

Jute prices falling fast for lack of buyers

BJMC yet to open purchase centers in Nilphamari

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Smiles of jute farmers are fading as initial high prices are falling fast due to lack of sufficient buyers.

Jute traders are watching the market while Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC) is yet to open its purchasing centres for want of a decision, circles in jute business said.

After several years' slump, jute marketing season began this year with prices hovering around round Tk 800 for Tosa and Tk 850 for local varieties. But in two weeks, the prices plummeted to Tk 550 and Tk 650 respectively in different markets in Nilphamari district, farmers and traders said.

District Jute Inspector Arindom Kumar Dhor told this correspondent on Saturday that two BJMC jute mills — Rajshahi Jute Mills, Peoples Jute Mills privately owned UMC Jute Mills, jute exporters BJ Singhenia and Julu Trading and 350 jute balers purchased jute from markets in the district in previous years. But only UMC Jute Mills and a handful balers have started purchasing small quantities this year.

Big buyers are yet to start buying while BJMC is watching the market. If high prices continue, many of the big buyers will hesitate to go for purchase right now, traders said.

Traders said 2000-5000 maunds of jute are brought to rural markets on every market day in the district. The big markets are Baburhat and Suti Bari Hat in Dimla, Bosunia Hat and Ambari Hat in Domar, Golna Hat and Tengenmari Hat in Joldhaka, Dhelapir Hat in Saidpur, Vobaniganj and Ramgan Hat in Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

Taking the scope of dull buying, organised syndicates will smuggle jute across the border, they said.

Agents of Indian jute buyers have already made their presence in areas close to the border, they claimed while talking to this correspondent. They are also waiting to see the prices come down further.

In the last couple of years, cultivation of the golden fibre decreased

alarmingly in northern districts as farmers did not get fair prices. Farmers became interested again this year when the prices rose to around Tk 1000 per maund at the fag end of last year (2004), the sources said.

But they had to pay heavily for it. Farmers had to buy jute seeds at prices as high as Tk 1000 per kilogram in the sowing season. Moreover, many a farmers were deceived by purchasing low quality seeds smuggled from across the border. Many farmers said they had to sow seeds twice or thrice on fields this year.

Inferior quality seeds was a great hindrance to attaining this year's production target. According to the

District Agriculture Extension Department (DAE), the target for jute cultivation was 10,620 hectares in six upazilas of Nilphamari district to get a yield of 1,11,740 bales.

But only 7,932 hectares could be brought under cultivation and the yield would be around 84,740 bales. The target could not be fulfilled as Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) could supply only 4.5 tonnes of seeds against a demand for 100 tonnes in the district, DAE sources said.

"But we are satisfied despite failing the target as farmers are happy at the reasonable price this year", one source said.

Ramzan Ali, a farmer at Goya

Bari village in Dimla upazila said he got 16 maunds of jute from two bighas of land. He spent about Tk 5000 and is expecting a profit of Tk 7000 from sale of jute and sticks.

Sources said that seven jute mills have been set up in Indian districts bordering Bangladesh in recent times, in addition to 59 set up earlier. Of the seven, one is in Kunchbihar district across Nilphamari.

An experienced jute trader in the district, Noor Hossen, said Indian jute mills are running with jute from Bangladesh but our jute mills are being closed one after another though we produce the best quality jute.



A farmer, expecting good price of jute this year, is drying the golden fibre at a village in Domar.

PHOTO: STAR

Mother with baby jumps under train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A mother along with her two year-old daughter were killed as she jumped under the wheels of Mymensingh-bound Teesta Express from Dhaka at Balashpur near the district town yesterday.

The victims are Laily Begum, 25, and her daughter Riti of Balashpur village in the Sadar upazila.

Laily was the wife of Police and locals said, she ended the lives as her husband Rezaul Karim went for a second marriage.

Some people at the spot said she was wandering beside the railway track. As the train came she with her daughter in the lap jumped on the track. They were cut to pieces. Police later recovered and sent the bodies to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) for autopsy.

Two killed in Tangail road mishap

A CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Two people were killed and 20 injured, 10 of them critically, when a Dhaka-bound bus from Dhanbari skidded off the Tangail-Mymensingh highway at Roktipara under Madhupur upazila yesterday morning.

The accident occurred as the bus tried to overtake a rickshaw-van, police said.

Nepal Chandra, 25, driver of the bus and Lal Miah, 50, a passenger, died on the spot.

Ten critically injured passengers were sent to the Mymensingh Medical College Hospital and ten others to Madhupur Upazila Health Complex.

2 Jubo Dal men held with arms

A CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

Police arrested two Jubo Dal activists along with one pipe gun and three knives from Fulkoach village in Sirajganj Sadar upazila Saturday night.

They are Al Amin and Tutol.

Police said, acting on a tip-off, a team from the Sadar thana raided their house and arrested them along with the arms.



A partial view of the 20-kilometre human chain from Shaghata to Tulshighat formed yesterday in protest against rape of a schoolgirl at Bharatkhal and demanding arrest and punishment of the rapist. Story on page 16.

PHOTO: STAR

Rural Rangpur without power for two days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Frequent load shedding and voltage fluctuation in Rangpur, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat and Gribandha districts amid a humid weather have made life miserable, prompting demonstrations in different areas in the last two days.

Angry people laid a siege to Rural Electrification Board (REB) offices for hours at Aditmari in Lalmonirhat and Saghata in Gribandha districts.

The power outage for long hours is also affecting production in mills and factories, the owners said. Many of them said they are on the verge of closing their units after counting losses.

The situation is worse in rural areas where there is no power supply by REB for the last two days.

Sources in REB told this correspondent yesterday that they had nothing to do as they did not get power supply from the Power Development Board (PDB) in last

two days.

Load shedding, coupled with voltage fluctuation causes electronic goods like refrigerators and TV sets and other household appliances to trip, consumers in urban areas said.

PDB sources said, they got only 55 mw electricity on Friday and Saturday from the National Grid against 200 mw needed in the eight districts in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur.

They said the 55 mw electricity supplied to PDB in the eight districts is being supplied to municipality areas only by rotation. So the rural areas remained without power.

The PDB Chief Engineer in Rangpur said, they are getting less supply from the National Grid as Ashuganj, Ghorashal, and Roujan power stations are not operating at the optimum level. He said the situation may improve in two to three days after the stations resume normal operation.

Broom procession for power

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkhira

Several hundred people yesterday afternoon brought out a broom procession in the town protesting frequent load-shedding, harassment to power consumers and sale of unused goods of the Power Development Board (PDB) at a throwaway price secretly.

The procession was jointly organised by Sathkhira district unit of National Awami Party (NAP) and Bastuhara-O-Bhumihin Samity, an association for homeless and landless people.

The processionists paraded the main streets of the town. Before the procession, a meeting was held at Shahid Abdur Razzak Park. NAP district unit secretary Kazi Saidur Rahman presided over the meeting.

Speakers have demanded smooth supply of electricity, stoppage of harassment to power consumers and punishment to those involved in selling PDB goods worth Tk 50 lakh at only Tk 2 lakh at an auction bid secretly.

They also expressed their great concern over power outage and voltage fluctuation affecting business, industrial and educational activities.

Among others, Master Mohsin, Sardar Kazem Ali, SA Selim Ratan, Abdus Sattar and Mozaffar Hossain addressed the meeting.

AUGUST 15 PROGRAMME IN PATUAKHALI

AL meet not held in face of threat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A meeting of Patuakhali district Awami League (AL) Working Committee scheduled to be held yesterday was postponed due to alleged threat by some "miscreants".

The meeting was called at 4 pm at the party office in the town to fix programmes to observe mourning day on August 15.

Party sources said all the 67 Working Committee members were present but district AL president and former lawmaker Shahjan Mia

declared the meeting postponed.

Later, Shahjahan Mia told journalists at his residence that a group of miscreants having links with the ruling party threatened him not to hold the meeting.

Earlier, at about 8.30 pm on Saturday, the district AL office and the residence of AL Secretary Khan Mosharraf Hossain were ransacked by some miscreant, party men claimed.

Khan Mosharraf Hossain claimed that "ruling party cadres" ransacked his residence but he did not file any case till writing this report at 5 pm yesterday.

No rift in alliance

Amini says at B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Islamic Okkya Jote (IOJ) Chairman Mufti Fazlul Haque Amini MP has said there may difference of opinion among component parties over small matters but that does not mean that there is rift in the four-party alliance.

The alliance must be maintained to fight the opposition in the next parliamentary election, he told a rally on the premises of IOJ office at Sarail on Saturday.

Without naming, he said an opposition party has virtually launched campaign for the next election. It is misleading the people and tarnishing the image of the country abroad.

"The Ulema-Mashayek (religious leaders) should unite under

the banner of the four-party alliance to resist the party from going to power in the next polls", he said.

Life of the people will become miserable again and crimes violence will increase if this party goes to power the IOJ chief said. The country's sovereignty will be jeopardised if that party goes to power, he alleged.

The people know about leaders of the party and will not vote for them, but we should remain vigilant, he said.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Brahmanbaria IOJ Secretary Hafiz Md Idris, Mawlana Burhan Uddin, Mowlana Farook Ahmed, Mowlana Md Yunus Gazi and Md Yeasin Arafat.

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National Awami Party (NAP) and its front organisation Bastuhara Samity (an association of landless people) brought out a broom procession in Sathkhira yesterday protesting frequent loadshedding in the town.

PHOTO: STAR

9 fishermen missing in Paira river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Nine fishermen are missing after five trawlers, caught in a storm, sank in the Paira river Saturday night.

Twenty-five fishermen on board five trawlers were fishing in the river.

As their trawlers capsized, other fishing boats rescued 16 fishermen from the river but nine are still miss-

ing, police and sources in fishermen's association here said.

The missing fishermen are Rustam, 30, Taher Ali, 28, Kader, 32, Nares, 35, Malek, 36, Chunnu, 28, Shah Alam, 33, Bareaq, 26 and Shahin 34. The capsized trawlers are FB Rangabali, FB Mashranga, FB Jaltali, FB Nowbihar and FB Ruppan.