

Rains ruin good IRRI-Boro output chance in Jamalpur

Low price of paddy worries Jhenidah farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Jamalpur*

Rainfalls just before the harvesting have marred the good prospect of IRRI-Boro paddy production in Jamalpur district.

Moderate to heavy rainfalls last week submerged vast tracts of crop fields with standing IRRI and Boro paddy in the district. As a result, farmers were compelled to start early harvesting. Besides, harvested crops could not be dried properly due to lack of adequate sunlight, causing huge loss to the growers.

Early harvesting brought misery to farmers, as they were not prepared to pay wages to farm labourers and make arrangement for preserving the crops.

Farmers were also compelled to sell their crops at throwaway prices. Paddy is being sold between Tk 150 and Tk 200 per *maund* in local markets. But the prices ranged between Tk 270 and Tk 300 during the last season.

Despite the government instructions to procure crops from farmers from mid April, the drive is yet to start, farmers allege.

According to Department of Agriculture Extension (AED), the government has fixed the price of paddy at Tk

8.25 a kg.

Omar Ali, a sharecropper of village Binanderpara in Sadar upazila, said fifty per cent of his land went under rainwater. The farmer cultivated paddy on three bighas of land.

Our Jhenidah correspondent adds: Farmers in the district are being deprived of fare prices of Boro paddy this season following good production of the crop.

Farmers Abdul Kuddus, 38, of village Bishovkhai; Raisuddin, 49, of village Surat; and Rajanikanta, 48, of village Kharikhali came to sell their paddy at Tetultala Hat recently. But they were compelled to sale the crop at prices, below their expectations.

We had no option but to sell the paddy at throughway prices to meet emergency expenses, they said. They attributed the low prices to the absence of crop procurement drive by the government.

Now paddy sells between Taka 250 and 255 per *maund* in local markets.

Krisna Gopal Saha, 46, and Ramakanta Dey, 43, businessmen at Shailakupa Bazaar, said if the procurement drive does not start immediately the prices will decline further.

Erratic power supply causes havoc in Khulna zone

120-megawatt deficit a day

UNB, *Khulna*

Erratic power supply and frequent load-shedding coupled with scorching heat have made the life of the people unbearable in Khulna zone.

On average, the zone faces 120-megawatt power deficit per day, causing power disruption for 5-6 hours. Power Development Board (PDB) sources said few power plants under the zone remain out of order for a long time, causing power crisis acute.

Five of the six units of Khulna Power Plant at industrial hub Khalishpur now remain closed while power production of another power plant here remains suspended for long, the sources added.

The Khulna zone under PDB, the state-run power provider, is consisted of 21 districts where there are many small and medium-size power plant units. However, power production of these units is not satisfactory at all.

80-megawatt four gas turbine power units at Bheramara in Kushtia and Barisal produce only 72-megawatt electricity while 5-megawatt power unit at Bhola produces only 3-megawatt per day.

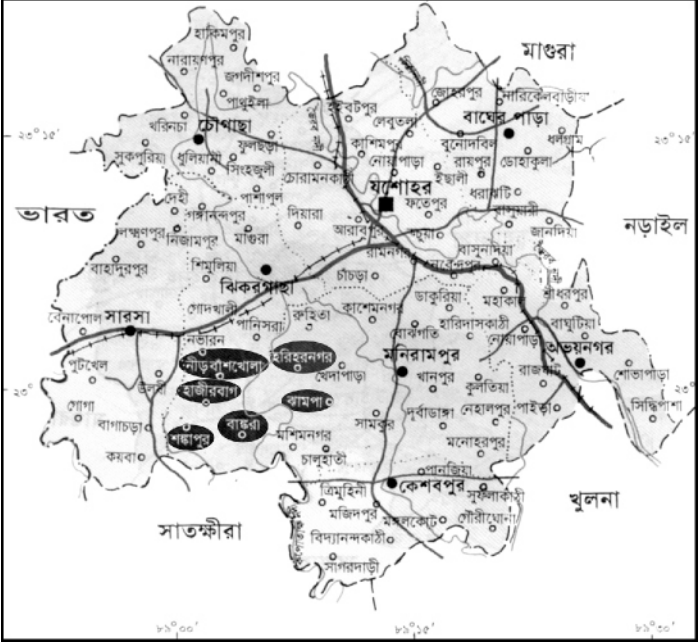
Only 280-megawatt electricity against the total demand of 400-megawatt as day is being supplied during the pick hours, causing immense sufferings to its subscribers in the zone.

Putting emphasis on overhauling of the 60-megawatt steam turbine power unit in the city, a PDB official said, "we cannot produce electricity as per requirement due to the mechanical fault."

When contacted, a PDB official said, "It is not possible to supply necessary electricity to its subscribers until steps are taken to increase generation of power in a planned way."

The official, however, said that PDB has already launched a drive to disconnect illegal connections aiming at reducing the power crisis.

When will Bakra be a upazila?



Map of the proposed Bakra upazila in Jessore district showing locations of the unions.

ATIUR RAHMAN, *Jessore*

The proposal to set up a new upazila at Bakra with four unions of Jhinkergacha and three others of Monirampur upazila in Jessore district remains pending for a long time.

After the liberation war of Bangladesh, people of Bakra, Nirbaskhola, Sankapur and Hajirbug unions of Jhinkergacha and Harihamagar, Moushipur and part of Jhapa unions of Monirampur jointly urged the government to create a new upazila for them with its headquarter at Bakra

In fact, the geographical situation of these unions are quite bad. They are far away from their upazila headquarter having no direct communication and transport facilities.

If and when necessary the people of these unions have to depend on foot or hackney carriage not to speak of bi-cycle.

The condition during rainy season goes beyond description as all the earthen roads become muddy.

They remain cut off from the mainland. According to latest cen-

sus report, the total population of these seven unions comes to over 1,80,000.

The distance from the upazila headquarter of these unions vary from 16 kilometres to 20 kilometres. Bakra is 16 kilometres off from the upazila headquarter, being the nearest.

As a result all the seven unions are being deprived of their due share in development work as well as in administrative benefit.

Public representatives who think always in term of political interest keeping election in view don't like to go deep into any local problems other than winning the cheap popularity.

There is no denying the fact that these vast areas are marked in the map of the upazila as most backward and undeveloped.

However, Bakra is centrally situated among all these backward seven unions, connected with better communication.

Besides, there are schools, colleges, banks and a number of offices of public utilities including a Police Investigation Centre. Bakra

Setting up of digital phone exchange uncertain in Gaibandha

UNB, *Gaibandha*

Setting up of a digital telephone exchange in Gaibandha has become uncertain following denial of a foreign company to provide technical assistance due to cumbersome procedure in construction works.

According to Rajshahi region telecommunication office, a China-based company has been assigned to install machinery in the telephone exchange after completion of building construction scheduled for last month.

The government has undertaken a plan to convert the district's telephone exchange into digital one under Digital Telephone Installation programme.

For this, the authority took a plan

has been developed into an important market in this area unaided by any political or administrative help.

This correspondent visited the area recently to see things for himself.

He met a number of local elite and business magnets and social workers including ex-MP, Alhaj Abul Islam, Dr Golam Sarwar, Monirul Islam Munir, ex-student leader Abdus Salam, political personality Alauddin Khan, a veteran social worker Iman Ali, ex-chairman Abdur Rahman, ex-chairman Ibad Ali, Nur Islam, Prof Shariful Alam, Kazi Ershad, Mozaharul Islam, Ishabdin, leaders of young generation and Secretary, Bakra Upazila Implementation Committee Abul KalamAzad.

They were unanimous about their fight to get the proposal implemented and looked certain to win the success today or tomorrow.

They told that they laid seige to the TNO office (now UNO) of Jhinkergacha and the office of the Deputy commissioner, Jessore for implementation of their demand in 1993.

They also alleged that Alhaj Professor Rafikul Islam after his election as MP from this constituency with Awami League's 'Boat' Symbol in the general election of 1991, avoided his responsibility in the creation of the new upazila on the plea that they were opposition party in the Parliament.

Happily, he was again returned from the same constituency from the same political party in 1996.

He was whip and later a State Minister.

The people of the area, have moved up to the Home Ministry for implementation of their demand but in vain.

At the fag end of the present government's tenure the people of these areas appeal to the Prime Minister to look into the matter and do what is deemed fit to uphold the image and dignity of the present government in the best interest of the nation.

Diarrhoea spreads in Naogaon, Chuadanga

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Diarrhoea has been spreading alarmingly in Naogaon and Chuadanga districts.

BSS from Naogaon says: Diarrhoea has broken out in Naogaon district, attacking more than 1,000 people in different upazilas.

Children and aged people are mostly attacked by diarrhoea.

So far, three children are reported to have died of high fever following diarrhoea.

The victims were Alam, 7, of

Mondalpara and Zaheedul, 8, of Mridhapra of Hashaigari Union Parishad and Baydyanath of Dhamoirhat upazila.

Preventive medicines are urgently necessary in all upazila health complexes.

Another report from Chuadanga says: Diarrhoea has broken out in village Baragangni under Alamdanga upazila of Chuadanga district.

The civil surgeon of Chuadanga said during the last 15 days, 40 per sons have been attacked by diarrhoea in the village, but the situation

is under control.

He said an unhygienic condition has been prevailing in the village because most of the villagers do not use latrines. They generally respond to the call of nature in the bushes and fields. Besides, he people of the village use the water of ponds which is not pure.

The civil surgeon said bleaching powder was sprayed in the ponds.

Health Department workers have been deputed in the village to keep a watch on the situation.

One dies in Rajshahi road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

A man was killed and two others were injured in a road accident that occurred in Kazihata area under Boalia police station in the city Saturday noon.

The dead was identified an Abdul Zabbar, an employee of local police office. Police sources said a speeding truck hit three people from behind. Zabbar died in hospital. Two others were also admitted to hospital.

Revolver recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Sirajganj*

A foreign-made revolver was recovered from Kalibari area in Sirajganj town Friday morning.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided a place near Kalibari Rickshaw Stand and recovered the 22-bore revolver with five rounds of bullet.

NEWS SNAPS

Youth hacked to death

UNB, *Benapole*

A young man was hacked to death by the rivals at Gorpara village in Sharsha upazila of Banapole on Saturday.

Police said the assailants hacked Abu Taher, son of Yunus Ali of Kunduppur village, to death on allegation of his illicit relationship with a housewife of the area. Family members of the housewife went into hiding after the incident. A case was filed in this connection.

Rival group kills girl

UNB, *Brahmanbaria*

A teenage girl was killed and 10 others were injured when the rival group attacked them at village Gogod in Sarali upazila of Brahmanbaria on Saturday.

The deceased was identified as Salma Begum, 14, daughter of Judge Miah. Villagers said the trouble erupted between Judge Miah and Miah Hossain on Thursday following the death of a hen belonging to Judge Miah. Later it was decided to solve the dispute at village arbitration and when Salma started giving her witness about the incident that led to the death of the hen, the rivals swooped on them suddenly injuring 11 people including Salma seriously. Salma was rushed to the Sadar hospital in a critical condition where she succumbed on Sunday.

Stock increasing at fertiliser factory

UNB, *Brahmanbaria*

The stock of fertiliser at Zia Fertiliser Factory in Ashuganj under Brahmanbaria district is increasing day by day, as it could not be supplied to the buffer godowns and the dealers across the country.

Factory sources said some 64,000 tons of fertiliser remained stockpiled in its godown till Wednesday. The per day production at the factory is 1,400 tons and the authorities can supply only 800 to 900 tons a day. But due to bad weather and other reasons, the dealers of North Bengal are not drawing the quota of fertilisers and no trucks are coming in Brahmanbaria from the northern region to carry the same. So, the fertiliser supply to the North Bengal is hampering seriously. Factory authorities in a limited scale have taken up alternative measures to supply the fertiliser across the country through the cargo vessels.

Two teenaged girls rescued

UNB, *Narayanganj*

Police rescued two teenaged girls from launch terminal of Narayanganj town on Sunday after two and a half months of their abduction.

Police said Tania, 14, and Rozina, 13, were abducted from Elatolia village in Matliab upazila of Chandpur district. Two people Goni Miah, 35, and Abdur Rashid, 35, of the same village were arrested in this connection.

Undertrial prisoner escapes

UNB, *Luxmipur*

An undertrial prisoner escaped from the court hajat in Luxmipur at about 7 pm Sunday.

Police arrested Abul Khair Ledu of Char Ruhita village in Sadar upazila some 15 days back in several theft cases including cow lifting.

When contacted, court police inspector Tanmoy Roy refused to talk with the newsmen in this connection. Two other accused fled away from Duttapara police interrogation centre and Kamarhat police outpost in August last year while Tanmoy Roy was Officer-in-Charge in Sadar thana, said police sources adding that they are yet to be arrested.

Gazipur Civil Surgeon's car stolen

UNB, *Gazipur*

A private car of Gazipur Civil Surgeon was stolen from his official residence early Sunday.

Burglars broke open collapsible gate of the residence of Dr Mahbub Hossain and took away his Toyota car.

The doctor's residence is situated in between the houses of the SP and SSP, where police remain on guard round the clock. A case was filed with the police.

Bogra road mishap claims 2 lives

UNB, *Bogra*

A head-on collision between two trucks on Bogra-Rangpur highway in Bogra district left two day-labourers dead and 10 others injured on Saturday morning.

Police said the accident occurred at about 8 am when a Thakurgaon-bound truck carrying some 20-25 day-labourers collided with another at Mokamtala leaving Mahidul Islam, 25, dead on the spot. Later, another victim Shamsur Rahman, 24, succumbed to his injuries at Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital. The injured, all agriculture labourers, were admitted to the same hospital. A case was filed with Shibganj police.

Two arrested for issuing 'fatwa'

UNB, *Comilla*

Two persons were arrested from Tonki village in Muradnagar upazila of Comilla district recently in connection with issuing 'fatwa' and lashing in the name of village arbitration.

Police said Subedar (Retd) Sirajul Islam and Mohon Sarker of the village were arrested on charge of whipping innocent villagers in a number of occasions. Women Empowerment Movement, a non-government organisation recently investigated into the issuing of 'fatwa' and whipping incidents in the area following a report published in a national daily. The arrest was made as per demand of the leaders of the organisation.

Two guns recovered: Man arrested

UNB, *Comilla*

Police in a raid at a night-coach on Dhaka-Chittagong highway in Chandina upazila of Comilla district recently recovered two guns and arrested one person.

Police said they searched the Dhaka-bound coach from Chittagong at Bagur bus stand on May 16 and found the two one-barrel local-made guns in a polythene bag. They arrested Sohrab Hossain, son of Dr Aktar Hossain of village Baola in Chakaria upazila of Cox's Bazar district in this connection. A case was filed.

Three Islami Bank staffers held

UNB, *Comilla*

Three staff members of Comilla town branch of Islami Bank Bangladesh Ltd were arrested recently on charge of embezzling Tk 10 lakh.

Police arrested cashier Kamruzzaman and two other staffs Akram Hossain Majumder and Hamid Ullah on May 16 following a case filed by bank manager Harunur Rashid. The court sent them to jail hajat.

Relief distributed among fire victims

UNB, *Thakurgaon*

RDRS, a local voluntary organisation, distributed relief materials among 190 fire-affected families of three villages in Baliadanga upazila of Thakurgaon district on Friday.

Deputy Commissioner Nepal Sarker distributed the relief on behalf of RDRS at the premises of Paria Primary School and Dhantola RDRS Foundation office. Each family received 20-kg rice, saree, lungi and one set of clothes for their children. Some 150 families of Uttar-Paria Bastubhita village, 40 families of Horiara and Baliadighi village received the relief. Families of the villages were rendered homeless in three separate fire incidents recently.

Housewife with opium nabbed

UNB, *Gazipur*

Special Branch of police arrested a housewife along with 7 kg of opium from her house in village Mochak Kouchakuri.

On a secret information, policemen raided the house, recovered the opium hidden in a steel almirah and arrested Shamima Chowdhury, wife of Shamsur Rahman Chowdhury. Chowdhury, a cosmetics trader, was not in the house at the time of police raid.

Maize farming gains popularity

UNB, *Bogra*

Maize farming is gaining popularity in Bogra district as it has turned out to be more profitable than the other crops.

According to local Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), some 1,000 hectares of land in seven upazilas out of 11 have been brought under maize cultivation with an output target of 3,250 metric tons. Upazila wise breakup of the cultivation: 840 hectares in Sherpur, 80 hectares in Dhunat, 10 hectares in Gabtoli, 30 hectares in Sadar, 30 hectares in Shariakandi, five hectares each in Shibganj and Sonatola upazilas.