

Maize amazes farmers in Sherpur

Ahmed Ali of Nalitabari earns Tk 3,60,000 from five acres: Marketing, diversified use assured

JAHANGIR ALAM, back from Nalitabari (Sherpur)

Netrakona: Maize cultivation has opened the door to prosperity for farmers, thanks to the efforts by Agriculture Extension Department (AED) officials in Sherpur. Ahmed Ali of Nakla village under Nalitabari upazila in Sherpur earned about Tk 3,60,000 from five acres of land last year. He produced 1250 maunds and sold those at Tk 290 per maund. He had to spend around Tk 50,000.



PHOTO: STAR

A maize field at Nakla village under Nalitabari upazila in Sherpur. The photo was taken recently.

This year, maize on seven acres of land is ready for harvest, he told this correspondent during a visit to his field last week.

The cultivation is easier and less costly than other crops. The main advantage is an assured market. Buyers, mainly poultry feed producers, take away the yield from his house, he said. This crop has good prospect because of its diversified use, AED officials and buyers said.

Ahmed Ali said the crop can be raised throughout the year but the yield is best in the Rabi season (October to April).

Maize plants need less irrigation as they collect food and water from

brought encouraging results.

In the current season, 500 acres including 250 in Nalitabari upazila have been brought under maize cultivation in the district, AED officials said in Sherpur.

Local varieties like Barnaly, Shuvra, and Mohar and high yielding varieties including Sewra and Pacific-II are being cultivated in our country.

Bangladesh's climate is suitable for this crop, they said. Farmers in Nalitabari said high yielding Pacific-II variety is grown on 80 per cent of the land under maize cultivation in the area.

The AED officials said corn oil produced from maize is one of the most popular edible oils in the world now. Corn oil is also used for preparing acid, alcohol, paint, artificial rubber, gun powder, medicines etc. Besides the home market, maize has good prospect for export because of its diversified use, they said. This is the only crop which contains magnesium, potassium, sodium and chlorine together.

the deep layer of soil through long roots. They do not harm other crops and soil fertility.

Besides, pest attack is not as severe as in other cereal crops, he added.

Another farmer, Narandra Chandra Sarkar, said he got 720 maunds from three acres by cultivating Pacific-II, a high yielding variety, in the last season.

"Smooth marketing facility attracted me to go for maize cultivation", Khalek Mia of Kenduapara village under Nalitabari upazila said.

He cultivated high yielding Sewra variety this season. Some big NGOs like BRAC, Grameen Krishi Foundation and poultry farmers are showing interest in maize, he said.

The AED introduced the crop in Sherpur district five years back through demonstration plots in different areas. Their efforts have

Classes at IU resume today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, KUSHIA

The Islamic University crawled back to normalcy ending about three months' deadlock after new Vice-chancellor Prof Rafiqul Islam took office yesterday.

Classes will resume today, its treasurer Moslem Uddin said. Students who had left the campus started returning to dormitories since Saturday evening.

The new VC held a day-long meeting with deans, heads of departments, senior teachers and high officials yesterday. The meeting will resume today.

Prime Minister and Chancellor of the university Khaleda Zia on Saturday appointed Prof Rafiqul Islam new VC by removing Prof Mustafizur.

Teachers, students and officials of the university had been demanding his removal as he was allegedly toeing Jamaat-e-Islami line.

Prof Mosarraf Hossain has been replaced with Prof Anwarul Karim as treasurer of the university. Prof Mosarraf Hossain, president of IU Zia Parishad, will remain a teacher at the university. Prof Anwarul Karim was former principal of Kushtia Government College.

"My first task is to bring back order at the university", the new VC said when a group of journalists met him yesterday.

"Then I would resume academic routine immediately", said the veteran academician who was a

teacher at Rajshahi University for long 22 years.

Orders have been given to different administrative departments to finish all pending work, said a high official.

The Vice-chancellor asked all teachers to resume classes and examinations "as early as possible" and to fix a date for admission test for 2003-2004 session.

Initiative will be taken to hold first year admission test soon, the VC said.

The Islami Chhatra Shibir, student front of Jamaat, had been demanding removal of Prof Mosarraf for his alleged corruption.

When contacted Prof Mosarraf said the ICS allegation is "base less".

Also at Rokeya's birthplace...

Marriage against will, fatwa, torture on women rampant

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Had legendary woman Begum Rokeya lived, she would have lamented to see the plight of women at her birthplace now.

Women in Payrabond and nearby villages in Mithapukur now reel under the scourge of early marriage, dowry, fatwa and repression.

Thirty-three per cent female adolescents are married against their will, seven per cent become victims of fatwa and 22 per cent are subjected to torture by males, according to a survey conducted in the area by Begum Rokeya Smriti Sangha.

The voluntary organization based at Payerabond revealed its report at a women's gathering at Mithapukur on Wednesday to protest these vices.

Hundreds of women and adolescent girls joined the day-long programme styled

Kishorimela (adolescents' fair), organised by BRAC. It was held at Begum Rokeya Auditorium.

They brought out a procession at Mithapukur upazila headquarters, chanting slogans against dowry, early marriage and women oppression.

The programme included a discussion meeting in the afternoon, addressed by, among others, local parliament member Mohammed Solaiman Alam Fakir, Mithapukur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mokbul Hossen and BRAC official Harunur Rashid.

The lawmaker said early marriage is a curse. About seven per cent married adolescents in the district die during childbirth, he said.

Other speakers also urged women to rise against early marriage, dowry and violence against women.

But the programme concluded without any plan on how to check these.

ATTACK ON HASINA'S MOTORCADE

Gournadi BNP protests 'media propaganda'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A one-hour blockade at Gournadi in peak hours on Saturday afternoon on the Barisal-Dhaka highway has caused immense sufferings to people.

BNP enforced the blockade protesting what they termed 'a motivated media propaganda' on the so-called attack on Sheikh Hasina's motorcade here. A protest procession was brought out by the BNP activists. After the procession a meeting was held at Gournadi bus stand.

The meeting was presided over by upazila BNP president Nure Alam Howlader and addressed by its secretary Sarwar Alam Biplob, Mizanur Rahman Mukul, municipality BNP president, Zahir Sajjad Sharif, municipality BNP secretary, Fakir Abdur Razzak, upazila Jamaat secretary, Jubo Dal convener Badiuzzaman Mithu, Agailihara Jubo Dal secretary Shah Md Bakhtiar and others.

Speakers termed the so-called attack on Hasina's motorcade as 'false and fabricated'. They also threatened to boycott print and electronic media for 'serving the purpose' of Awami League (AL). They demanded AL secretary general M A Jalil's trial for giving an ultimatum to topple an elected government by April 30 and having connection with the recent arms haul at Chittagong.

Meanwhile, police lodged a GD entry in Gournadi police station regarding attack on Sheikh Hasina's motorcade here on April 2, but denied to disclose in detail.

PROTEST AGAINST RANGPUR SUGAR MILLS LAY-OFF

Half-day hartal observed in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A half-day hartal was observed in Gaibandha district yesterday in protest against lay-off of Rangpur Sugar Mills.

All political parties in the district gave support to the hartal, called jointly by the district Workers and Employees Federation and Rangpur Sugar Mills Workers Union.

All shops, business centres and educational institutions remained closed till 2 pm.

Veicular traffic including long-rout buses did not ply. Train communication was however normal.

A procession was brought out in the town and a rally held at the rail crossing point during the hartal demanding withdrawal of the lay-off.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Gaibandha Workers Party Secretary Aminul Islam Golap, 11-Party Alliance Convenor Mihir

Ghosh and Workers and Employees Federation President Rabil Hossain.

The speakers reiterated the demand for withdrawal of the lay-off and threatened of tougher action programme for non-compliance.

As per an earlier announced programme, a 'mass hunger strike' will be observed at the Shaheed Minar on April 13, to be followed by a day-long hartal in the district on April 20 to press the demand.

On Saturday, members of the Federation jobless employees of the mill formed a huge human chain in the town to press the demand.

The government laid-off the sugar mill since March 31, throwing over 1200 employees out of jobs and affecting hundreds of sugarcane growers in the district.



PHOTO: STAR

A human chain was formed at the rail crossing point at Gaibandha on Saturday protesting lay-off of Rangpur Sugar Mills. Workers union of the mill, Gaibandha Workers and Employees Federation and different political parties jointly organised the programme.

BOGRA POURASABHA POLLS BNP, AL announce candidates

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

BNP leader and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's special representative advocate A K M Mahbubur Rahman has been nominated as the Four-party Alliance chairman candidate in Bogra Poursabha election scheduled to be held on May 9.

Helaluzzaman Talukder Lalu MP, announced this at a press conference at Bogra Press Club auditorium on Friday.

Awami League (AL) also nominated the present municipality chairman advocate Rezaul Karim Montu as the party's chairman candidate.

Jamaat-e-Islami leader Moulana Alamgir Hossain announced the names of 12 Four-party Alliance ward commissioner candidates. Nine of them are from BNP and three are from Jamaat-e-Islami. BNP also nominated four women candidates to contest in four women reserved seats.

BNP candidates are: Shah Mohammad Mehadi Hasan Himu (Ward No 1), Towhidul Islam (Ward

No 2), Zuhurul Islam Dalu (Ward No 3), Syed Anowarul Islam Babla (Ward No 5), Sree Parimol Kumar Das (Ward No 6), Delwar Hossain Hiru (Ward No 7), Abu Taleb Bolla (Ward No 9), Mahbubur Rahman Lulka (Ward No 10), Sipar Al Bakhtiar (Ward No 11).

BNP nominated four women candidates are: Nilufa Kuddus (Ward Nos 1,2,3), Hosne Ara Begum (Ward Nos 4,5,6), Ranjona wBegum (Ward Nos 7,8,9) and Khodeza Bagum (Ward Nos 10,11,12).

Jamaat nominated candidates are: Master Nazrul Islam (Ward Nos 4), Erashadul Bari Earshad (Ward Nos 8), Jufiker Ali Babu (Ward Nos 12).

Meanwhile, freedom fighter Joglar Rashid will contest as the Gonotantri Party chairman candidate and Masudur Rahman Helal will contest as an independent candidate.

District election office sources told this correspondent that the last date for submission of nomination paper is April 11.

6 hurt in clash over phone call charge in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Six persons including four Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (SUST) students were injured in a clash here between a telephone shop owner and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists over telephone charge on Saturday.

According to locals and eye-witnesses, Hedayetul Kabir, a BBA student had an altercation over call charge with telephone shop owner Selim at a market near Shahporan Hall. At one stage of altercation Selim beat the student with a stick.

After some time, about 100 agitated students of the university went on a rampage in the shop and fired several rounds of gunshots.

Soon after the incident police forces were deployed on the campus.

Selim filed a case accusing JCD activists Rafiqul Islam Liton, Hedayetul Kabir, Munjer Talukder, Sadi and Rashid for the attack and also for causing loss of two and a half lakh taka.

However, SUST JCD vice president Mominul Islam Momin denied the allegations.

Meanwhile, Shahporan Hall Provost Committee at an emergency meeting on the day decided to file a case on behalf of the university against the shop owner. It was also decided to warn the students.

Boro crops drying up in Teesta project area

Water supply through Rangpur Canal stopped after breach in dam

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

IRRI-Boro crops in four upazilas are being damaged as Water Development Board (WDB) has stopped water supply through the Rangpur Canal of Teesta Irrigation Project following a breach in the dam.

The project authorities stopped water supply after about 80 feet of the canal dam breached at Moulvibazar Dolapara village in Magura union under Kishoreganj upazila on March 20.

Crops in vast areas in Kishoreganj, Taraganj, Gangachara and Badarganj upazilas in Rangpur and Nilphamari districts are drying up, farmers told this correspondent during a visit on Saturday.

As the dam breached, Water Development Board (WDB) men initially dumped sang bags to stop the water flow, but failed. They then stopped water supply through the canal.

This is the prime time for crops but the fields are without irrigation, many farmers in the area said.

WDB officials blamed farmers for the breach. This was caused due to illegal cutting of the dam by farmers for making grains for water, they said.

But the farmers said the dam collapsed automatically because sand was used instead of soil in its construction. So the dam could not bear the water pressure, they claimed.

WDB also lodged a case against 19 farmers in Kishoreganj on charge of damaging the dam.

WDB Superintendent Engineer Ahsanull, Executive Engineer AKM Moazzem Hossen and Assistant Engineer Abdus Sayeed visited the damaged site on March 21.

Ahsanulla had told newsmen during the visit that the breach would be repaired within days to resume water supply.



PHOTO: STAR

A lifeline dries up...
The main canal running through Bhola town is being silted. It connects the town with rest of the country. Now, cargo vessels can carry merchandise to and from the town only during the wet season. Earlier the canal used to provide irrigation water to over 10,000 acres of land in five unions of Bhola Sadar. But farmers are deprived of this facility for the last several years as it dries up in the winter. The canal has not been re-excavated since it was dug by the municipality about 100 years ago. Once re-excavated again, it can benefit thousands of townspeople and farmers.

Tk 1.59 lakh coins recovered from Indian at Benapole

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) recovered coins of foreign countries worth 1,59,000 taka from an Indian national at Benapole check post on Friday.

He was identified as Sharat Oshu Deurhi Kadu, 40, of Nagpur, Maharashtra state.

BDR handed him over to Benapole police with coins of different denominations of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. One hundred US dollars were also recovered from the Indian who allegedly entered Bangladesh a week ago.

A case was recorded with Benapole land port thana.



PHOTO: STAR

The breached portion of Rangpur Canal embankment at Dolapara.