

Woes of 50,000 salt producers in Cox's Bazar

6 lakh tonnes salt remains unsold

MUAZZEM HOSSAIN SHAKIL,
Cox's Bazar

About 50,000 salt producers in eight upazilas are passing difficult time as 6 lakh tonnes of salt remains unsold.

Local producers hoarded salt for selling in the rainy season, but they could not sell it due to its low price.

They alleged prices of locally produced salt fell down abnormally following arrival of a huge quantity of smuggled salt from Myanmar. In this situation, many producers might miss the next season, said Salt Producers' Action Committee.

Cox's Bazar Salt Producers' Action Committee president Anwar Pasha Chowdhury said about 5 lakh metric tons of salt were kept beneath 1,500 shrimp enclosures by digging ground and about 1 lakh metric tons of salt were hoarded in 500 big and small godowns.

Each ton of salt was supposed to be sold at between Tk 300 and 350 during rainy season in the months of June, July and August. But due to easy availability of smuggled salt from Myanmar, prices of locally produced salt did

not soar by more than Tk 100 in the markets.

Meantime, the next salt producing season will start from December. But the ongoing season's salt still remain unsold. Many producers will lose their capital if they are unable to sell their hoarded salt within the ongoing month. In such a situation, they will not be able to produce salt in the next season.

On contact, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (Bscic) Salt Project general manager (GM) Engineer Salahuddin Chowdhury said 14 lakh 83,000 metric tons of salt were produced on 70,050 acres of land in 8 upazilas of Cox's Bazar and 1 upazila (Banshkhal) of Chittagong in the last season. As the production exceeded the official target of 11 lakh 70,000 metric tons, producers could not sell salt due to its lower price, he said.

About 5 lakh people of the coastal area including 50,000 marginal producers are involved with the industry, he said further.

Cox's Bazar Salt Factory Owners-Producers Oikya Parisad convener Raisuddin said an

unscrupulous circle is active to ruin the industry. Another syndicate imports salt from India and Myanmar in large quantity much higher than the actual demand. In most cases only 5 per cent import tax is being imposed in stead of original 205 per cent, he said.

Bangladesh Salt Producers Association president Mostafa Kamal Chowdhury has demanded of the government to stop import of salt and immediate haltage of opening of new LC for the interest of protecting salt industry.

Hasanul Abedin Shuva, a salt producer of Uttar Nalbila village under Kalar Mar Chhara union in Maheshkhali upazila, said he had hoarded about 40,000 maunds of salt last season, but he could not sell it due to fall in price.

Similarly, Lokman Hakim of Kalar Mar Chhara union hoarded 30,000 maunds, Rezaul Karim of Barua Para 20,000 maunds and Aby Taher Chowdhury of Dailyaghona hoarded 15,000 maunds of salt.

At least 50,000 producers hoarded at least one and a half lakh maunds of salt in the union.

Admitting the fact, Cox's Bazar

Salt Factory Owners Association president Abdu Shukkur said fresh production of salt will start in the next month. But many producers will not be able to produce salt in the next season if they are unable to sell their hoarded salt within a short period.

Cox's Bazar Salt Factory Owners-Producers Oikya Parisad convener Raisuddin said over 100 smugglers of Teknaf, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong and Myanmar smuggle in salt while they smuggle out fertiliser by sea through syndicates.

Raisuddin alleged the administration mysteriously did not take action against godfathers of the syndicate although previously many smugglers disclosed their names after arrest.

Policemen, navy personnel and coast guards of Teknaf, Ukhiya, Maheshkhali and Chakoria seized 7 cargoes with 70,000 smuggled salt in last three months, police sources said.

Cox's Bazar Sadar Police Station sources said in most cases they could not arrest the criminals because criminals usually smuggle out salt by deep sea.

SHIBIR ATTACK

Female students leave Carmichael College hostel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The resident students of Rangpur Carmichael College female hostel yesterday left their dormitory following attack on their procession by the cadres of Islami Chhatra Shibir on Monday.

They said that they had left the hostel as the college administration failed miserably to take adequate security measures for protection of female students and arrest of the attackers even after 24 hours of the incident.

Shibir cadres attacked their procession when it was proceeding towards the Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office. The processionists were proceeding to hand over a memorandum to the DC containing their demand for safety and security of their lives.

College sources said the hostel residents were suffering from insecurity for a long time because of uncontrolled accessibility of men at the hostel all the day, specially at night. The residents urged the college authorities to take adequate security measures to resist the bad practice, but in vain. Finally, they decided to go to the DC to urge him to take action in this regard. But on the way, the Shibir cadres resisted movement of the procession resulting in injuries and

harassment to many processionists.

Local people, in a press statement issued on the day, expressed their anguish over the incident. They criticised the role of college principal and demanded his suspension as well as punishment to the culprits.

Sammitto Sangskritik Jote presi-

dent Kazi Mohammed Zunnun, coordinator of 14-party Combine here Dr Ekramul Hoque Swapan and former principal of Carmichael college Dr Mohammad Rezaul Hoque also condemned the incident.

Chhatra Sangram Parishad brought out a procession in the town

protesting the inactivity of the college administration.

Parishad leaders threatened a greater agitation if the principal failed to take action against the culprits without further delay.



Jubo League activists brought out a motor cycle rally in Sylhet yesterday demanding reform in Election Commission and realisation of their 11-point demand.

PHOTO: STAR

Sufferings of Monga-hit people aggravate

TR, GR programmes suspended in greater Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The sufferings of Monga (a near famine situation) affected people in Nilphamari and five other districts of greater Rangpur have aggravated manifold due to suspension of the official test relief (TR) and gracious relief (GR) programmes.

The programmes were suspended in Nilphamari on receipt of an official order to this effect on November 2, said Acting District Relief Officer Md Tariqul Islam. The order would be in force until further order of the concerned ministry, he said.

Sources in different relief offices in Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Gaibandha confirmed the report of suspension of rural infrastructure development programmes.

The immediate past government introduced the programme through allotment of foodgrains.

Sources in different district relief offices said this year the government allocated more than 3,000 metric tons (MT) of foodgrains as TR and about 550 MT as GR programmes in 5 districts of greater Rangpur.

Nilphamari district got an allotment of 600 MT of food grains under TR and 1,000 MT of foodgrains under GR programmes.

Paddy fields were damaged in the region as a drought-like situation prevailed here at the outset of aman cultivation season. There is an apprehension of possible shortage of food in the region next year.

In such a situation, suspension of TR and GR programmes have multiplied sufferings of scores of Monga affected people.

Usually 'Monga' period lasts from mid-September to end-November causing unemployment of farm workers.

The previous governments also

allotted a huge quantity of foodgrains under the programmes. Thousands of starving people of 6 districts in the region used to

earn a living by engaging themselves in various rural developmental activities. The activities included renovation of roads, tree plantation, earth filling work, re-excavation of ponds and canals. They got foodgrains or money as wages.

District Krishak Dal general secretary Farhanul Islam, District Krishak League president Babu Khoka Ram Roy and District Krishak Samity general secretary Sridam Das, in separate statements, demanded immediate resumption of the programmes.



PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) brought out a procession in Netrakona town yesterday marking the National Revolution and Revolution Day.

Home for elderly destitutes in Monga-prone area

A CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A home for destitute elderly people titled, 'Rebecca Reyaz Probin Nibash' has been built in Monga-prone Aeditmani upazila.

Built in memory of late Alhaj Reyaz Uddin Ahmed and late Rebecca Ahmed recently, the cost of construction of the home was borne by sons and daughters of the late couple.

Initially, five destitute elderly women and five destitute elderly men will be accommodated in the home which is likely to go into full operation on December 25.

An advisory committee will be formed to be headed by incumbent lawmaker of Lalmonirhat-2 constituency as its chief advisor.

Other advisors will be local Upazila Nirbahi Officer, Union Parishad chairman, OC of local police station, local Union Parishad member, Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer. A committee comprising local people will run the home.

The cost of food, clothing and medicine including furniture of the home will be borne by the founding family members.

Initially, the activities of the home began on the first day of the holy month of Ramadan with feeding of destitutes and children. Ifar was distributed to 100 poor fasting people daily during the entire holy month.

Harassment at Sirajganj passport office alleged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Passport seekers coming from different remote areas of the district are being harassed allegedly by the brokers at Sirajganj Regional Passport Office.

Brokers allegedly collect between Tk 3,000 to 5,000 from each applicant in name of quick service. But people do not get passports on time, rather they are cheated by them most often. Brokers carry on their activities in collaboration with 'corrupt' policemen.

When this correspondent tried to contact the deputy director of the passport office, he allegedly misbehaved with him saying irregularities prevailed everywhere in the country.

'Cancel mass recruitment at RU'

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Rajshahi University Teachers, Officials and Employees' Welfare Association yesterday demanded of the university authorities to cancel the illegal mass recruitments in the university immediately.

About 100 members of the association led by its president Prof Mukhlesur Rahman met vice chancellor (VC) Prof Altaf Hossain at his office and handed him a memorandum containing their demand.

They urged the VC to cancel illegal appointment of 546 employees who were recruited allegedly on political consideration and violating university rules.