

SCARCITY OF QUALITY SEEDS

Jute farming faces setback in five northern districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Jute cultivation has faced a setback in five districts of the northern region including Nilphamari due to acute scarcity of quality seeds.

Continuous drought has aggravated the situation in Nilphamari, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts.

Because of the phenomenon, the farmers could not sow jute seeds on about 60 per cent of targeted lands although half of the harvesting season already passed.

Last year's high price of jute encouraged the farmers to cultivate the cash crop on a vast tract of land this year, but they have become frustrated due to non-availability of quality jute seeds and drought.

In search of quality seeds, the farmers are now crowding the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) offices. They are also moving from door to door of authorised dealers of BADC. But they are returning home empty-handed.

Last year, farmers in the region got Tk 800-1000 per maund of jute, the highest amount in last 20 years.

The ongoing drought persisting for more than five months has dried up lands resulting in poor sprouting of saplings.

Usually farmers collect jute seeds from the following sources. They usually prefer to use their own harvested seeds, otherwise they collect seeds from BADC or authorised dealers or smuggled jute seeds found in markets. As quality jute seeds are very rare, the farmers opt for BADC seeds.

Source in the BADC regional



A farmer in Domar upazila, Nilphamari prepares land for jute cultivation. But jute cultivation faces setback in the district due to acute scarcity of quality jute seeds.

office, Rangpur, said this year the demand for jute seeds in the five districts is 270 metric tonnes (MT) whereas 70,000 hectares of land have been brought under jute cultivation. But the availability of jute seeds is only 68 MT.

The assistant agriculture officer of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Nilphamari, Provash Chandra Mohanto told this correspondent this year the demand for jute seeds is 109 MT. Of the seeds, 14 MT is of local variety and 95 MT is of Tosha variety.

The DAE brought 14.5 thousand hectares of land under jute cultivation

which is higher than about 13.5 thousand hectares of last year's target.

BADC is the authority to supply jute seeds to the farmers. But the storekeeper of local BADC office, Abdul Malek said till March 28, he received only 1,422 kg of jute seeds (about 1.5 MT) which constitutes only 2 per cent of the total demand.

The BADC authorised seed dealers are selling government seeds in the open market. They are selling a pack of Tosha variety of seeds of 775 grams at in between Tk 230-240 instead of government fixed price of Tk 68. They are also

selling the local variety of 1 kg of seeds at between Tk 100-120 instead of the official rate of Tk 75. At present the seeds in BADC storage have been exhausted. BADC sources said their local office sells jute seeds directly to farmers in the Sadar upazila only while in other five upazilas it is sold through the authorised dealers.

They said the local BADC office is not responsible to monitor the price of jute seeds as the dealers procure their quota of jute seeds directly from the regional office at Rangpur.

Making best use of the situation, Indian jute seeds have flooded the markets. At present, the cultivation season of local variety of jute is over. So, there is a great demand for Tosha variety of jute seeds.

Inferior quality of Indian Tosha jute seeds such as Debgi, Krishi kalyan, Bangabir, Krishi Sebyan, Tasmahal, Bankim, Panpata, Trishul and Pansa are being sold at between Tk 240-250 per kg.

When contacted, the owner of Sonali Seed Store of Nilphamari Baro Bazaar, Akbar Ali told this correspondent they sell these varieties of Indian seeds.

"We do not know which seeds are good and which seeds are bad because these are imported through land ports legally."

Jamiar Rahman, a farmer at Ketkibari village under Domar upazila said he had sown Indian variety of Tosha seeds in his two bigahs of land but he became disappointed as 75 per cent of the seeds did not sprout. He blamed the inferior quality of Indian seeds for it.

Indefinite truck strike in Nilphamari threatened

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Nilphamari District Truck Owners' Association has demanded of the administration to take steps to stop truck hijacking and extortion by police on highways within a month.

The association threatened to go for an indefinite strike after expiry of the deadline.

They threatened this at a press conference held at Saidpur Press Club. Association president Sawkat Chowdhury who is also the vice president of North Bengal Truck Owners' Association said that 10 loaded trucks of the district were hijacked from highways in last one year. The trucks were carrying rice worth Tk 1 crore to different parts of the country. He said the hijackers are confirmed culprits, hiding themselves as transport workers. He lamented that police miserably failed to recover any of the hijacked trucks or nab the criminals.

At the press conference held on Wednesday, Chowdhury mentioned that the state minister for home assured the North Bengal Truck Owners' Association leaders two years ago to set up police outposts on every 10 kilometre points on the highway. But he said the state minister did not fulfil his commitment.

A 10-point demand including stoppage of truck hijacking and extortion by police on highway was placed at the press conference.

Association leaders mentioned that the truck fare from Dinajpur to Dhaka via Saidpur is Tk 10,000, but police demand toll at 19 points along the route.

Media urged to create awareness about TB

World TB Day observed in dists

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Speakers at different workshops held in Chittagong, Khulna, Sylhet and Barisal called upon the media men to create awareness about tuberculosis (TB) among people.

The workshop were held to mark the World TB Day recently, says a press release.

Health Department of the government, Barac and associated organisations jointly organised the workshops.

In Chittagong, the workshop was held at the Theatre Institute auditorium. Chittagong district civil surgeon Dr Khurshid Jamil Chowdhury presided it.

Jatiya Sangsad chief whip Syed Wahidul Alam was present as chief guest while Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) director Brigadier Abidur Rahman, Chittagong Health Department director Dr Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, noted chest diseases specialist Dr Ahmed Hossain and

Brac health and nutrition programme trainer Dr Mahfuza Rifat were present as special guests.

In Khulna, the workshop was held at Khulna Press Club auditorium. Khulna civil surgeon Dr Hame Jamal presided it.

Additional divisional commissioner Md Farhad Uddin was present as chief guest while Khulna Medical College principal Dr S M Jafar Ullah, additional deputy commissioner Muhammad Shahiduzzaman, former president of Khulna Press Club Sahabuddin Ahmed and Sheikh Abu Hasan were present as special guests.

Khulna Medical College assistant professor Dr G C Biswas was the main discussant. Barac regional health co-ordinator Md Mohsin Ali gave the welcome address.

In Sylhet, the workshop was held at Sylhet Zila Parishad auditorium. It was presided by Sylhet civil surgeon AZ Mahbub while TB specialist Farid Uddin Faruquee was present as the main discussant.

Sylhet city BNP president Ariful Huq Chowdhury, acting director of Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital (SOMCH) MA K M Jahangir and others were present as guests. In Barisal, the workshop was held at Barisal Press Club auditorium.

Barisal civil surgeon Dr Abdul Malek presided it.



Jatiya Sangsad whip Syed Wahidul Alam MP, speaks at a workshop held at the Theatre Institute auditorium in Chittagong to mark the World TB Day recently.

Tigers kill 20 in Sundarbans last year

Bss, Salkhira

At least 20 persons were killed by tigers in different parts of the Sundarbans last year.

Forest officials said the victims are fishermen, 'bawali', 'mawali' and coast guard.

The dead fishermen are: Shantosh Kumar Mondal, 32, of village Jalalpur under Tala upazila, Aziz Sheikh, 35, of village Baro Bhetkhal, Amjad Ali Sheikh, 38, of village Dhumghat, Abdur Rahim, 18, of village Shora, Dhona Sardar, 60, of village Shora, Nirapada Mondal, 45, of village Burigoalini, Abdul Gafur, 38, of village Pakhimara, Shahjahan Ali, 21, of village Tengrakhal and Arshad Ali Gazi, 60, of village Munshigonj under Shyamnagar upazila.

The dead 'bawalis' are: Kobad Ali, 55, of village Burigoalini, Rezaul Gani, 30, Kawsar Gazi, 32, of village Horinagar, Nasar Ali Gazi, 45, of village Ehooto Bhetkhal and Abdur Rab, 35, of village Pakhimara under the same upazila, and Monirul

Sana, 22, of village Dhamrail under Paekgacha upazila and Nur Mohammad, 30, of village Bobra under Koyra Upazila of Khulna district.

The dead 'mawalis' are: Monjel Gazi, 40, of village Chackbara, Rafiqul Islam, 35, of village Horinagar and Sobed Ali Gazi, 42, of village Godara under Shyamnagar upazila.

The dead forest guards are: Mahfuz, 38, of Lotaberi Forest Camp.

Meanwhile, three persons including a forest guard were critically injured by tigers during the period.

Of the injured, Forest Guard Nasir Khan of Lotaberi Forest Camp survived after fighting for half an hour with tiger.

Abdul Hamid, 86, of village Kholishabunia and Abu Taleb Sardar of village Tengrakhal under Shyamnagar Upazila were attacked by tigers while fishing at Lotaberi Khal and Matabhanga Khal area in the Sunderbans.

Mohila Parishad founding day

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A discussion to celebrate the 36th founding anniversary of Bangladesh Mohila Parishad (BMP) was held at Syed Mujtaba Ali Auditorium here.

Presided by BMP president Nomita Das, the discussion was attended by Prof Abdul Khaleque and Akmal Hussain Nipu among others.

Clash leaves 1 dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

One person was killed and two others were injured in a clash over ancestral property village Dhepa in Gangni upazila in Meherpur.

The dead is Anisur Rahman 30, son of Mozammel Haq of the village. Mozammel had rivalry with his sister Aloka Khatun over ancestral property.

Bid to develop skill of English language

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A meeting to develop skill of English language was held at Green Hill International School (GHIS).

The GHIS authorities organised it. Local guardians, journalists and high officials of the British Council participated in the meeting held on Wednesday.

Presided by GHIS Chairman Alaur Rahman Chowdhury the meeting was attended by the British Council project officer Brayonia Sumaya Rayhan as chief guest.

GHIS Principal Sayma Rahman, Tareque Ahmed, journalists Syed Humayed Ali Shaheen and Nurul Islam Sheful were present as special guests.

12X3

13X3



A procession at Rajshahi to protest attack on the Rajshahi bureau office of Dainik Samakal on Wednesday.