

## Non-payment of arrears by purchasing centre

# Faridpur jute growers lose interest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Faridpur*

Non-payment of over Tk one crore by Ambikapur Government Jute Purchasing Centre in Faridpur town has frustrated the jute growers and traders in the district.

The farmers and traders are facing hardship, as they are yet to get the money, although about one year has elapsed.

The farmers have lost interest in jute cultivation this year, as they have no capital to bring lands under the cultivation.

According to official sources, some 52 thousand *maunds* of jute worth Taka 1.75 crore were purchased through this centre in 1999-2000 and 15 thousand *maunds* valued at Tk 70 lakh in 2000-2001.

The total outstanding money in the last two seasons with the centre stood at Tk 2.45 crore, out of which only Tk 1.5 crore was paid to the growers and traders.

The local people have urged the authorities to pay the arrears to help generate enthusiasm among the farmers to cultivate jute, once dubbed the golden fibre.

UNB from Kishoreganj adds: Jute growers and traders in the district have lost interest in cultivation and trade because of non-payment of Tk 2.5 crore

## Police inertia in arresting accused frustrates Moulvibazar villagers

UNB, *Moulvibazar*

Although the killers are moving freely, police reluctance to arrest the identified accused of a gruesome murder has come as a surprise to the residents of Daspara village under Rajnagar upazila, in Moulvibazar district.

Confidence in police and respect to law have been waning at the apparent unwillingness of the police to act under alleged influence of money or the ruling party, said an elderly man of Daspara requesting anonymity for fear of reprisal.

Maulana Rafique, a head teacher of Nurul-Ulm Madrasah and imam of the madrasah mosque, was killed by a group of terrorists in the mosque during Magrib prayer on November 12 last year. The culprits were identified by the 'musulis' (devotees) in whose presence the attack was made on the imam.

But police have not arrested any of the identified killers, who were moving freely in the village raising doubts about the efficacy of the police and the rule of law.

Instead, the police have been

harassing innocent people of the village, complained the residents of Daspara when this correspondent visited the village last week.

Rajnagar police said they could not round up the accused despite repeated raids in the village.

Relating to the sad incident and background of the killing, residents said the village was divided and named as Uttar (north) and Dakkhin (south) Daspara. People of Uttar Daspara changed the name of the village as Mohammadpur and that of the madrasah as Nurul-Ulm.

This change of names was not acceptable to the residents of Dakkhin Daspara. And the difference led to occasional brawls.

Maulana Rafique has long been head teacher of the madrasa (religions school) and imam of the mosque. Another teacher of the madrasa, backed by the residents of Dakkhin Daspara, had been trying in vain to replace Maulana Rafique.

On November 12, a group of people from Dakkhin Daspara came to offer special prayer at the graveyard adjacent to the madrasa and

by the government controlled Jute Mills Corporation for the last two years.

Jute purchasing centres have procured jute from growers and traders on deferred payment. But some of them have not paid for the last two years.

Informed sources said the purchasing centre of UMC Jute Mills is to pay arrears of Tk 92 lakh, Adamjee Jute Mills Tk 50 lakh, Latif Bawani Jute Mills Tk 43 lakh and Amin Jute Mills Tk 65 lakh.

But non-payment for a long period has frustrated the farmers who reduced heavily jute cultivation this year.

Sources further said officials of the purchasing centres pay in instalments to those who are 'known' to them.

Another report from Rangpur says: Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) has taken up a programme to distribute 144 mt of high yielding variety of jute seeds in greater Rangpur district.

Officials said 66 mt of local variety of jute seeds and 78 mt of Tosha variety were distributed in the five districts Rangpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat districts through BADC's 13 sale centres.

They said 65,900 hectares of lands have been brought under jute cultivation this season in the five districts with an output target of 6,59,000 bales.

## Construction work of Khulna airport yet to start

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Construction work of the proposed Khanjahan Ali Airport in Khulna is yet to be started.

Ninety-five acres of lands were acquired at Foila under Rampal upazila in 1996 for construction of the airport.

Former prime minister Khaleda Zia laid the foundation stone on January 27, 1996. She said construction work of the proposed airport would be completed by the end of 1997.

But with the change of the government all works, plans and programmes for construction of the proposed airport were postponed for two years.

But earth-filling works started in 1998 by order of the Ministry of Civil Aviation. One-third of its earth filling work could not be completed due to non-availability of necessary fund, a reliable source said.

At present, some influential people have brought the acquired lands under paddy cultivation.

First move to construct the airport was taken in 1961 at Mashiali village, 17 kilometres from Khulna city. Fifteen hundred acres of lands were also earmarked in this regard.

The proposal was cancelled in 1968 and the fresh move was taken the same year at Teligati, 7 kilometres from the city. Construction work for a metalled road started for this purpose. But it was stopped after 1971.

## 11 silos under construction in Bogra

UNB, *Bogra*

Eleven silos are being constructed in eight northern districts of a cost of Tk 12 crore, raising the total number of silos in the region to 181.

The silos are being constructed at Dupchachia and Mukamtola of Bogra, Chouhali in Sirajganj, Phoolchhari in Gaibandha, Bagha in Rajshahi, Ghoraghat and Daudpur in Dinajpur, Khettal in Joypurhat, Joduranirhat and Bhullirhat in Thakurgaon and Faridpur in Pabna.

Upon completion of the silos, the storage capacity of godowns in the region will rise to 4.20 lakh mt from 4.12 lakh mt.

## Pirates attack engine boats

UNB, *Manikganj*

Armed pirates looted cash and valuables worth Tk 3 lakh from two engine boats in the Jamuna River last week.

Police said 10 pirates swooped on a Pabna-bound engine boat and looted cash and valuables from the passengers leaving 16 injured. They decamped with the booty leaving the passengers on a nearby char, (shoal).

According to the police, the same gang of pirates looted cash and valuables from another boat at Tower No-10 in Bera upazila in Pabna district on the day.



PHOTO: STAR

The summer has these days cast a dry spell on the water bodies, proving a boon for many like these children on the lookout for fishes in an almost dried-up canal at Husorkhali village under Mohespur upazila in Jhenaidah district.

## Drought renders IRRI-Boro production prospect bleak

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

*Gaibandha*

An acute drought and heat wave have badly affected the IRRI-Boro cultivation in the district, rendering chances of achieving the production target during this crop season bleak.

Most of the rivers, ponds and canals here have already dried up due to scorching heat of the sun and cracks have developed in the crop fields for lack of irrigation.

Besides, frequent power disruption has also aggravated the situation. On the other hand, the engine-operated shallow tube-wells cannot lift enough water, making fate of the IRRI-Boro crops on 50,062 hectares of land in Gaibandha uncertain.

According to the Public Health

Engineering Department, the level of ground water has decreased alarmingly in different locations of the district, as the areas received less floodwater last year.

All the sources of natural water in the district went dry by March this year. The river Ghagot has also lost its usual flow due to heavy siltation and shorter tenure of last year's flood. In many places of the district, the engine-operated shallow tube-wells cannot lift water for irrigation. Many of these tube-wells need to be re-sunk deeper, which means additional expenditures to the farmers.

Experts think that unplanned and random lifting of water is the prime reasons behind the sharp fall in ground water level. Moreover,

siltation in the river, deforestation and withdrawal of huge water in the upper regions can be held as the other contributing factors.

After recording three millimetres of rainfall on November 23 last year, there has been virtually no rain in and around Bogra district, according to a report of Bogra Met Office. On the other hand, Rangpur has only experienced occasional rains since April 21. The Met Office has dubbed the drought 'unprecedented', as there has been no such record in the last 11 years.

There is widespread apprehension in the district that the production cost of IRRI-Boro would rise significantly this year, according to the district Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

## Five convicted in murder case in Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

A court in Sirajganj on Tuesday sentenced a man to life and four others to 10 years in prison in the sensational Motahar Ali murder case.

Saiful was awarded life term while Bakul, 22, Tota Miah, 31, Haider, 25, and Dulal, 26, were given 10 years' imprisonment. Each was also fined Tk five thousand and in default they have to suffer six more months in prison.

According to prosecution, the convicts murdered Motahar Ali, a day labourer of village Khidromatia under Belkuchi upazila, on December 27, 1994.

Judge after examining 16 witnesses and other evidences pronounced the verdict.

## Sound pollution hits Chuadanga

OUR CRRESPONDENT, *Chuadanga*

People in Chuadanga town have nowadays been facing severe sound pollution caused mostly by horns of vehicles.

Almost all vehicles like trucks, buses, coasters, minibuses and rickshaws blow their horns without any reason while plying on the roads.

Besides, videocassette shop-owners and mike service providers play music in full volume, causing severe sound pollution for the general public.

Sometimes young people are found playing music in maximum volume by using loudspeakers in different parts of the town. The cinema advertisers also create sound pollution. Besides, hawkers of various cosmetics goods play their part as they sell goods using loud speakers.

This proves a bugging factor for the hundreds of patients with high blood pressure and heart problems, children and pregnant women who come to local physicians or health

clinics every day for treatment.

Local doctors and experts also said sound pollution has gripped the town including areas around hospitals and clinics, causing untold sufferings to residents.

It is alleged that most of the vehicles, which generally cause sound pollution in the town, do not have fitness certificates. The local people have, however, urged the authorities to take immediate steps to stop the problem.

## Two children drown

UNB, *Barguna*

Two minor girls drowned in a pond in Amtoli, municipality area recently.

Sathi, 7, daughter of Noor Hossain, and her niece Sukhi, 8, drowned at noon while playing near the pond.