

KALIACHAPRA SUGAR MILL UNDER PRIVATE OWNERSHIP

Sugarcane cultivation rises by 7 times in three years

MUKLESUR RAHMAN LITON,
Kishoreganj

Kaliachapra Sugar Mill inspired farmers to increase cultivation of sugarcane in Kishoreganj district after its privatisation in 2000.

In 2005-2006 financial year, about 5000 acres of land were brought under sugarcane cultivation in the mill's command area. The area rose to 22,025 acres in the current financial year.

In the current plantation season, over 35,000 acres have been brought under sugarcane cultivation, said the Deputy General Manager (DGM-Admin) of the mill.

Sugarcane plantation starts with the advent of winter and the crop becomes ready for harvest in about a year.

Sugarcane cultivation in the district increased by about seven times in three years as farmers are now encouraged due to various positive steps by the mill authorities, he said.

Kaliachapra Sugar Mill in Pakundia upazila was set up in 1969 but declared laid off in 1994 by Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation with an accumulated loss of about Tk 50 crore. It was sold to Nitol Group by the Privatisation Board on March 19, 2000.

The DGM said, the mill authorities distributed stems, fertiliser and insecticides against loan to farmers to increase production. The loan is recoverable by selling sugarcane to the mill.

He said, the yield per acre has increased to 700-900 mounds as farmers now cultivate sugarcane under agriculture experts provided by the mill. The mill purchases the sugarcane at Tk 60 per maund. A farmer can earn Tk 42,000 to 54,000 from one acre by growing sugarcane. They are more interested to cultivate sugarcane as this is more profitable than any other crop, he



Sugarcane being crushed at Kaliachapra Sugar Mill in Kishoreganj.

PHOTO: STAR

said. This year, the mill started production by crushing local sugarcane on January 8, which will continue till February 25.

After the sugarcane is exhausted, the mill will run with 'raw sugar' imported mainly from Thailand, the DGM said.

The mill's command area includes areas in Hossainpur, Pakundia, Kishoreganj Sadar and Karimganj upazilas.

During a recent visit, many farmers said the situation improved after privatisation of the mill. But everything is not fine.

Though they no longer have to

bribe mill's officials, there are still anomalies in sugarcane purchase.

Earlier they had to wait for 2-3 weeks on mill premises with bundles of harvested sugarcane, which caused loss of weight of the product and also money.

Now, there are 24 'weighing bridges' in the mills command area.

Farmer Farid Miah of Dordora village in Pakundia said, he took his sugarcane bundles at Morora 'weighing bridge' at Boratia union. He had to wait five days there to get his sugarcane weighed.

Another farmer Hafiz Uddin of Dholiarchar village in Josodal union in Kishoreganj Sadar said he first

went to the 'weighing bridge' in his area but the mill employees there refused to weigh his sugarcane.

He then took his sugarcane to the mill and sold it there. He is yet to get the money even after two weeks, he alleged.

Many other farmers also complained about hassle in selling the sugarcane to the mill.

When contacted, DGM (Finance) of the mill said some mismanagement could still be there. "We will take proper steps so that no farmer can complain in future", he said.

Chandpur BNP leader arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Acting secretary of Chandpur district BNP and former chairman of Chandpur Poursabha Shafiqur Rahman Bhuiyan was taken into custody by joint forces from Chandpur Club premises Sunday night.

He was handed over to Sadar police on the same night.

Police Superintendent Md Obaidur Rahman said there are allegations of extortion from transports, land grabbing and other crimes against Shafiqur Rahman.

Yesterday, he was produced before court, which sent him to jail hazat under Emergency Powers Act, court sources said.

Khulna Citizens Forum leader threatened for refusing toll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Chairperson of Khulna Citizens Forum freedom fighter Shaikh Abdul Kayyum was threatened allegedly by an extremist Sunday night for refusing to pay toll.

The extremist demanded toll in the name of PBCP Janajuddho faction to raise a fund for treatment of its injured cadres.

Sheikh Abdul Kayyum lodged a general diary with Khulna thana seeking security of life.

Similar threats were received recently by dentist Dr Habibur Rahman and administrative officer of Khulna Shishu Hospital Mokhesur Rahman Babu allegedly from PBCP operatives for toll, police said.

Meanwhile, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested two alleged extortionists Sunday night while receiving toll of Tk 10,000 from Ferdous Ahmed, proprietor of Tripty Enterprise at Natun Bazar under Khulna Sadar police station. They are Mamunur Rashid, 20 and Ali Akbar, 27.



BNP president of Bayajid thana in Chittagong, Abul Hossain (left), was arrested Sunday for making a brick field by cutting hills.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Rampant theft of transformers affects farming in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

IRRI-Boro cultivation is being hampered due to rampant theft of transformers in Tala, Kalaroa and Sadar upazilas.

Dozens of pumps may not get power supply affecting irrigation on 15,000 bighas of land in the three upazilas, officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said.

Police said, criminals took away transformers, installed by the Rural Electrification Board (REB), from at least 59 irrigation pumps in last one month in Sonabaria, Panchnol, Murarikati, Jhhitki, Bamankhali, Khordo and Helatala areas in Kalaroa, Tentulia, Kalapota, Mirzapur, Nagarghata, Islamkati and Jalalpur areas in Tala and Akhrakhola, Tajalpur, Chhoygharia, Satiantala, Baikari, Gangnia, Alipur, Rajnagar and Chupria areas in Sadar upazila.

Farmers are also facing problems to install new transformers following imposition of new pre-condition by the REB, said Saiful Islam, an affected farmer at Jhhitki

village in Kalaroa upazila.

Farmers whose transformers were stolen will have to deposit an amount of Tk 15,000 to 20,000 for each transformer as per new condition set up by the REB, he alleged.

Farmers Abul Kalam of Chupria village, Samsur Rahman of Indra village, Alam Gazi of Jhhitki village and some others said Boro crops on about 15,000 bighas of land will be affected if fields remain out of irrigation.

On contact, Satkhira DAE deputy director Mahi Uddin Ahmed said if the affected farmers failed to reinstall transformers, crops on about 15,000 bighas of land might be affected due to lack of irrigation.

When contacted, Satkhira REB general manager Arif Ahmed said they are thinking ways to supply new transformers to the affected farmers in simple terms and condition.

Assistant superintendent of police (ASP) Delwar Hossain said they are trying to recover the transformers and arrest the culprits.

310 students get RHDC stipend

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Rangamati Hill District Council (RHDC) yesterday awarded stipends to 310 students of class four of 10 primary schools in 10 upazilas here for their brilliant results in the annual examinations last year.

Certificates were also distributed to the meritorious students in two categories, talent pool and general scholarship, at a function held here yesterday, council sources said.

Each of the 54 talent pool scholars got Tk 600 and certificates while each of the 256 general scholars got Tk 400 and certificates, RHDC sources said.

RHDC member Ushalah Roaza chaired the occasion while its chairman Dr Manik Lal Dewan was present as chief guest.

RHDC chief executive officer Golam Hossain made the welcome address. District primary education officer (DPEO) Ajmad Ali was also present.

This year, 3094 students of class four in 10 primary schools of 10 upazilas appeared in the scholarship examination.

RHDC introduced the stipends in 2003.

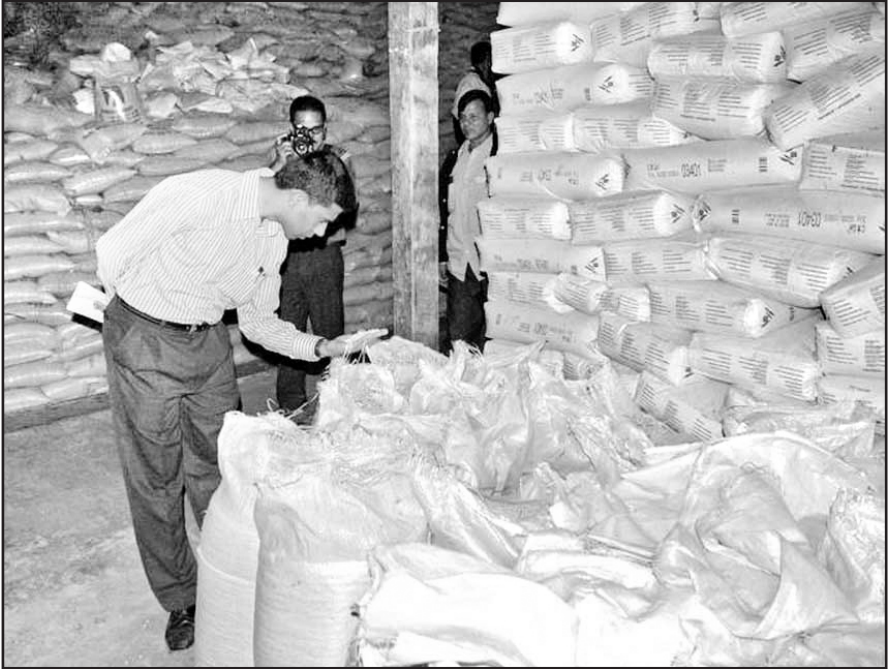


PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Joint forces seized a huge quantity of uneatable food items from Nobojug Godown at Madarbari in Chittagong city (left) and snapped illegal power connections in Barisal city on Sunday.

7X3

10X3

Younger brother of BNP central leader held with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested former vice-president of students council of Chittagong Medical College Rashed-Un-Nabi Biplob and recovered firearms, bullets and explosive materials from his Rangpur resident Sunday night.

Biplob is the younger brother of BNP central committee member Habib-Un-Nabi Khan Sohel.

A Rab team led by Maj. Abdul Bari arrested him from near a hotel in the town at about 8:30 pm and took him to their camp.

During primary interrogation, Biplob admitted that he possessed firearms, bullets and explosives, which he kept hidden at Rangpur BNP office near Grand Hotel, his rented house at Mulatol and his ancestral house at South Guptapara, Rab sources said yesterday.

Acting on his confession, Rab recovered a pipe gun, some parts of a point 303 rifle, 6 machine gun bullets, one bullet of pistol and some explosive materials from his Mulatol house, a bomb from the party office and 26 bullets of shot gun from his other residence.

Two cases were filed with Kotwali thana, one under the Arms Act and the other under the Explosives Act.

Maj Bari said Rashed-Un-Nabi was an alleged criminal and

several arms cases were filed against him with different police stations in Chittagong.

He was also arrested in Chittagong with firearms last year but was freed on an interim bail, Rab sources said.

Female vet student takes life in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Body of a girl student of Sylhet Government Veterinary College was found hanging at her room at the college dormitory yesterday afternoon.

Zinia Tanjim Aurna, a fourth year student, did not attend classes yesterday. Fellow students went to her room (207) at the women's dormitory at about 2 pm and found her body hanging from the ceiling fan.

The authorities informed police, who took the body to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College morgue for autopsy.

The cause of incident could not be ascertained immediately. However, a police official said, it seemed to be a case of suicide.

Zinia was the daughter of Luthfur Rahman of 354/2 Gulbag, Shantinagar, Dhaka.

Her classmates also could not give any clue to the incident.