

3,484-hectare arable land lost in 5yrs in Rangpur

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Agricultural land across Rangpur district is gradually shrinking, with vast stretches of arable land being used for non-agricultural purposes such as housing development and industrial establishments, brick kilns, and other infrastructures.

Meanwhile, the population has been rising rapidly in the district, thereby increasing the demand for food as well. As a result, the agriculture-dependent economy of Rangpur region is being threatened, raising concerns over potential food insecurity in the future, according to experts.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension, arable land in Rangpur district has decreased by 3,484 hectares over the past five years. During the same period, the district's population increased by 1,54,183. The annual demand for food has increased by 27,594 tonnes, but the food surplus stands at only 2,705 tonnes.

At one time, surplus food grains produced in the Rangpur region were supplied to rest of the country. At present, while there is still a surplus in food production, it is

families are landless, while 2,04,490 are marginal farming families.

Also, the district has 8,773 hectares of single-crop land, 87,472 hectares of double-crop land, 92,832 hectares of triple-crop land, and 8,960 hectares of four-crop land. The net area is about 4,97,933 hectares.

With growth in population, the demand for housing is also rising, and residential houses are being built by filling up agricultural land. Besides, factories, brick kilns, educational institutions, and



not significant compared to the rise in demand. Currently, the food demand of nearly 3.2 million people in the district can still be met from local production, but concerns have emerged over whether this capacity can be maintained in the future as arable land continues to shrink, said DAE officials.

According to statistics, there are 5,33,129 agrarian families in Rangpur district. Of them, 95,140 are

various commercial establishments are also being constructed on fertile land. As a result, agricultural land is gradually shrinking.

Sunil Kumar Roy, a college teacher from Shathibari area of Rangpur, said, "Even 15-20 years ago, there were vast stretches of green agricultural land in our area. Now almost all that land has been lost to factories built one after another."

Abdus Sattar, a school teacher and resident of Mithapukur upazila town, said, "Much of the croplands in the area has been used in the recent years to build government and private institutions, small factories, and residential houses."

Advocate Palash Kanti Nag, adviser to the Rangpur District Homestead and Agricultural Land Protection Committee, said, "In

many cases, fertile agricultural land is being destroyed for industrial expansion. If this continues, food security in the Rangpur region will face a serious threat."

Agriculture officials said due to lack of effective implementation of the land zoning law and policies to protect agricultural land, farmlands are being indiscriminately occupied and converted. As a result, there is a growing risk that food grain production may decline in the northern region in future.

They, however, also said while

agricultural land has decreased somewhat, there has been no major shortage in food production so far due to modern technology, improved seeds, and short-duration, high yield crops.

Sirajul Islam, DAE additional director in Rangpur region, said, "Production is still in surplus as farmers have become more skilled in modern cultivation. However, it must be ensured that triple-crop land is not used for non-agricultural purposes under any circumstances. At the same time, balanced fertiliser use is very important to protect soil fertility."

"The country's economy is largely dependent on agriculture. Therefore, priority must be given to preserving farmlands in agricultural hubs like Rangpur," he added.

Bangladesh seeks Dreams crushed

FROM PAGE 3

He added that the Japanese side has agreed to consider Bangladesh's proposals and submit a revised offer shortly, after which further discussions will be held to finalise the arrangement.

CAAB officials said the delay largely resulted from indecision during the interim government, when negotiations over terminal management, operational control and revenue-sharing arrangements failed to reach consensus.

The Japanese consortium involved in the project includes Japan Airport Terminal Company, Sumitomo Corporation, Sojitz Corporation and Narita International Airport Corporation, while the terminal project was largely financed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

He said complications had arisen regarding certain charges and operational issues in the agreement related to the management of the terminal.

The state minister explained that civil aviation agreements generally involve three categories of charges, and differences had emerged between the two sides over some of these issues.

"Both sides discussed the matter in detail. Bangladesh presented its proposals and the Japanese side also shared their position."

He said complications had arisen regarding certain charges and operational issues in the agreement related to the management of the terminal.

The state minister explained that civil aviation agreements generally involve three categories of charges, and differences had emerged between the two sides over some of these issues.

"Both sides discussed the matter in detail. Bangladesh presented its proposals and the Japanese side also shared their position."

He added that the Japanese side has agreed to consider Bangladesh's proposals and submit a revised offer shortly, after which further discussions will be held to finalise the arrangement.

CAAB officials said the delay largely resulted from indecision during the interim government, when negotiations over terminal management, operational control and revenue-sharing arrangements failed to reach consensus.

The Japanese consortium involved in the project includes Japan Airport Terminal Company, Sumitomo Corporation, Sojitz Corporation and Narita International Airport Corporation, while the terminal project was largely financed by the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

JS Speaker

FROM PAGE 3

Parliament Hafiz Uddin Ahmed said this after paying homage to the Liberation War martyrs at National Memorial in Savar.

Newly appointed Deputy Speaker Barrister Kaiser Kamal did the same.

In response to journalists' questions, the Speaker said his role in running the parliament is to be neutral. "I have resigned from the party to perform my duties impartially. The opposition party will get enough opportunities in parliament. We were together in the movement to remove dictatorship. We have enough tolerance towards them."

Hafiz Uddin said, "I remember with deep respect the proclaimer of independence Shaheed President Ziaur Rahman, and three-time former Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia..."

the incident, DUET Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Zainal Abedin contacted the hospital, after which treatment arrangements improved.

"Nur is a member of our family," the VC said. "We are in constant contact to ensure his proper treatment and justice."

Students of DUET held a protest march on March 10 demanding justice for Nayeem. They later submitted a memorandum to the Gazipur deputy commissioner.

SM Saliqul Islam, deputy commissioner of Gazipur Metropolitan Police, said the incident falls under the jurisdiction of the railway police.

Dhaka Railway Police Station OC Zainal Abedin said police have registered a case. "We have not yet been able to arrest the accused, but efforts are ongoing."

ABM Kamruzzaman, divisional railway manager, said ensuring security on trains primarily falls under the responsibility of railway police.

"Compensation may be possible if an accident occurs due to railway negligence, but in this case, the opportunity appears limited," he added.

For Nurunnahar, however, compensation is not the biggest concern.

"My son dreamed of becoming an engineer," she said, glancing at Nayeem, who lay silent, staring at the ceiling.

"Who will return his legs? Who will return his dreams?"

After learning about

4 years on, hospital

FROM PAGE 4

done in the operation theatre due to lack of surgeons, he added.

Moreover, the hospital does not have adequate medicine supply for outdoor patients. While around 400 patients visit the hospital daily, medicines worth only around Tk 15 lakh were allocated in last fiscal year against the huge number of outdoor patients, said hospital sources.

The hospital was set up as part of a government-supported healthcare initiative to expand medical services in underserved rural areas, but the people are deprived of the intended facilities for four years since it started

operation, said Nazmul Anwar, a local resident.

Aynul Islam, a local battery-run auto-rickshaw driver, said people are not getting their desired services from the hospital. For serious cases, they have to travel some 20km to MMCH, which is often costly for poor people, he added.

Expressing frustration over the hospital's facilities, local people demanded immediate steps to appoint adequate number of doctors and staff to make it fully operational.

"Higher authorities have been informed in this regard but it is still uncertain when the issue will be resolved," said hospital superintendent Dr Badrul Ahsan.

them departed on time, only two trains left about 40 minutes late due to delays caused by an earlier accident.

"Trains are expected to run on time within the next two days," he further said, adding that around 124 additional coaches and five pairs of special trains have been introduced to handle the Eid rush.

"These measures will allow the Railway to serve around 36,000 to 42,000 passengers daily," he said.

He further said work is underway to expand the Dhaka-Sylhet Highway into six lanes.

"As such, vehicles will be able to move on at least two lanes. Speed may be reduced, but vehicles will not stop anywhere," he said.

advance train ticket sales began online on March 3, he said, adding that the online platform faced heavy pressure on the first day.

"About 37 lakh people attempted to purchase tickets online, while around 36,000 tickets were sold in line with railway capacity," he also said.

Rabiul said 21 trains left for their scheduled destinations yesterday on the first day of Eid journey. While most of

strain the country's finances, the report added.

According to Petrobangla, the cost of LNG is nearly 20 times higher than domestically produced gas. Rising fuel costs have already forced some factories to cut production, slowing economic growth.

The report suggests that if Bangladesh were to channel similar levels of investment into solar power and energy storage, it could potentially achieve its energy ambitions more quickly and at lower cost.

With renewable energy accounting for less than 2 percent of electricity generation, Bangladesh ranks among the bottom 10 percent of countries globally in terms of renewable energy share, the report said.

"Growing deployment of renewable power, energy storage and other clean technologies can provide a buffer against fluctuating gas markets and serve as a reliable, affordable alternative," it added.

Pilot project shows promise, but delays stall wider rollout

FROM PAGE 3

The interim government inaugurated semi-automated signals at seven intersections — Hotel InterContinental, Bangla Motor, Sonargaon, Farmgate, Bijoy Sarani, the Chief Adviser's Office and Jahangir Gate — on August 30, 2025.

Authorities had planned to install signals at 15 more intersections within the following six months.

"We are getting very good results compared to the previous situation," Hossain said. "If the system is implemented in more areas, its usefulness will be much greater."

He said the system's full impact cannot be understood when it is implemented only in limited areas.

"Basically, the 22 intersections should have been completed around July or August last year, at most September. By now,

one full corridor across Dhaka should have been operational," he said.

"If around 50 nearby intersections had also been added, most of the city would already be covered."

According to him, such delays show a lack of commitment among implementing agencies.

He also said technology alone cannot solve the problem unless authorities and road users cooperate.

"Technology is technology, but when implementing it among the public, you must consider public behaviour as well," he said.

The system can operate fully automatically like an "autopilot", but the semi-automated design allows manual supervision during special events or unusual traffic situations.

He also stressed the importance of enforcement.

"An intersection is a very valuable hub. If there

is chaos there, nothing will work," he said. "Traffic police must keep intersections clear."

For example, he said the system works well at Bijoy Sarani because the area is relatively free of hawkers and roadside obstructions.

"If other intersections are kept similarly clear, congestion would improve significantly," he said.

According to Hossain, expanding the system would not be very costly.

"Even with civil works included, each intersection costs less than Tk 1 crore," he said. "For 100 intersections the project might cost around Tk 60-80 crore."

"With proper commitment, we could complete all 100 intersections within this timeframe."

IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS
DM Ghius Malik, deputy traffic engineer at Dhaka Transport Coordination

Authority (DTCA), said several installed signals are already functioning properly.

"At Bijoy Sarani, Karwan Bazar and Farmgate, I saw that the lighting system was being maintained and operating," he said.

He also noted that under the current government policy, traffic signals are no longer supposed to be stopped for protocol during VVIP movement.

"The signalling system should continue functioning normally," he said.

If the pilot project proves successful, authorities plan to expand the system further.

Currently, Dhaka North and South together have about 338 intersections, most of which are managed manually by traffic police.

"Our goal is eventually to bring all these intersections under a signalling system," he said.

Rajib Khadem,

superintendent engineer of the Traffic Engineering Circle of Dhaka South City Corporation, said signals have been installed at several locations, including Shikha Chatra, Kadam Chatra, Matsya Bhaban, Kakrail Mosque, Hotel InterContinental, Bangla Motor and Shahbagh.

"Our work is finished. Now Buet is installing the lights and related equipment and running them on a trial basis," he said.

However, officials from DNCC said coordination challenges and administrative processes contributed to the delays.

Khondoker Mahub Alam, superintendent engineer of DNCC's Traffic Engineering Circle, said the main issues were coordination between the two city corporations, tender procedures and frequent administrative changes.

"The delay in the tender happened because of

Bangladesh's energy future clouded by LNG risks

FROM PAGE 1

invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the JKM spot price surged to as high as \$70 per million British thermal units (MMBtu). Bangladesh endured rolling blackouts after it was periodically shut out of the LNG market when suppliers diverted cargoes to higher-paying European markets.

Spot prices have since stabilised — at least prior to the Middle East conflict — with the JKM hovering around \$11 per MMBtu as of January. Even at these levels, however, strong demand growth has yet to materialise in South Asia.

According to the GEM briefing titled "Southern Asia's Gas Plans May Be Overblown," a massive wave of new LNG export capacity led by the United States and Qatar is expected to come online over the latter half of this decade.

"Global LNG export capacity is conservatively set to grow 56 percent by 2031, counting projects that are already under construction or have

reached final investment decisions," the report said.

Even so, GEM cautioned that the apparent opportunity could prove misleading for developing importers.

"Even if LNG prices fall in the next few years, buyers and sellers in Southern Asia should be careful because the apparent opportunity may be an illusion and not sustainable in the long run," the briefing noted.

The International Energy Agency also projects that LNG demand in Bangladesh could grow by about 60 percent by 2030.

Bangladesh has proposed 11.3 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) of new LNG import capacity, enough to roughly double the country's existing capacity of 8.3 mtpa. Industry plans to build additional LNG import terminals would therefore significantly expand the country's ability to import the fuel.

"Bangladesh is one of the eight most populous

countries in the world with gas infrastructure plans that could shape their energy mixes for decades to come," it said.

The report warned that failure to expand supporting infrastructure could bottleneck LNG development, as pipeline connectivity remains a major constraint.

Bangladesh has plans to build 2,695 kilometres of gas pipelines to link LNG import facilities with gas-consuming sectors such as power plants, industries and city gas networks. Yet only about 8 percent of those pipelines are currently under construction, according to data from GEM's online database Asia Gas Tracker.

Dependence on LNG is increasing as the country's domestic gas production from mature fields has declined by 9.3 percent between 2014 and 2024, the report said.

In 2025, the government imported 109 LNG cargoes and has stood out in the

region for its growing commitment to long-term LNG contracts. Three additional contracts are scheduled to begin in 2026.

Despite the anticipated supply growth, the report said LNG may still struggle to compete with other energy sources. "LNG that is relatively cheap during a period of oversupply may still not be competitive with alternatives."

It also warned that the expected period of oversupply could be short-lived.

Quoting the Oxford Institute for Energy Studies, the report noted that global LNG markets are expected to rebalance in the early 2030s. QatarEnergy has also argued that a potential LNG-fuelled artificial intelligence boom could tighten the market sooner, possibly ending the oversupply period by 2030.

Petrobangla, the state-owned oil and gas exploration company, has warned that fluctuating LNG prices could further

strain the country's finances, the report added.

According to Petrobangla, the cost of LNG is nearly 20 times higher than domestically produced gas. Rising fuel costs have already forced some factories to cut production, slowing economic growth.

The report suggests that if Bangladesh were to channel similar levels of investment into solar power and energy storage, it could potentially achieve its energy ambitions more quickly and at lower cost.

With renewable energy accounting for less than 2 percent of electricity generation, Bangladesh ranks among the bottom 10 percent of countries globally in terms of renewable energy share, the report said.

"Growing deployment of renewable power, energy storage and other clean technologies can provide a buffer against fluctuating gas markets and serve as a reliable, affordable alternative," it added.