



A farmer spreads husk ash at his Boro seedbed at Khoyerbari village in Dinajpur's Phulbari upazila in a bid to protect the tender seedlings from the biting cold and fog.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

# Cold, dense fog affect Boro seedbeds in Dinajpur

KONGKON KARMAKER, *Dinajpur*

The ongoing cold weather accompanied by dense fog has started affecting the Boro seedbeds in the district, much to the worry of farmers.

“If such a weather continues for long, farmers might face shortage of seedlings. They will have to buy seedlings from other sources for Boro cultivation, which will add to the production cost,” said Khatib Uddin, a farmer of Phulbari upazila of Dinajpur.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Dinajpur set a target of Boro paddy cultivation on around 1.71 lakh hectares of land in the district this year and farmers prepared seedbeds on

9,270 hectares for the purpose.

But the persistent cold weather coupled with dense fog, cloudy sky and rain has already affected the growth of the tender seedlings, turning those yellowish at many places.

Visiting different areas of the district during the last few days, this correspondent found that many farmers covered the seedbeds with polythene sheets and sprayed ashes of rice husk in a bid to protect the seedlings from the adverse weather.

Many of the farmers, already hard-pressed after losses from Aman cultivation last season due to low market prices, will have to buy seedlings to cultivate their Boro lands if the damage to seedbeds continues amid the adverse weather, said locals.

“Boro seeds on my one decimal of

seedbed germinated quite healthy, but the seedlings turned yellowish due to the biting cold and foggy weather,” said Khalib Uddin, a farmer of Aladipur village in Phulbari upazila.

“I am concerned as there is no noticeable improvement despite applying the medicine prescribed by the agriculture department,” he said.

Moinul Islam of Chhatianganrh village in Khansama upazila said he is upset due to serious damage to his two-decimal seedbed at the beginning of the Boro season.

According to Dinajpur Met office, the mercury saw a serious fall in the district at the end of December last year and since then dense fog and cloudy sky featured

most of the days.

The Met office recorded 6.4mm of rain during the 11 days from January 1.

The DAE officials said they are yet to estimate the extent of damage to seedbeds in the district.

Shamim Ashraf, an officer of Dinajpur DAE, said their sub-assistant agriculture officers are conducting field visits to help the farmers.

“The farmers are suggested to cover the seedbeds with polythene sheets and treat the seedlings with ash and medicines as per instruction of the DAE officials.

Hopefully, there will be no shortage of Boro seedlings this season as there is still enough time to prepare seedbeds,” he added.

## Schoolgirl gang-raped in Jashore

2 rape accused held in Gazipur, Barishal

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A schoolgirl was gang-raped in Jashore’s Abhoynagar upazila on Friday while two people, including a teenager, were arrested yesterday and on Friday for allegedly raping girls in Gazipur and Barishal.

Our Benapole Correspondent reported that: A 13-year-old girl was gang-raped allegedly by her stalkers at Diapara village in Jashore’s Abhoynagar upazila on Friday evening.

The traumatised victim, also a Class VII student at a local high school, in now undergoing treatment at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Victim’s mother alleged that, one of their neighbours Riaz Khan, 25, son of Hafiz Khan, and two of his accomplices entered her house when her daughter was staying alone at home on Friday evening.

At one stage, the criminals gagged the victim’s mouth with a scarf and raped her forcibly until she lost her consciousness, she added.

“After returning home around 6:00pm I found my daughter lying unconscious on the floor,” she said, adding that hearing her screams, neighbours rushed in, rescued her daughter and admitted her to Abhoynagar Upazila Health Complex.

The girl’s mother alleged that Riaz and his friends used to stalk her daughter on her way to and from school for long.

When she protest their heinous act the culprits threatened to kill her and set her house on fire, she alleged.

Officer in Charge of Abhoynagar Police Station Tajul Islam said action would be taken against those involved in the incident.

Away in Gazipur, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-1) detained a man yesterday in connection with a case for raping a five-year-old girl on Friday, reports our correspondent.

Rab members arrested Nurul Islam, 59, son of Abdul Mannan, from Salna area around 3:30pm.

According to the case statement, on Friday morning, Nurul took the minor girl behind a grocery shop by luring her with chocolates and raped her.

Rab sources said during primary interrogation, Nurul confessed that he raped the minor girl.

Our Barishal Correspondent added that a teenager was arrested on Friday night in connection with a case for raping a 14-year-old mentally challenged girl in Babuganj upazila the same day.

The arrestee, Sumon, 16, is son of late Ayub Ali of Baherchar village in the upazila.

Victim’s mother said Sumon and his friend Rimon forcibly took the girl to the vacant house of one Noman master violated her there on Friday evening.

The victim was sent to Barishal Sher-E-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH) for medical test after victim’s father lodged a rape case with Babuganj Police Station two people yesterday, Officer in Charge Mizanur Rahman said.

## Schoolboy kills self

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

A schoolboy allegedly took his life in Tangail’s Nagarpur upazila yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Imran Hossain, 16, a class IX student of Noyon Khan Memorial High School and son of Lutfar Rahman of Bekra Purbo Para village in the upazila.

Quoting family members, Alam Chand, officer-in-charge of Nagarpur Police Station, said Imran killed himself by taking poison as his parents denied buying a mobile phone set for him.

An unnatural death case was filed.



With a dredger, sand lifting from the Kapotakkho river in Jhenidah's Kotchandpur upazila has been continuing for the last few months.

PHOTO: STAR

# Illegal sand lifting from Kapotakkho goes unabated

Vacuum created due to the sand extraction posing threat to nearby roads and homesteads

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jhenidah*

A local Swechhchasebok League activist has allegedly continued lifting sand from the Kapotakkho river at Solemanpur village in Kotchandpur upazila of the district, posing erosion threat.

The accused is Sohel Rana, an activist of Kotchandpur upazila unit Swechhchasebok League, and also a resident of Solemanpur in the upazila.

Locals said with a dredger, Sohel has continued illegal sand lifting from the river for the last few months. Sohel dug a pond beside the river where he set up the dredger.

Vacuum in the riverbed, caused by the sand lifting, is posing threat to the nearby roads and homesteads, they said.

But nobody can stop the illegal sand lifter as he is locally very influential person having connection with a powerful politician, said the villagers.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent found that sand lifting with a dredger continued.

If sand lifting from the river flowing through Moheshpur and Kotchandpur upazilas continues this way, large cracks may develop in the nearby areas, said Mizanur Rahman, a resident of Solemanpur village.

Not only Sohel but also a good number of local influential people have grabbed a large portion of the river, said Mizan, adding that those sand lifters also dug ponds there.

Contacted over cellphone, the Swechhchasebok League activist said the pond was not dug in the river area.

It is his own land where the dredger has been set up, he said.

Kotchandpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Naznin Sultan said they will take steps in this regard after investigation.

## ‘Save us from harassment of land grabbers’

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

People of different villages in Mirzapur upazila formed a human chain in the upazila headquarters yesterday, demanding steps to save them from harassment of the local land grabbers.

Over a hundred people from Postkamuri, Baimhati, Mirzapur Bazar, Garail villages took part in the hour-long rally held in College Road area.

Speakers at the rally said a syndicate of land grabbers and touts -- like Mizanur Rahman Jewel, Abul Abbas Dhala, Abdus Salam, Ali Hossain and Abdur Razzak of Postkamuri village, and Shakil Miah of Mirzapur Bazar area -- has been harassing locals in different ways, including implicating in false cases, for long.

Seeking justice, although the innocent villagers informed the matter to the local administration and public representatives, no step has been taken in this regard yet, they alleged.

# Meherpur jail serves pitha to inmates

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushitia*

Inmates of Meherpur jail had a chance to escape from their everyday mundane activities inside the prison on Thursday when the authorities arranged a pitha festival for them.

On Thursday night, the prison compound was brimming with aroma of various types of pitha, the rice-made delectable winter delicacies of the country.

ASM Kamrul Huda, superintendent of Meherpur jail, said they arranged the festival for the 227 male and 6 female inmates so they also can join in the pitha-tasting festivities that grip the nation during the winter time.

Professional pitha makers were brought in and some of the inmates along with staff members of the jail took part in preparation, presentation and distribution of the pithas among all.

As a correctional facility, they try to organise these types of activities for inducing humane qualities among the inmates and the pitha festival will continue in years to come, he added.

Tajmid Ali, whose brother has been



Meherpur jail inmates during Thursday's pitha festival.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

in the jail for the last eight years in connection with a murder case, said since there is a restriction on bringing home-cooked meal for a prisoner, it was a laudable initiative of the prison authorities.

Meherpur Deputy Commissioner Ataul Gani said treating inmates with compassion through such programmes can go a long way in facilitating behavioural correction of prison inmates.



Members of government-run children's home in Manikganj perform at the concluding ceremony of the 10-day ‘art and literary fair’ held on the premises of Manikganj Government High School on Friday evening. The district administration organised the programme ahead of Mujib Barsha (Mujib Year), to be observed across the country marking the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from March 17 this year.

PHOTO: ZAHANGIR SHAH