

National

### A large number of hand operated tube wells remain out of order

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Sept 24: Rural inhabitants of the district have been suffering for want of drinking water as a large number of hand operated tube wells went out of order.

Public Health Engineering Department (PHED) sunk 18,390 hand operated tube wells in different rural areas with the aim of supplying drinking water. Five hundred and ninety-three tube wells went out of order due to lack of proper maintenance and short supply of spare parts.

According to an official source at Gobindaganj thana a total of 3739 tube wells were sunk, of that 189 went out of order. At Sunderganj thana out of 3445 tube wells sunk 141 are lying out of order. At Gaibandha sadar thana a total of 3025 tube wells were sunk and 90 went out of order. At Sadullapur thana total number of tube wells sunk were 2300, 77 went out of order. At Palashbari thana a total 2151 tube wells were installed, 20 are not working. At Shaghata the number of tube wells sunk were 2100. Eighty-five are not working. At Fulchhari thana total tube wells installed were 1630 of them 28 are not working any more.

While visiting some of the rural areas many of the tube wells were found headless. The villagers complained that some organised miscreants took away the head of tube wells despite strict observation. Very often villagers repair disordered tube wells at their own cost and try to keep them functioning. However, present strength of tube wells is not adequate to meet the demands of the local people.

During the current fiscal year the department has undertaken a programme of sinking more than 105 hand operated tube wells in rural areas and will re-sink 386 disordered tube wells. Besides, 240 'Tara pumps' will be set up in different areas to meet the increasing demand of drinking water. Gaibandha pourashava also sank 140 tube wells in the town areas.

Every year intestinal diseases claim several lives in rural areas due to use of contaminated drinking water from ponds and canals where there is no tube wells. For the greater interest of public health more tube wells should be set up in remote areas.

### Two commit suicide

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Sept 24: One Paltu Sana (161 of village Tetulia under Kaligonj) thana committed suicide by taking poison after hearing the news that he could not pass the SSC examination this year.

It is reported that Paltu Sana appeared at the SSC examination under Jessore Board this year.

Another report adds: One Sabita Rani, 20 wife of Biswa Nath Baidya of Assassuni sadar thana committed suicide by taking poison recently.

It is reported that Sabita Rani took poison following family trouble.

An UD case was lodged with Assassuni police station.

### Sluice-gate not working 42,900 acres of cropland remain unused in Jessore

From Our Correspondent

JESSORE, Sept 24: A total of 42,900 acres of land in Abhainagar, Monirampur and Keshabpur thanas of the district are lying uncultivated due to waterlogging following malfunctioning of the Bhobodah sluice-gate since long. Over 31,000 families who directly depend on farming present an awful picture, being the hardest-hit.

According to both official and unofficial sources, mouth of the Bhobodah sluice-gate has lost capacity to draw water from the neighbouring 27 beels through the rivers Srinadi and Mukteswari for discharge as most of the incoming channels have been silted up. The gate is now quite useless. It worked well as per expectations from the very begging.

But subsequent and un-planned construction of embankment along the river Srinadi in 1965, blocked water channels of the entire beel areas to pass through the sluice gate. River beds of these two rivers experienced heavy siltation which ultimately closed the mouth of the channels leading towards the sluice gate. The result was fatal. All the 27 beels plunged into waterlogging permanently since 1973.

Meanwhile several attempts were made to dredge the rivers to ensure smooth navigation and re-open the mouth of the sluice gate. The programmes failed.

Bhobodah sluice gate was erected at the connecting-point of Srinadi river located on the south end of Abhainagar thana in 1958 in a bid to exhaust excess water from the beel area through the sluice gate during rainy season and bring the area under cultivation round the year by irrigation to boost production.

According to Agriculture Extension Department (AED), 11,500 acres of land under Mohakal, Nawpara, Rajhat and Paira unions of Abhainagar, 19,900 acres under Dhakuria, Haridaskati, Durbadanga, Shyampur, Chaluhati, Kulatia, Nehalpur and Monoharpur of Monirampur and 11,500 acres under Majidpur, Biddanana-

dakati, Mongol Kot, Pajia Sufalakti and Gaurighana of Keshabpur thanas have been waterlogged.

Visiting some of the affected areas it was found that many houses were still under water and rafts are kept only for communication with the mainland.

Water from some of the beels was used for cultivation as the farmers experienced continued drought during this monsoon. Farmers risked growing aman paddy this year in the area, but saline water has started to infiltrate causing massive damages to the crops, the source added. It was also learnt that many of the families have migrated elsewhere in search of food and shelter.

A Water Development Board (WDB) source and an expert of Agriculture Extension Department explained the problem of waterlogging in the areas. They said the problem could be averted if the length of the river could be extended by breaking the sluice gate and excavating an eight-km long canal to connect the river Bhairab in Khulna constructing a bigger sluice-gate. They added, this was the cheapest and easiest solution.

When contacted a WDB source said that a sum of about Taka two hundred fifty crore has been estimated to cover the cost of the project for solution of the problems. The source also added, it will take more time to begin the work.

### Tornado hits two unions in Gaibandha, 20 injured

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Sept 24: A severe tornado lashed two unions of Gobindaganj thana on Tuesday afternoon injuring 20 persons.

According to a delayed report, the tornado originated over a big pond and soon grew bigger to hit villages Betara, Goglagari and Sonarpara under Katabari and Badrbasta unions.

About fifty dwelling houses were razed to the ground uprooting hundreds of trees. On September 21, TNO of Gobindaganj thana visited the areas and allotted relief materials for the victims.

### Just for dowry

SIRAJGANJ, Sept 24: A housewife was beaten to death by her husband for dowry at a village in sadar thana early Thursday, police said, reports UNB.

Rawshan Ara Khatun, 20, daughter of Rahman Mandal of Mesra village in the thana, was married to Abdur Rahim, 28, of the same village last year.

Since her marriage, Rawshan Ara was being tortured by her husband as well as in-laws to bring dowry from her parents. On Thursday night Abdur Rahim asked Rawshan Ara to go to her father to give him a plot of land and some amount of money as dowry.

When she expressed her inability to go to her father for the purpose, Rahim became furious and started beating her mercilessly leaving her unconscious. Later, she succumbed to her injuries. Soon after her death Rahim hanged the body from a tree to prove that she committed suicide, police added.

Father of the victim, Rahman Mandal, filed a case with the local police. The body was sent to Sirajganj General Hospital for autopsy.

Another report adds: A teenage boy was run over by a train on which he was travelling at Jamtali railway station Thursday.

Abdul Mannan, 15, son of Badsha Pramanik of Kaman-khand thana, boarded the rooftop of Iswardi bound train from Sirajganj. He fell down and was run over by the train.

A case was filed with Sirajganj Railway police.



SHERPUR: A temporary bamboo bridge built at the initiative of the local people. This bridge connects a major business centre in the district town area. — Star photo

### Disappointing aus output in Chuadanga

From Our Correspondent

CHUADANGA, Sept 24: The harvesting of aus paddy has just been completed in all the four thanas of Chuadanga district. But the poor yield of aus paddy disappointed many farmers of the district.

This year about 21,000 hectares of land were brought under aus paddy cultivation target in the district expecting production of about 10 lakh maunds of paddy. However, due to natural calamities and other reasons the production of aus paddy in the current season was abnormally low which will no doubt incur losses worth more than Taka 100 crore. The main reason behind failure in cultivating aus paddy the district this year was want of sufficient rainfall. The other reasons were poor supply of fertilizer, use of low quality of seeds and want of proper and timely nursing of land.

This year about 8 lakh maunds of aus paddy were produced in the district which is said to be less than 20 to 30 per cent of the expectation. The farmers, from the

experience this season are showing very little interest to sow aus paddy next year.

Once upon a time, not very long ago, aus paddy was the main crop produced in the district. On an average every year over 20,000 acres of land is used for aus paddy cultivation in the district. Unfortunately, farmers see those as history. Roughly about 50,000 acres of land is used now-a-days for aus paddy cultivation in the district. The area used for cultivation of other crops is also decreasing.

When this correspondent visited as many as 10 villages talking to the poor farmers it was learnt that earlier farmers would use cow-dung in aus paddy fields getting high yield. But instead use of chemical fertilizers has become very popular which has only contributed in decreasing trend of production. Besides, they said, land would be used every alternate year increasing the fertility of the land but now-a-days its different and even worse.

### 10 killed in road accidents

Sept 24: Ten people were killed in separate road accidents in Brahmanbaria, Rangpur, Sherpur and Sylhet over the last ten days, according to UNB reports.

Another report from Rangpur adds: A transport worker was killed by some unknown assailants on Sunday night at Mahiganj Satmatha in Kotwali thana, police said.

The victim, identified as Akbar Ali, 40, while returning home at 10 pm, was attacked by the miscreants with deadly weapons. The reason behind the attack could be known immediately.

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### Whisky, beer, phensidyl bottles worth Tk 76,000 seized in Feni

FENI, Sept 24: District Narcotics Control Department seized 583 bottles of phensidyl, whisky and beer worth about Tk 76,000 from a shop and a house at Jail road and Masterpara of the town last week, reports UNB.

The owner of the shop and house, Bappi Saha, was also arrested on charge of selling and holding the contrabands.

Acting on a tip-off, they raided Bappi Saha's shop and house at midnight on September 14 and recovered the goods.

Later, the goods were deposited with the local Customs department. A case has been registered with the police.

### 200 cataract patients get free treatment

JAMALPUR, Sept 24: A week-long eye camp began here at the premises of Surja Mukhi Shishu Niketan in Dewanganj thana headquarters of the district on Sunday, reports UNB.

Renowned social worker Abdur Rashid Dula of Dewanganj sponsored the camp in collaboration with Progressive Lions Club of Dhaka.

More than 200 cataract patients were operated upon in the eye camp which was inaugurated by Dewanganj TNO Abul Kalam.

At least 1000 patients with eye complication so far were treated free of cost.



COXS BAZAR: Journalists planting a sapling recently at the local Press Club premises. — Star photo

### Dacoities on night coaches increase

From Our Correspondent

JHENIDAH, Sept 24: Coach journeys at night has become risky in south-western routes of the country due to road dacoities, it is alleged.

Report says, some armed dacoits in the guise of passengers attacked the driver of a Khulna-bound coach near Roghunathpur in Kaligonj thana on August 2. The armed dacoits took control of the coach while looting goods worth Taka about one lakh.

On the night of August 8 another Khulna-bound night coach from Dhaka was attacked by a group of armed dacoits near Mobarakgonj under Kaligonj thana of the district.

The dacoits numbering 8 to 10 suddenly stabbed the driver and tried to take control of the vehicle. However, they failed. At one stage the driver lost control over the bus and hit a roadside tree injuring passengers. The miscreants fled just after the accident.

Another dacoity on a night coach was committed about four kilometres away from Kushtia on the Kushtia-Dhaka route on August 6.

Report says, when the coach reached near the place of occurrence a group of armed dacoits numbering 10

to 12 put up a road barricade with wires and trees. Valuables worth Tk about 50 thousand was looted at gun point. Local people said dacoity is a common feature in the area specially at night.

Another coach dacoity was committed near Keyabagan on Jhenidah-Jessore route recently. Truck dacoities also took place near Shantidanga and Kulchra in Kushtia-Jhenidah route recently.

A dacoity was committed in a Benapole-bound night coach near Madhupur under Jhenidah thana on August 7.

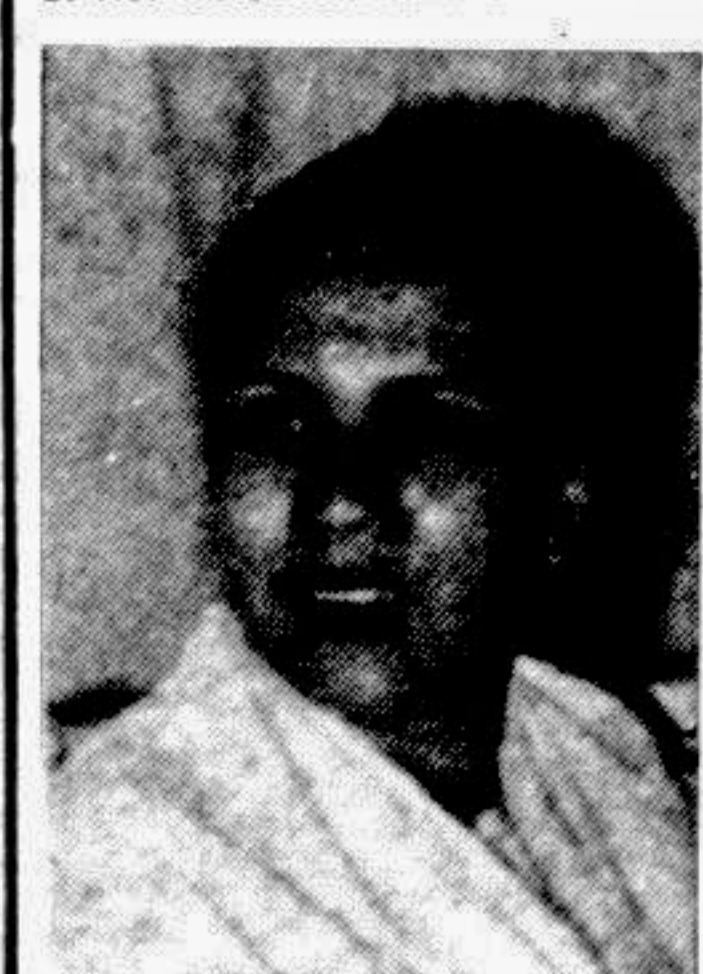
### Poor health treatment facilities

MAJDEE COURT (Noakhali), Sept 24: Begumganj thana health complex is ailing due to lack of necessary medicines and equipment causing untold sufferings to the patients, says UNB.

Every day a lot of patients from far flung areas come to the health complex seeking treatment. But most of them go back disappointed in the absence of adequate treatment facilities.

### A Tale of three women

Kandiganon is a small village three kilometres away from Muktagacha thana town in Mymensingh district. Juthika Rani Das, 28, and Shibani Das, 25, are among the many assetless families of the thana 2,743 are now covered by RD-12. A total of 1,994 women and 749 men cooperative members have by end-July 1993 been given loans amounting to over Tk 1.44 crore with a recovery rate of 9 per cent. Loans have been given for such self-employment activities as rice husking, bamboo-cane work, poultry, vegetable gardening, small businesses, tailoring, rearing cows, wood-work, pisciculture, betel-leaf growing, goat raising, animal fattening and peddling wares. Through the programme's compulsory savings the cooperative members have already accumulated Tk 17 lakh million in a common bank account.



Mirza Shaheen Akhter

going sons. Taking a loan of Tk 2,000 each they have built up a slow-moving but fairly steady business of making bamboo and cane baskets. Shibani has also bought a cow and a goat. The loans are repayable with interest in 52 months. So far they have not defaulted. They also contribute to the programme's compulsory savings scheme. Their children look fairly healthy and their thatch houses no longer leak. Both

admit they and their children no longer go to bed hungry.

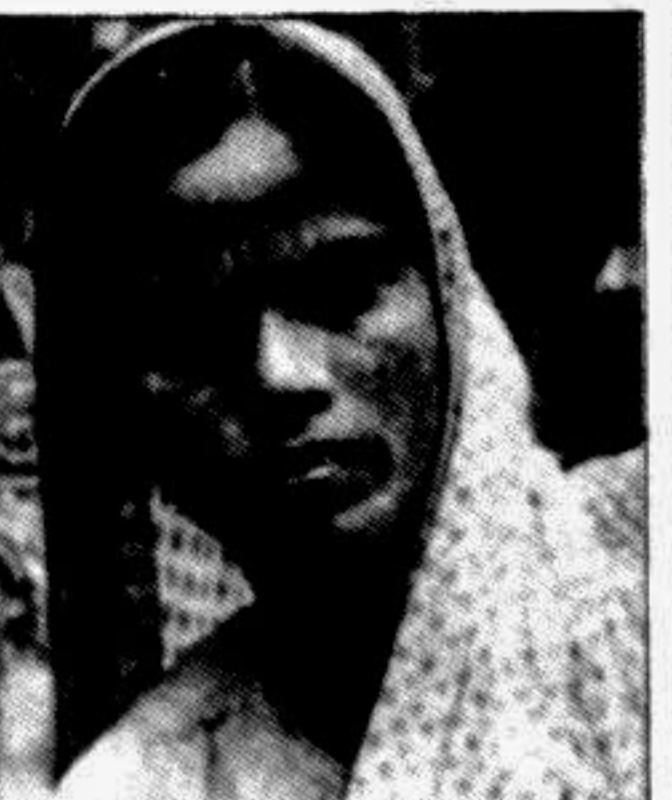
Muktagacha thana has 273 villages, 63 of them have come under RD-12 since 1988. Of 14,906 assetless families of the thana 2,743 are now covered by RD-12. A total of 1,994 women and 749 men cooperative members have by end-July 1993 been given loans amounting to over Tk 1.44 crore with a recovery rate of 9 per cent. Loans have been given for such self-employment activities as rice husking, bamboo-cane work, poultry, vegetable gardening, small businesses, tailoring, rearing cows, wood-work, pisciculture, betel-leaf growing, goat raising, animal fattening and peddling wares. Through the programme's compulsory savings the cooperative members have already accumulated Tk 17 lakh million in a common bank account.

Mirza Shaheen Akhter, 28, holding a master's degree in political science, heads a team of 25 as Thana Rural Development Officer at Muktagacha. She is an attractive woman and single. That's no disadvantage, she asserts. Quite a few of her team members are women and most of their target groups are women. Shaheen is quite enthusiastic about the programme and happy about her loan recovery rate. She explains that despite working under the limitations of a government programme they are competing well with a number of NGOs which have more funds to offer and enjoy much greater flexibility in operation. Good luck to Shaheen.

### The story of a crew of 15

Parveen, 30, is one of a 15-member all-women RMP crew maintaining 15 miles of village roads for last eight years in Bettia Mitara Union of Manikganj district. Solemon, Moyna, Batasi, Mirson, Ayesha, Rizia, Jobeda, Banu, Shanti, Rahima, Zarina, Rokeya, Basiron and Tarabanu are her gang mates. All were assetless, very poor, and without a male member to support them. Any damage to a road is repaired by them as soon as weather permits. Roads keep the village economy moving.

Parveen, like the others, is now worried because they have graduated — from total assetlessness to some assets which can generate a reasonable income to support their families. Their children have grown up, received some education, and many are able to earn. Under RMP's compulsory savings scheme, each member has by now accumulated at least Tk 10,000 in a bank account. Out of a regular wage of Tk 720 they have been saving Tk 120 per month. Most of them have acquired a small piece of land, a house, some milch cows,

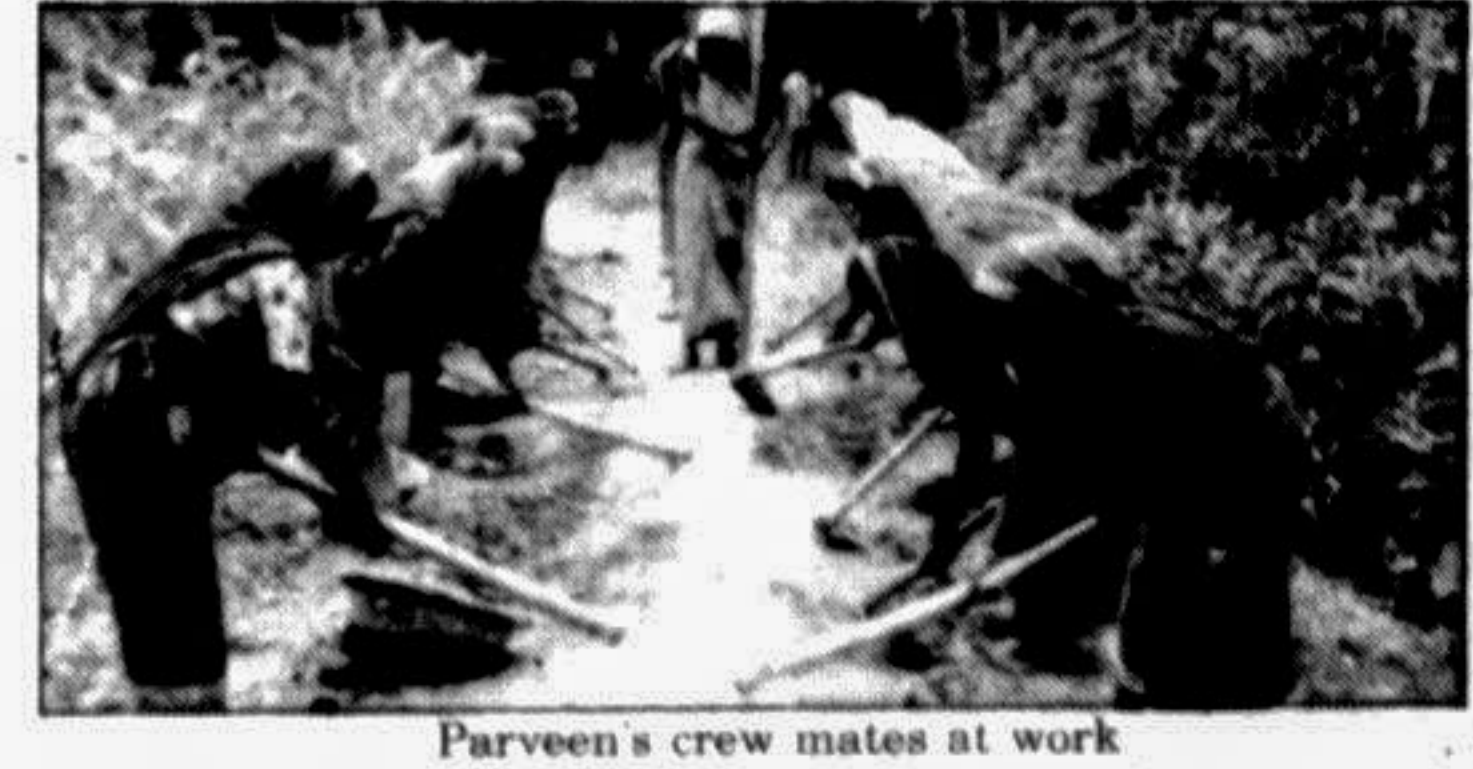


Parveen

goats and chickens, and a vegetable garden. They have been given skills training by RMP.

But graduation also means it is time for them to yield place to a new crew of poor women who have no one to support them. That's RMP's way to poverty alleviation among rural women. Parveen says, she would be happy to continue to work for RMP but she is grateful for whatever it has done for her.

[Source — A CIDA brochure — An Enduring Partnership]



Parveen's crew mates at work

### Prices of essentials mark sharp rise in Satkhira

From Our Correspondent

SATKHIRA, Sept 24: Prices of rice and wheat have shot up abnormally in the local markets causing much inconvenience to the consumers.

The consumers have demanded proper functioning of the Open Marketing System or OMS by the Food Department to tackle the situation. The small quantity of rice supplied by Food Department is learnt to have been inadequate to meet the needs of the local consumers. It is alleged that rice is purchased by *farjias* and other small businessmen who in turn re-sell the commodity at higher price in the local markets.

It is also alleged that marketing system of the OMS introduced in the district has been working without the knowledge of the needy buyers. As a result, the OMS which is supposed to benefit local consumers fails to serve its purpose.

Rice is being sold at Taka 12.50 to Taka 13.00 per kg, according to a market survey while fine variety is being sold at Taka 15.00 per kg. A kilogram of 'ata' is being sold at Taka 11.00.

Similarly, prices of other essentials have also shown sharp increases. Soyabean oil is reportedly not available in the local markets. Mustard oil in its place is being sold at Taka 60 per kg. Prices of baby food and powdered milk have also registered a sharp rise. The price hike ranged between Taka 12 and 16 per tin of two kgs. Due to short supply prices of many essentials have gone up causing anxiety among the low income group of people.

particularly the fixed income group.

A UNB report from Manikganj says: Prices of essentials including soyabean oil, sugar, salt, onion, garlic and vegetables are on rise in the local markets causing concern among the consumers.

The low income group of consumers are hard hit and most of them cannot afford to buy daily necessities to maintain their livelihood.

Soyabean and palm oil are being sold at Tk 58 and Tk 48 per kg as against Tk 40 and Tk 36 respectively. Prices of onion and garlic have gone up by Tk six and four per kg respectively.

In addition, prices of construction materials like rod, flat bar, CI sheets, bamboo and bricks have also shot up affecting the middle class people.

A section of dishonest businessmen, taking advantage of the situation, have been demanding higher prices creating artificial scarcity in the markets.

Another report from Noakhali says: Prices of essentials have registered a sharp rise in different markets of the district in the last few days causing concern among the common consumers.

At present, medium variety of rice is being sold between Tk 13 and 14, flour between Tk 10 and 11, salt between Tk 8 and 9, onion between Tk 10 and 12, garlic between Tk 29 and 32, pulse (masur) between Tk 25 and 28, sugar between Tk 28 and 30 and soyabean oil between Tk 50 and Tk 56 per kg.