

# Bewildered rawhide traders

Prices low in greater Rangpur, huge quantities smuggled out as Dhaka tanners form undeclared cartel

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Nilphamari

Abdus Subhan cast a vacant look at the heap of rawhides and said he has already lost Tk one lakh.

He arranged Tk five lakh and purchased rawhide and skin. He sold half of it at loss and is in a fix what to do with the rest.

He is among many traders at the Taraganj wholesale rawhide market, the biggest one in Nilphamari and surrounding districts in greater Rangpur.

Abdul Latif Khan of Greater Rangpur Hide and Skin Traders Association who was present there said over one lakh pieces of cowhide and 30 thousand pieces of goatskin were collected by about 2000 small traders in greater Rangpur after the Eid-ul-Azha this year.

Agents of tanners in Dhaka purchased less than thirty per cent of it so far. The rest are set to be smuggled out, he told this correspondent during a visit to the market on Tuesday.

"We are helpless. The tannery have formed a cartel and offering prices much lower than buying rates".

Moreover, Tk 17.86 crore of traders in greater Rangpur from last year's supplies is still unpaid by 10 tanneries in Dhaka.

Sobhan, Latif and many others said the tanners' agents offer Tk 800 to 1000 for hides and Tk 100 to 150

for goat skin per piece. They said they incurred Tk 200 to 400 loss per cowhide and around Tk 100 per goat skin this year.

All of them claimed that agents of Indian buyers are moving in the area.

"We now see some people never seen in the area before. They want to buy hides and skin. They offer higher prices", said Sobhan.

They said they will have to dispose of the stocks soon because it is a perishable item.

Smuggling is very easy. A common smuggling route is Teesta, which enters Bangladesh at Kaliganj in Dimla upazila. Big boatloads of smuggled goods cross the border through the river at night, they claimed.

At Khaluapara village five kilometres from Nilphamari town, about 100 people are engaged in this hereditary business. Kaluapara in among 20 villages in the area where trading on rawhide and skin has flourished over the years.

All small traders will simply perish, said Sikandar Ali of Kaluapara, who bought Tk one lakh hides this year.

He said he went to Taraganj four days ago to sell his stock. But the price they offered will cause at least Tk 25,000 loss. So, he returned.

Finding no way, he sprinkled salt and some other ingredients and dried those in the sun. "Those could be preserved for a week more at best", he said.



A trader with a stock of rawhide at Taraganj wholesale market in Nilphamari. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: STAR

## BCL to boycott CU classes on February 19

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University (CU) unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) has decided to boycott all classes on February 19.

It was decided at an emergency BCL workers meeting held on Sunday after finalisation of appointment of a lecturer in Political Science department.

The Syndicate finalised the appointment of Enayet Ullah Patwary, a 'Shibir cadre' and an accused in a killing incident in 1990 on January 29, according to sources in BCL.

BCL further decided to boycott all programmes of the university authority to mark the International Mother Language Day on February 21. BCL said the programmes were chalked out as per "direction" of Islami Chhatra Shibir.

BCL also placed their five-point demands which include cancellation of fees to verify transcripts of graduates, immediate holding of Chittagong University Central Students' Union (CUCSU) election and declaration of "Arts Faculty" building as an abandoned building.

## Launch service via Gopalganj stopped

3 rivers silted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Launch services from Dhaka to Khulna and Barisal to Khulna via Gopalganj, Takerhat and Moharhat have been stopped as the rivers Madhumati, Kumar and Ghagor and Madaripur Beel Route (MBR) canal have silted up.

Every year the routes become narrow as shoals emerge in the river-bed of the Madhumati, Kumar, Madaripur Beel Route (MBR) canal and Ghagor.

"Rabi" crops, milk, fish, green coconut, vegetables and betel leaves are supplied from Gazirhat in Khulna district to Kalia, Mohjan, Bordia, Joganja, Pahardanga and Chapail in Narail district, Barfa, Uddaypur, Kahalpur, Bohajaki and Charkulia in Mollarhat thana of Bagerhat district.

On contact, Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) Executive Engineer Abdus Sobhan told The Daily Star that they had prepared an estimate amounting to Tk 10 cr and sent it to the higher authorities for approval.

## Cancelled VGF cards in B'baria not restored yet

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Brahmanbaria

The 180 VGF (vulnerable group feeding) cards in Shahjadpur union in Sarail upazila, cancelled nine months ago, are yet to be restored, causing sufferings to the distressed people.

Those were cancelled for alleged arbitrary distribution, not evenly covering all the nine wards, which was detected in an official probe.

Officials had said earlier that the cards would be redistributed properly so that distressed women in the nine wards are benefited, but no action has yet been taken.

Shahjadpur Union Parishad Chairman Sirajul Islam told this correspondent during a recent visit that the area is poverty-stricken as most of the people are landless.

When contacted, Sarail UNOASM Abdul Hafiz said a decision has been taken at a meeting to restore the cards.

Brahmanbaria Deputy Commissioner Md Yunusur Rahman said the UP chairman has submitted an application and steps will be taken soon.

One person gets 30 kilograms of rice or wheat per month against each card.

## Kerosene price up in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Gaibandha

Price of kerosene has shot up here due to its artificial crisis. Unscrupulous traders hoard kerosene to earn windfall profit. Diesel oil is also being mixed with kerosene.

Kerosene is now being sold between Tk 24-26 per litre in Gaibandha Pourashava while in remote areas price of each litre of kerosene is Tk 30.

Local dealers complained inadequate supply of kerosene due to introduction of quota system at depots. The system was introduced to discourage contamination of kerosene.

The Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), however, refuted the allegation. Demand for kerosene increased by 40 per cent last month, according to BPC's northern central cell. In January last year the dealers lifted one crore 19 lakh litres of kerosene from depots while in January this year they lifted one crore 95 lakh litres. The figure shows the crisis is artificial, they opined.

High demand of diesel persists now as it is the peak period of 'Boro' cultivation in northern region. According to a statistics there are 4,35,000 shallow tube-wells in operation in the northern areas during the current Boro crop season. So, unscrupulous people are mixing kerosene with diesel.

## Pall of gloom at B'baria village

Steps to realise compensation from Saudi killer of 3 Bangladeshis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

A pall of gloom has descended at Alakpur where relatives are mourning the brutal murder of three of the villagers in Saudi Arabia. They were working there.

Siraj Mia and Kamal Mia, sons of Abdul Ahad and Abdur Rashid alias Sabu Mia were shot dead by the drunken son of their employer in Riyadh on Tuesday last. Their bodies were doused with petrol and torched, according to earlier press reports.

The killer was from the family of Ameer Abdullah Bin Fahd, the reports said.

Brahmanbaria Deputy Commissioner Mr Yunusur Rahman and Police Superintendent ATM Tarek and many others visited the grief-stricken families on Tuesday (February 11) and consoled the members.

The DC told them that steps would be taken to realise compensation for the murders.

Some sources claimed that State Minister for Employment Kamrul Islam announced one lakh taka grant for each of the families. The DC said this is yet to be officially communicated to him.

Meanwhile, District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Md Abu Bakar said yesterday he has initiated a process for granting Tk 1000 and 50 kgs of rice each to the victims' families. Steps will be taken for more relief, he said.

The three were the only earning members of their families.

Siraj left behind his wife and four children. Sabu Mia's son Moklesur Rahman is an SSC candidate.

## Road accident: Two killed in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

Two persons were killed and three others injured when a Dhaka-bound bus hit a tempo in Khoitala area near Garai bridge on Magura-Dhaka highway yesterday morning.

The dead identified as Arabinu Sen of Brahmanbaria village in Madhukhali upazila of Faridpur district and Asruddin, 45, of Durannagar village in Sreepur upazila, Magura.

## UPDF terms Feb 10 a 'day of national disgrace'

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Khagrachhari

United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) has termed February 10 'a day of national disgrace'.

On this day in 1998, members of Parbatya Chattagram Janasanghati Samity (PCJSS) surrendered arms to the then government following a peace pact on December 2, 1997.

UPDF, fighting for full autonomy in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), held a rally at Khagrachhari on Tuesday. Earlier, they brought out a procession in the town which terminated at Shapla Chattar.

Speakers asked PCJSS Chairman Jotiridriyo Bodhipriyo Lama allies Shantu Larma to resign from the chairmanship of regional council to fight with the hill people to establish their rights.

They said Shantu Larma surrendered arms to the administration which they bought at a cost of blood.

UPDF district committee member secretary Animesh Chakma presided over the meeting while it was addressed by UPDF district unit member Dharma Jyoti Chakma, the district President of Pahari Chhatra Parishad, Shawpan Kumar Chakma, Hill Women's Federation General Secretary Antarika Chakma and UPDF district committee member Dev Danta Tripura.

## Criminal arrested for fourth time

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushlia

Al alleged ring leader of arms and drug smugglers, who is also accused in two murder cases, has been arrested in the town for the fourth time.

Police raided the house of Badsha Mia, 41, son of Aitir Rahman at Purbp Majampur in the town in the early hours of Monday and arrested him.

The officer-in-charge of Sadar police station told newsmen that Badsha was involved in arms and drug smuggling. He was being interrogating.

The OC said he was arrested four times earlier, once with firearms. But he got freed allegedly through underhand deals with police and local influentials.

Other police sources said Badsha was accused in two murder cases, five drug cases and one arms case.

# Foreigners' security beefed up in Rangamati

Ministers-in-charge for 3 hill dists asked to closely monitor security: Rangamati-Ctg-Khagrachhari roads closed for night traffic

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Rangamati

The Deputy Commissioner yesterday directed law enforcers and others concerned to take whatever measures necessary to ensure security of foreigners in Rangamati.

The government wants full security of foreigners in their free movement in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), DC Dr Jafar Ahmed Khan told a meeting on law and order, held at his office.

The three ministers-in-charge of Rangamati, Bardarban and Khagrachhari have also been asked by the highest level in the government to closely monitor law and order in the districts, he said.

Senior police officials, Upazila

Nirbanee Officers (UNO) and OCs of all the 10 upazilas in Rangamati district, NGO representatives, newsmen and the local elite attended the meeting, held following a home ministry directive.

"In the face of deterioration in law and order, the government has directed the local administration and law enforcement agencies to tighten security all over the region", Jafar said.

He also sought cooperation from owners of residential hotels and resorts where foreigners stay, NGOs and development agencies in this regard.

Recollecting the abduction of three foreigners from Kalapahar n February 16, 2001, the DC said, "The administration remained

vigilant so that such incident can not happen again." But incident of abduction took place again, he said.

Abduction of a hotel owner from Bardarban on the night of February 2 raised an alarm in the government. Mahbub Hassan Bablu, abducted on gunpoint for Tk one crore ransom, is yet to be rescued.

At least 26 foreigners were staying at the hotel at that night but they were unhurt when gunmen laid a cordon and abducted Bablu.

Meanwhile army has stopped movement of passenger-carrying vehicles on Rangamati-Chittagong and Rangamati-Khagrachhari roads from sunset to sunrise, sources said.



PHOTO: STAR  
Transcom Beverage Limited officials are seen with the three youths - (from left) Kamrul Islam, Debabrata Roy and Tariqul Islam - selected for participation in the national level 'Mountain Dew, Team X-Treme' competition. Twenty-one youths will be selected through tests in other places of the country, and from among them a team will be selected for expedition to the Mount Everest. The selection test for Barisal region was held at Durgasagar, Madhobpasha on February 9.



PHOTO: STAR  
Polls pledge unfulfilled: People's representatives failed to keep their words to construct a bridge over the river Mogra at Challisha Bazaar in Sadar upazila, Netrakona. A bamboo pole is the only means for the people to cross the river during winter to go to the district headquarters.