3-4 each. The photo was taken yesterday.

Unsafe but unavoidable

Rickety bamboo bridge puts 50,000 lives at risk

SAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB, Jamalpur

A rickety bamboo bridge remains the only means of communication for around 50,000 people in several unions of Madarganj upazila in Jamalpur and Sariakandi upazila in Bogura, forcing locals to risk their lives every day.

The 100-metre-long makeshift bridge, built over a tributary of the Jamuna river at Nangla village in Balijuri union, serves as the only connection between at least 15 villages, including Nangla, Nadagari, Paschim Sukhnagari, Fuljod, Kajjer Char, Atamar and others.

Since the river remains full almost

year-round, there is no alternative route available.

During the monsoon, the bridge becomes dangerously slippery. Women, children, the elderly, students and patients suffer the most while crossing it, said locals.

Locals said they have been demanding a concrete bridge for over 15 years, but their pleas have largely gone unheeded. Time and again, public representatives promise a permanent structure before elections – yet, once the polls are over, those commitments are forgotten.

Azibar, a resident of Nangla village, said, "We don't want anything else, we

just want a bridge."

Alim, a tenth-grade student, said, "I often slip and fall while crossing. My books get wet, and I injure myself."

Rahim Mandal said farmers in the area struggle to transport their produce to nearby markets. Due to the lack of proper infrastructure, they are often forced to sell crops at unfair prices.

In the absence of a bridge, locals have to travel an additional 5 to 7 kilometres to reach the upazila headquarters or any major market, which adds to their suffering, said Manjurul Islam Musa, former UP chairman of Balijuri union parishad.

Contacted, Golam Kibria Tamal, engineer at Madarganj upazila LGED, said they have submitted a proposal to the ministry and hopefully, it will get approval soon.



20 decimals of land. I have already earned Tk 15,000 by selling them and hope to earn another Tk 8,000-10,000 this year."

Shajahan Sheikh, 49, a paddy sapling trader of Khankhanapur Bazar, said, "I bought paddy saplings from different villages and brought them to this market to sell. By selling paddy saplings, I can earn Tk 1,500-2,000 per day."

Shajahan Kazi, a leaseholder of the Khankhanapur paddy saplings market, said, "On average, paddy saplings worth around Tk 50,000 to Tk 60,000 are sold on every market day. If it rains more in the next couple of weeks, the sales will be even higher."

"Khankhanapur is one of the biggest paddy sapling markets in our district. Traders and paddy growers from different areas, including Faridpur and Madaripur, come here to buy saplings," he added.

10 'diseases' plague the health system

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severe lack of planning, resource allocation, and consistency.

He said the ministry has already taken some steps and planned further measures to tackle these issues.

They have repealed the quota system in medical admissions and set up an accreditation council, he continued.

Among other measures, the ministry has proposed an automated posting system, a separate public service commission for the health sector, and either the closure or quality improvement of low-standard medical colleges.

They have also taken steps to decentralise the power of various directorates under the ministry, said Prof Sayedur.

New institutions have also been planned, including a National Institute for

Women in Khulna, a Geriatric Health Institute in Chattogram, and a health city in Rangpur.

To strengthen primary healthcare, ward-based primary healthcare centres will be established in urban areas, while existing union-level health and family planning centres will be turned into full-fledged primary healthcare centres. A total of 2,700 doctors will be appointed to provide primary healthcare, he also said.

Patients referred from these centres will be treated by specialists at upazila and district hospital outpatient departments.

To ensure transparency and accountability, they are planning to introduce a unique Health ID, and all procurement will be carried out through the e-GP system.

The ministry has proposed a special pay board

for healthcare workers and an 18-month internship for doctors, up from the current 12 months. The internship will include six months of outdoor or community-based primary healthcare services.

Pharmaceutical companies, diagnostic centres, and private hospitals will not be allowed to offer gifts or commissions to doctors, he added.

Two separate councils will be established to resolve conflicts of interest. The capacity of the government-run Essential Drug Company Ltd will be expanded to reduce dependency on external suppliers.

The Bangladesh Institute of Health Management will be operationalised to develop competent leadership. A needs assessment will also be carried out for manpower planning in the sector, said Prof Sayedur.

When a reporter asked for their response to a health sector reform commission member's recent remark that the ministry was in an "utter mess", Prof Sayedur said, "We don't want to comment on that. You can make your own judgment... We tried to improve the situation..."

In response to the Bangladesh Association of Pharmaceutical Industries' (BAPI) claim that the government is putting the pharmaceutical sector at risk, he said no pharmaceutical company has faced an existential crisis during their tenure.

"I'm not sure why they're saying this. We have to strike a balance – ensuring citizens' access to affordable and quality medicines, while also allowing a fair and reasonable profit margin," he said.

Nurjahan said after taking

office, their priority was to ensure proper treatment for those injured in July uprising and preparing a database of victims. In addition to treatment within the country, 78 individuals were sent abroad for better care.

The government has decided to promote 7,000 officials and has already promoted some of them, addressing long pending promotion issues, she said.

The prices of coronary stents and anti-cancer drugs have been reduced, and existing laws have been amended to facilitate organ donation, she added.

Top ministry officials were also present at the briefing.

Dengue death toll climbs

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Experts have warned that the situation may worsen in August and September due to continued rainfall, which creates ideal breeding conditions for Aedes mosquitoes – the primary vector of the dengue virus.

"Intermittent rain is highly favourable for the spread of the dengue virus, which is already present across the country," said entomologist GM Saifur Rahman.

He said Aedes mosquitoes are more active during overcast or gloomy weather, which has persisted across the country. "During the monsoon, the number of dengue cases can be up

to nine times higher than during the dry season," he added.

Saifur urged the public to take precautions, including wearing full-sleeved clothing, using mosquito nets, and regularly cleaning homes to eliminate breeding sites, especially on rooftops.

Jahangirnagar University entomologist Prof Kabirul Bashar warned that August could see at least three times as many dengue cases as July, with a further rise possible in September.

"The current rain pattern is one of the main reasons behind the surge. Once an outbreak starts, cases tend to increase at a geometric rate," Bashar explained.

He stressed the need for aggressive larval control and the elimination of mosquito breeding sites. "When both mosquito populations and infected individuals rise simultaneously, the disease spreads rapidly," he said.

Bashar also called for targeted hotspot management around the homes of dengue patients to kill adult mosquitoes and prevent further breeding. He highlighted the importance of mosquito control in hospitals as well.

"Hospitals can become major sources of transmission if Aedes mosquitoes bite infected patients and then transmit the virus to others," he warned.

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জিডি-১৭৪২

Prosecution seeks

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Rahman and Nirmol Kumar Das; ASIs Biswajit Saha and Kamrul Hasan; and Saiful's aide Rony Bhuiyan – are absconding.

The prosecution said 29 people were killed in Ashulia during the uprising, but the charges in this case are based on the killing of one protester on August 4 last year and six others the next day. The second incident involved five bodies and one injured person being set on fire in a police van.

HC acquits

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not arrested in other cases. Senior lawyer Barrister Ruhul Quddus Kazal also appeared for GK Shamim and others during hearing of the appeals.

On July 17, 2023, a Dhaka court handed down the sentences to GK Shamim and the others in the case filed over laundering Tk 195 crore to Singapore and Malaysia.

His seven bodyguards – Md Delwar Hossain, Md Murad Hossain, Md Jahidul Islam,

Prosecutor Mizanul Islam told the court that the investigation initially found former MP Saiful Islam, former DIG Nurul Islam, then Dhaka SP Asaduzzaman, additional SPs Kafi and Shahidul, former OC AFM Sayed, and inspectors Masudur Rahman and Nirmol Kumar Das planned and supervised the crimes as part of a "joint criminal enterprise".

He said they directed their subordinates to open fire on unarmed demonstrators in the Ashulia area.

Md Shahidul Islam, Md Kamal Hossain, Md Samsad Hossain, and Md Aminul Islam – were sentenced to four years in jail for assisting GK Shamim, who was a top contractor of government projects, in acquiring the laundered money.

Rab on September 20 of 2019 arrested him on charges of extortion and tender manipulation. His bodyguards were also arrested then. Later, Rab filed the case against them with Gulshan Police Station.