

## National

# Cold wave hits hard salt output, fishing

From Our Correspondent

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 3: Salt production and fishing here is being hampered due to the prevailing biting cold wave.

The producers started their works for preparing land in early December and production started from the mid-December. But due to the shivering cold and dense fog the production has come down alarmingly.

This season only 2,500 metric tons of salt have been produced till January 1, as against 4,500 metric tons in the corresponding period of the last season.

But BSCIC authorities hoped that, the target would be achieved if the growers get adequate sunshine during the March-April period to refine salt.

About 47,000 acres of land in Kutubdia, Moleshkhali, Chokoria, Sadar upazila and Teknaf of Cox's Bazar and Banskhali of Chittagong district have been brought under salt cultivation in the current season.

Fishing in the Bay and the rivers are also being hampered due to the prevailing biting cold wave and fog.

Mercury in the coastal areas of the district and its adjoining areas recorded further fall. It has been fluctuating between 12 degree Celsius to 13 degree Celsius till January 2 causing immense sufferings to the inhabitants of the areas especially to poor men.

Sadar hospital sources said diseases like asthma, whooping cough, cold and dysentery are on increase.

On average the Sadar hospital authority has

been admitting 10 cold related disease affected patients each day. The number of cold affected patients have increased by 20 per cent in five hospitals here.

Local weather experts said, onrush of cold wave from the Himalayan region and thick fog have deteriorated the weather condition throughout the district.

**Our Sirajganj correspondent says:** Severe cold has gripped the district with poor people shivering for want of warm clothes.

After midnight dense fog cover the entire district, hampering river and road communications severely. River crafts and motor vehicles ply by switching on lights in the morning. But in the night the vehicles hardly could ply due to dense fog.

The mercury drops between 13 and 14 degree Celsius in recent days in the district.

Marginal farmers, landless, day labourers, rickshaw pullers and other people of low-income group are passing nights sitting beside fire.

Recently superintendent of police on behalf of police department distributed 200 pieces of warm clothes among the poor in the town.

Meanwhile, standing crops like potato, maize, mustard and IRRI-Boro paddy have been affected by the severe cold.

Besides, patients of asthma, bronchitis, diarrhoea, and chronic dysentery have been suffering a lot due to the cold.

Local people have urged the district administration to take necessary steps to distribute warm clothes among poor people.

## News snaps

### Rabi farming on 38,000 hectares

BAGERHAT, Jan 3: A total of 38,000 hectares of land here have been brought under Rabi crops cultivation in the current season, reports UNB.

According to Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) of the total land, boro crops will be cultivated on 21,170 hectares of land. Break-up of other crops: wheat-200 hectares, potato-100 hectares, sweet potato-550 hectares, mustard seeds-3,000 hectares, vegetables 3,500 hectares, pepper-2,500 hectares, onion-300 hectares, garlic-200 hectares, pulses-650 hectares and coriander-50 hectares.

DAE has also set up a number of demonstration plots to acquaint the farmers with the modern methods of cultivation.

### Two killed by bandits

LAXMIPUR, Jan 3: Two people were killed, 11 assaulted and valuables worth about one crore taka looted by bandits here during several days preceding Eid festival, reports UNB.

The criminal activities occurred in 67 incidents of robbery and hijacking while people were preparing for celebrating holy Eid-ul-Fitr. Police and witnesses said 25 cases of thefts and robberies were committed in different shops and houses while 42 hijackings and dacoities took place on roads. Shopkeeper Momtaz Begum, 29, of Hanif Mazi's market in Sadar upazila was shot dead and five others were injured by the miscreants when they refused to pay them toll. Baby-taxi Driver Harunur Rashid died on the spot when the extortions fired on him on the Battali-Duttapara Road on Dec 22.

### One lakh fish fries produced

SHARIATPUR, Jan 3: More than one lakh fish fries have been produced in the paddy fields of the district in the current season, reports BSS.

These fries were produced under a programme chalked out by the Agriculture Extension Directorate (AED) to produce fish fry in aman and boro fields. These fish fries were produced in 100 acres of land in different parts of the district. The production of fish fry in paddy fields has gained popularity in the district. Now many farmers are engaged in producing fry in their land.



All the members of Sirajganj Police recently donated their one day's salary for the cold-hit poor people of the district. They procured warm clothes and blankets for the distressed people after collecting a total of Taka 50,000. Photo shows Sirajganj SP distributing those among the needy.

--Star photo



The historic court of King Rajendra which was built in 1706 at Joyantapur in Sylhet district is being destroyed due to sheer neglect of the Archaeology Department. --Star photo by

## Two cops beaten, 3 arrested persons snatched away

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Jan 3: One sub-inspector (SI) of police and two police constables were beaten and three arrested people were snatched away by some phensidyl traders at Shekherchak-Panchabati in the city on Saturday afternoon.

Police and local people sources said, police arrested one phensidyl trader Nannu and two other phensidyl users from Shekherchak-Panchabati areas along with some bottles of phensidyl. Suddenly a group of

## Extortion takes toll on vegetable traders

From Our Correspondent

GOPALGANJ, Jan 3: Traders who transport vegetables, fruits and other perishable items from the southern districts to the capital city through Daulatdia and Aricha ferry terminals are frequently harassed by extortions.

The traders from Gopalganj, Madaripur, Barisal, Khulna, Bagerhat and other southern district alleged that extortions backed by local influential people frequently exact toll from them, causing rise in transport cost.

Traders said even traffic police stop vehicles carrying the per-

ishable goods and ask for 'toll' on the pretext that the vehicles carry goods beyond capacity.

A vegetable trader said extortions are also favoured by the members of police. A truck driver in Gopalganj town who often transports perishable items said they face harassment if they do not pay toll.

Period from October to December is the peak time for transport of vegetable and other kitchen items to the capital city.

A trader said there many recognised points on the way to Dhaka where they must pay toll. When asked a police official

stationed in Gopalganj town denied the allegation that they exact bribe. If a vehicle carries goods beyond capacity, it must be stopped, he added.

"Sometimes we are accused of accepting bribe. But this is not true, they violate the rules and we fine them."

A truck driver said we always include toll money while charging for transporting goods. On the way at each point a hundred taka note is sufficient for 'transit pass', added the truck driver.

## Unabated hunting of guest birds in coastal areas

From Abdul Monayem Khan

COX'S BAZAR, Jan 3: Indiscriminate hunting of guest birds is continuing in the coastal and hilly areas of Cox's Bazar and Bandarban hill districts, according to reliable sources.

Like previous years thousands of guest birds have started arriving in the coastal areas here since the beginning of winter this year. Migratory birds, our flying guests in the winter, have been crowding the shoal lands of Kutubdia, Moleshkhali, Sonadia, Chokoria, Ukhia and Teknaf areas.

These migratory birds coming from the Siberian region due to severe cold are taking shelter in the coastal lands of Cox's Bazar and the hilly areas of Bandarban district in search of comparatively warmer places.

Different species of guest birds are also taking shelter in different sea beaches, rivers, canals, ponds and other water bodies of the two districts.

The migratory birds, which are seen in the areas are of various species.

Besides, professional as well as amateur bird hunters are rushing to these places, where the migratory birds are taking shelter, sensing their presence in a bid to kill those. Some of the hunters also catch the birds and sell them in the open markets and on different footpaths of the districts.

There are different ways of hunting the birds. Some hunters use guns and some use cages to catch the birds. They also apply a number of other methods to net the guests.

The hunters do not bother to obey the government's ban on hunting migratory birds. There is a law in the country for punishment to the illegal bird hunters. But hoodwinking the law wholesale hunting of the guest birds is continuing in the

region due to lack of strict enforcement of law.

On the other hand, the local administrations are maintaining silence regarding indiscriminate hunting of the guest birds. If this trend continues unabated the migratory birds would stop coming in the country which would harm the ecological balance, fear weather experts.

According to the naturalists the migratory birds come to the coastal lands and hilly areas during the winter season flying from the ice-fields in Siberia, thousands of kilometres north of here, to escape the biting cold.

While making a day-long trip to the Moleshkhali beach and riverside areas on December 30, this correspondent said that the areas had turned into a heavenly abode of guest birds. Some of the migratory birds had been seen flying cheerfully on the sandy fields, which have emerged along the river and some had been catching small fishes, from water. Others had been chirping or flying in the air at the top of Moleshkhali hills. The scene attracts lots of travellers and local people.

Talking to this correspondent, the local people have alleged that, natural movement of the guest birds is being hindered by the bird hunters. They have also complained that a section of professional bird hunters catch the guest birds daily for selling them at the local hats and bazaars despite the government ban on bird hunting.

They underlined the need for intervention of law enforcing agencies to ensure the safe stay of the guest birds in their temporary winter home in the coastal areas.

The birds hunting has turned into a trade for some unscrupulous people in the region.

## Middlemen force growers to sell paddy below govt rate

PANCHAGARH, Jan 3: Despite a bumper production of Aman paddy the poor growers of the region are not getting fair prices of their produce as the local hoarders are controlling the

market price, reports UNB.

Due to delay in launching government procurement drive local middlemen and hoarders are forcing the poor growers to sell their paddy at throwaway

prices, which is much lower than the government rate.

At present a maul of paddy is being sold in the market between Tk 200 and Tk 240 against its government rate of Tk 320.

Some growers at the big hats complained that due to the pressure from the middlemen and hoarders and absence of government procurement drive they are forced to sell their paddy below the cost of production.

When contacted district Food Controller Santosh Kumar Pundit told that the government has taken up a programme to procure 2,385 mts of paddy and 4,064 mts of rice this year at the rate of Tk 320 and Tk 500 respectively.

The Deputy Director of District Agriculture Extension Department said the farmers produced over 1.99 lakh mts of paddy this year cultivating over 1.05 lakh hectares of land.

Some farmers said that they were compelled to sell their paddy at lower prices to repay the loan taken from the money-lenders and meet their day to day expenses. They said the objective of the procurement drive will completely fail as the middlemen and hoarders are busy purchasing paddy at nominal prices.

Last year procurement drive started on November 1, but this year it could not be started after the expiry of the month of December, they said.

### 4,781 blankets distributed

SATKHIRA, Jan 3: A total of 4,781 pieces of blankets, provided from the Prime Minister's Relief Fund, have been distributed among the flood-affected poor people in five upazilas including one municipality here, reports BSS.

According to District Relief Office sources, of the total blankets, 1,850 have been distributed in Sadar upazila, 380 in Tala, 320 in Debbata, 171 in Assasuni and 1,910 in Kalaroa upazila including 150 in Kalaroa Municipality.

Upazila Nirbahi Officers and local Union Parishad chairmen distributed the blankets among the flood-affected poor people in five upazilas here including Kalaroa Municipality.