

NEWS SNAPS

Move to find out cause of blight in orange

UNB, Rangamati

Following report of disease in orange gardens in the frontier Sajek area, Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) has taken initiative to investigate into its cause. Farmers of the area have been deprived of their actual production of orange for last few years due to blight in the gardens. An expert team of the department would visit the gardens where the blight was reported and take initiative to check its further attack. The report of blight in orange gardens in Sajek area published in various newspapers recently attracted the attention of the government and the CHT Affairs Ministry and Rangamati District Council instructed the department to look into the matter.

Forged notes of Tk 500 detected

UNB, Magura

Beware of Tk 500 notes, these are being forged and used in between of the real notes. People of Magura are apprehending of being deceived with forged note of Tk 500 denomination, as Local Uttara and Sonali Bank branches recently recovered a number of such notes from the bundles of real notes. Various sources said an organised gang is tactfully putting the notes inside the real notes deceiving the people mainly the businessmen while trading goods. They opined that these notes are coming into the country from India. Bank authorities said there are maximum possibilities of being deceived, as there is no easy way to detect the forged notes.

56 arrested while going to India illegally

UNB, Sathkhira

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) in separate raids in Sathkhira recently arrested 56 people while they were going to India illegally.

Of the arrested 21 were males, 19 females and 16 children. They hailed from different areas of Barisal, Pirojpur and Jhalakati districts. BDR sources said they caught 18 people while crossing the border through Bhomra border of Sadar upazila on Dec 3 and 38 people from Kakkanga border of Kolaroa upazila on the following day. The arrested people said they were going to India in search of jobs as they were going without jobs in the respective home districts. But the border guards suspect that the human traffickers brought them here for trafficking to India.

T-'Aman' production may fall in Jhenidah

UNB, Jhenidah

Target of transplanted 'Aman' paddy production may not be achieved here due to lack of proper irrigation facility in the beginning of the season.

Farmers could not sow the seeds properly on the seedbeds for want of adequate rainfall. On the other hand, poor farmers do not have much money to irrigate their paddy fields. An official of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said that Aman production in low-lying areas are quite hopeful than the high lands as the low-lying lands are comparatively wet. This year, some 4.5 metric tons of paddy might be produced in each hectare of land against 7/8 mts of the previous year. This year, a total of 85,600 hectares of land were brought under transplanted Aman cultivation with a production target of 2,12,900 mts.

Mustard cultivation on 1,29,000 hectares

UNB, Pabna

A total of 1,29,000 hectares of land has been brought under mustard cultivation in 16 northern districts in the current season with a production target of 1,29,000 mts.

The district-wise breakup is as follows: Pabna - 17,000 hectares, Sirajganj - 17,000 hectares, Bogra - 7,000 hectares, Rangpur - 5,000 hectares, Dinajpur - 15,000 hectares, Rajshahi - 8,000 hectares, Panchagarh - 4,000 hectares, Thakurgaon - 5,000 hectares, Lalmonirhat - 11,000 hectares, Nilphamari - 3,000 hectares, Kurigram - 7,000 hectares, Gaibandha - 4,000 hectares, Joypurhat - 4,000 hectares, Natore - 14,000 hectares and Chapainawabganj - 7,000 hectares. Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources said production might exceed the target if favourable weather continues.

40 employees of DAE in distress

UNB, Kurigram

Some 40 employees of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) have not been getting their salary and allowances for the last 43 months and passing their days with financial hardships.

The employees were appointed in July 1987 under integrated farming project of DAE, which was completed in 1996. As per the plan, process of transferring the project employees to revenue sector was started. During the period, salary and allowances were given to the employees from another source. After that authority stopped giving their salary from July '98. Although the ministry ordered the DAE to pay outstanding salaries of the employees, the fund was not sanctioned yet due to unknown reasons.

Villagers catch three armed robbers

UNB, Sathkhira

Villagers caught three armed robbers along with arms and ammunitions at Rajuri village of Paikgacha upazila in Sathkhira Thursday.

Some five people were also injured while trying to nab the armed robbers. Police said gang of armed robbers swooped on the house of Santosh Kumar of the village at dead of night. They took away cash and gold ornaments from the house stabbing a daughter of Santosh. As the robbers were fleeing with the booties, villagers chased them. Police also joined with the villagers and opened fire at the robbers. At one stage the robbers entered into the neighbouring Dargapur village and injured three people who are chasing them. Later, three of them were caught from near Dargapur bazaar. The arrested are: Khairul Islam, Sabuj Sardar and Didarul Islam.



Some children warm themselves surrounding a fire place at village Kabirpur in Jhenidah while a few buyers belonging to lower middle class bargain at a footpath shop of old warm clothes at Jhenidah Agrani Square. A severe cold prevails in Jhenidah in recent days where people need warm clothes and blankets on emergency basis to protect themselves from bitter cold.



PHOTO: DELWAR KABIR

Date juice, winter cakes popular iftar items in Natore villages

ANWAR ALI, Natore

With the arrival of the winter season, people in Natore as elsewhere in rural Bangladesh, have started tasting sweet date juice.

The extraction of date juice is now going on in full swing in Natore.

Rural people in Natore and its adjoining areas are used to take 'iftar' during the Ramadan with delicious date juice and with different kinds of winter cakes (pitha) made of date juice. These are popular 'iftar' items among the villagers in Natore.

The extractors of date juice, locally called as 'Gaichha' are passing busy days trimming date trees to collect juice for making date molasses, widely known as 'khejur gur'. It is very tasty and has great demand among people.

Different kinds of cakes and sweets are prepared from the just harvested Aman rice, flour and date juice

There are more than 75,000 matured date trees in six upazilas of Natore, including 35,000 date trees in Lalpur upazila alone. These trees are yielding juice regularly.

About 300 metric tons of date molasses with attractive shape and colour are being produced and marketed every week at Banpara, Walla, Lalpur, Bilmariya, Nazirpur, Chachkoir, Moukhara, Telsaria bazaars of Natore.

A good number of people are engaged in collecting and selling date juice, thereby maintaining their families. Every morning in the winter season the juice collectors along with juice pots (Roshar har) are seen moving from door to door to sell the same.

An extractor, Mamtaz Uddin of Sadar upazilla told that the production cost of shaped molasses was around Tk 8 to Tk 12 as against the retail price of Tk 20 to Tk 24 per kg.

Momtaz said, he earns at least Tk 200 by selling date juice of 20 trees.



PHOTO: STAR

A juice extractor trims a date tree at Sadar upazila in Natore. Date juice extractors locally known as 'Gaichha' pass busy days trimming date trees in this winter season. The delicious and popular juice is available only in this particular season of the year. People, especially rural people, make varieties of cakes from date juice. In the ongoing month of Ramadan fasting villagers in Natore take 'iftar'(breaks holy fasting) with fresh date juice and various tasty cakes made of it.

Storage capacity in 53 godowns decreases

UNB, Rangpur

Storage capacity of foodgrains in 53 godowns of greater Rangpur and Dinajpur districts has been decreased for want of renovation work.

The farmers used to store 1.20 lakh mts foodgrains in these godowns a few years back, but at present they can store only 1.07 lakh mts.

Of the total, 2,000 mts storage capacity has decreased in nine godowns of Rangpur, 1,000 mts in nine godowns of Kurigram, 2,000 mts in seven godowns of Nilphamari, 2,500 mts in 10 godowns of Gaibandha, 4,150 mts in 10 godowns of Thakurgaon and 1,500 mts in eight godowns of Panchagarh.

In the meantime, food production of these districts has increased than the previous years, but no new godown has been constructed yet.

Taking the advantage, the dealers are purchasing foodgrains from the farmers directly below their production cost.

Two children die as school bldg collapses

UNB, Bhola

Two children were killed and nine others injured as the cornice of a government primary school building collapsed in Mukharbandha area of Charfashion upazila on Tuesday.

Witnesses said tragedy befell the schoolchildren at about 10 am when the cornice of the dilapidated school building collapsed all on a sudden.

Shortage of labourers may affect IRRI-boro, rabi cultivation in Faridpur

ABDUL MATIN FAKIR, Faridpur

IRRI-boro and rabi crops cultivation in eight upazilas of Faridpur may be hampered to a great extent in the current season due to acute shortage of labourers, especially agriculture labourers.

Some farmers of Char Madhabdia in Sadar upazila told this correspondent that they would not be able to bring the targeted land under rabi crops cultivation in this season as agriculture labourers are seldom available. If available, their daily wage is Tk 85 to Tk 100 each which would cost them a huge amount of money and incur loss, they said adding that the labourers used to sell their labour at Tk 40 to Tk 50 each two or three months ago.

When contacted a source of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said that rabi crops would be cultivated on nearly 95

thousand hectares of land while IRRI-boro on 1,19,700 hectares.

Agriculture labourers might be scarce as the cultivation works begin in Faridpur at the same time resulting in heavy demand for the labourers.

When contacted about the scarcity of the labourers, some day labourers at Alipur crossing in Faridpur town told this correspondent that they (agriculture labourers) get jobs for six months and they have to remain unemployed for the rest six months of the year for want of jobs.

So, many of the agriculture labourers have left their ancestral profession to improve their lots, they said.

DAE source categorically said that if the climate favours IRRI-boro and rabi crops cultivation target in the district would be achieved.

Sugar output may fall short of target in 15 mills

UNB, Rangpur

The target of sugar production in 15 sugar mills of the country may not be achieved in the current crushing season due to short supply of sugarcane.

Official sources in Rangpur said the sugar mills have fixed the target to produce 1,81,850 metric tons of sugar by crushing about 22.75 lakh metric tons of sugarcane.

Of the total, Shyampur Sugar Mills has fixed the target to produce 8,500 metric tons of sugar by crushing one lakh mts of sugarcane, Rangpur Sugar Mills 10,875 mts of sugar by crushing 1.50 lakh mts of cane, Panchagarh Sugar Mills 11,700 mts of sugar by crushing 1.30 lakh cane.

Besides, Thakurgaon Sugar Mills fixed the target at 10,640 mts of sugar by crushing 1.40 lakh canes, Shatabganj Sugar Mills 9,200 mts of sugar by crushing 1.15 lakh canes, Joypurhat Sugar Mills 13,875 mts of sugar by crushing 1.85 lakh mts of canes, Rajshahi Sugar Mills 15,000 mts of sugar by crushing 2 lakh mts of canes.

Natore Sugar Mills fixed the target at 15,200 mts by crushing 1.90 lakh mts of canes, North Bengal Sugar Mills 17,318 mts of sugar by crushing 2.15 lakh mts of canes, Pabna Sugar Mills 6,015 mts of sugar by crushing 90,000 mts of canes, Kushtia Sugar Mills 11,600 mts of sugar by crushing 1.45 lakh mts of canes.

Darshana Sugar Mills fixed the target at 15,750 mts of sugar by crushing 1.75 lakh mts of canes, Mobarakganj Sugar Mills 13,440 mts of sugar by crushing 1.60 lakh

mts of canes, Faridpur Sugar Mills 13,020 mts of sugar by crushing 1.55 lakh mts of canes and Jheel Bangla Sugar Mills 9,717 mts of sugar by crushing 1.15 lakh mts of canes.

Informed sources apprehended that the target of sugar production would not be achieved due to short supply of canes. The cane growers, violating the contract, are supplying the canes in large quantity to the power crushers in the mill zones for manufacturing molasses.

The owners of power crushers reportedly offered higher price for the sugarcane than that of the sugar mills. The molasses manufacturers have been giving Tk 50 for each maund of sugarcane against the mill price of Tk 40.50.

Two killed in Sirajganj road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Two people were killed in two separate road accidents on Dhaka-Dinajpur highway near Purkola and Komajpur area in Sirajganj.

Identity of the victims is: Insaif Ali, 35, a local rickshawpuller and Pervin, 9 of Komajpur in Sholonga thana.

The victims met the tragic end of their lives when a Dhaka bound bus crushed them under its wheels while its driver drove hurriedly towards Dhaka without caring for the ill-fated victims.