

Gachhis gear up for date palm sap season

MOHSIN MILON, *Bengali*

Although winter has yet to begin, date palm sap collectors in Jashore have already started preparing their trees ahead of the season. As a light chill sets in during mornings and evenings, locals say it signals the arrival of winter.

In anticipation, the sap collectors – locally known as “gachhis” – are busy cleaning and trimming date palm trees.

Their activity has brought a visible sense of urgency to the villages. As temperatures drop, the sweetness of the sap increases, bringing the promise of fresh date palm juice and the much-loved patali gur (molasses) at the beginning of winter.

For generations, Bangladeshi homemakers have used date palm juice and molasses to prepare traditional delicacies like pitha and payesh. The juice is not only consumed fresh but also boiled down to produce various types of molasses, including nolen gur and patali gur.



Ibrahim Laskar, from the Khajura area of Jashore, has been earning his livelihood by selling date palm juice and molasses for around 25 years. Passed down through generations, this age-old craft remains his family's main source of income.

“With fewer trees and rising prices of daily essentials, it's hard to support my family of five,” said Ibrahim. “We have to buy firewood to make molasses, which increases costs. If we had access to modern technology, things would be easier.”

Another sap collector, Mizanur, said, “After collecting the sap, our wives boil it down to make molasses – a very labour-intensive process. But the profits are too small. A knife now costs Tk 600, while a pot that once sold for Tk 30-40 now sells for Tk 50-60. If the price of molasses doesn't increase, we'll face big losses this year.”

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), there are about 1,64 million date palm trees in Jashore, of which 3,49,000 are tapped for sap extraction.

Each season, these trees yield approximately 52.4 million litres of sap, producing around 52,500 tonnes of molasses worth over Tk 100 crore. Currently, around 13,200 sap collectors are active across eight upazilas in the district.

Contacted, Shaminur Rahman, sub-assistant agriculture officer of Jashore Sadar, said under a government project, they have distributed sap collection pots and knives among the collectors.

“If we can provide them with modern stoves, climbing equipment, and training on improved techniques, this heritage can be further enriched.”



PHOTO: STAR

Erosion leaves over 200 families homeless

S DILIP ROY, *Salmonirhat*

As floodwaters recede in the northern districts of Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, and Nilphamari, erosion has intensified along the banks of the Teesta, Dharla, Brahmaputra, and Dudhkumar rivers, with at least 60 points now severely affected.

Farmlands, homesteads, orchards, and other structures are being devoured by the rivers, leaving many riverside families homeless. Fearing further collapse, some residents have dismantled their homes and moved to safer places.

According to sources at the district administration and the District Relief and Rehabilitation Office, river erosion along 60 points of the Teesta, Dharla, Dudhkumar, and Brahmaputra rivers between October 7 and 11 has rendered 230 families homeless.

Of them, 160 families lost their homes in Kurigram, 40 in Lalmonirhat, 20 in Rangpur, and 10 in Nilphamari. Farmlands and homesteads in these areas have been swallowed by the rivers.

Erosion has worsened in Kurigram's Sadar, Nageshwar, Rajarhat, and Ulipur upazilas; Lalmonirhat's Sadar, Aditmari, and Hatibandha upazilas; Rangpur's Gangachara and Kaunia upazilas; and Nilphamari's Dimla upazila.

Meher Jamal, a resident of Banipara village in Kurigram Sadar, said, “Over the past few years, Engineer Rakibul Hasan said, “After the floods, several spots have started eroding. Controlling the erosion at Jatrapur requires a large quantity of geo-bags, but there are fund shortages.”

“We are dumping sand-filled geo-bags at some vulnerable points



I lost seven bighas of land to the river. I was living on just ten decimals of homestead land – and that too went into the river on Wednesday morning. I somehow managed to move my belongings to safety.”

Villagers, Mohosena Begum and Mominul Islam echoed him.

Kurigram WDB Executive

and have sent a letter to higher authorities requesting urgent allocation,” he said.

Kurigram Deputy Commissioner Sifat Mehnaz said, “The affected families are being given the government's emergency relief assistance, and they will be rehabilitated.”

Put women, youth at centre of climate action

FROM PAGE 3
communities themselves,” she added.

Dhrubo Haider, programme specialist at UN Women, said Bangladesh needs to strengthen coordination and data-driven action to make climate policies effective. “Progress has been slow, but we cannot afford to stop,” she said.

The involvement of 25 ministries in climate work is not fragmentation – it's progress, because climate change, gender, and disaster risk reduction are crosscutting issues that demand an all-of-government and all-of-society approach. What we need is stronger coordination to prevent duplication and ensure impact.”

“Equally vital is collecting disaggregated data to set clear targets. But without shifting deep-rooted social norms towards gender equality, no policy can bring lasting change,” she said.

Dr Tania Haque, professor of Dhaka University's Women and Gender Studies department, said, “To bring real change, we must bridge knowledge gaps between weather and climate and address the intersectional failures in research and policy.”

“Heat stress affects women differently based on class, occupation, or physical condition. These inequalities reduce productivity and harm national growth. We must shift from a victim-

oriented to a rights-based approach, value indigenous knowledge, ensure inclusive data systems, and engage youth as active participants, not passive recipients,” she said.

Sohanur Rahman, executive coordinator of YouthNet Global, said, “I come from the grassroots – my activism began a decade ago in Barishal. We've long spoken of meaningful participation and equality, yet real gender mainstreaming still lags. Women, youth, and people with disabilities remain excluded from adaptation and mitigation decisions.”

“Diversity in gender and identity must be represented, not just discussed. We

need to move from gender-sensitive to gender-transformative approaches that include men and farmers too. Most importantly, Bangladesh still lacks a youth ministry or budget for climate action. Without structural reform, youth remain sidelined. It's time to ensure real inclusion, resources, and leadership for women and young people in climate policy.”

AKM Sohel, additional secretary and chief of the UN Wing at the Economic Relations Division, said no government can achieve true climate resilience without inclusive and coordinated action.

“Bangladesh has made remarkable progress – identifying 113 intersections, and outlining more than 7,000 activities under its climate framework,” he said.

“However, the lack of clear budgeting continues to create major funding gaps, hindering engagement with global partners. We must build stronger financial systems, ensure credible data, and embed gender- and youth-focused mechanisms in all climate financing,” he added.

Nafisa Nowrin Chowdhury, resilient infrastructure specialist at C3ER, delivered the keynote presentation.

Among others, Farah Anzum, country lead of the Global Strategic Communications Council (GSCC); M Zakir Hossain Khan, chief executive of Change Initiatives; Banasree Nojee Mitra, programme director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; Kamal Ahmed, consultant editor of The Daily Star; and other climate and gender activists also attended the event.

Dhrubo wants

Slabon vows a women-friendly

FROM PAGE 3

and put students' academic careers and even lives at risk. There's a fear that such incidents could happen again, which is why we are determined to resist it.”

He stressed the need for a long-term framework to build a safe campus.

“I want to introduce a 'Campus Charter' involving all stakeholders – students, teachers, and staff. Whenever the administration fails or acts irresponsibly, this charter will function as a guiding law for everyone.”

Dhrubo said, “Our plan is clear and multi-dimensional. We will include the Cucus elections in CU's academic calendar, ensure that elected representatives can participate in the Senate, and prepare a roadmap to address issues of food, accommodation, and transportation.”

“Since 2019, I have been actively involved in movements and struggles at CU. During the July movement, I played the role of a co-coordinator, and afterwards I continued the fight by standing with the people, free from greed or temptation. I think my organisational ability to coordinate work at the grassroots level makes me capable of representing the students,” he said.

Dhrubo also called for printing ballot papers in Braille for visually impaired students.

cottages or buildings to accommodate students. For the long term, we can utilise abandoned buildings and unused land on campus to create housing facilities. I will initiate steps toward that,” he added.

Improving the transport system would also be one of her priorities, alongside solving other basic issues such as medical services, medicine supply, and food quality.

“There is no separate day-care centre for female

students with children. The one that exists for teachers is also used by students, but it is not very effective. As a result, many female students with children struggle to continue their studies. Their rights must be ensured – so I plan to set up day-care centres in every faculty,” she said.

She also pledged to ensure prayer spaces, sanitation and menstrual hygiene facilities, access to medical services, and strengthened campus security for female students.

“We will form an effective anti-sexual harassment cell and ensure a safe, supportive campus environment for women,” she said.

“We kept our manifesto realistic – all promises are achievable,” she said.

Regarding the election, she called for uninterrupted vote counting with live broadcast to ensure transparency.

“I believe the students will choose the most deserving candidate through a free, fair election,” she added.

তিকারননিসা নূন স্কুল এন্ড কলেজ

১/এ, নিউ বেইলী রোড, ঢাকা-১০০০

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

তিকারননিসা নূন স্কুল এন্ড কলেজের জন্য স্কুল এন্ড কলেজ প্রোগ্রাম পরিকল্পিত সরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

সরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির অধৃত অংশে আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।</