

Kishoreganj rice bowls to go empty

Sheaves on 24,000 acres of Boro lands in four haor upazilas won't bear grains

MUKLESUR RAHMAN LITON,
Kishoreganj

Green Irri-Boro fields in at least 24,000 acres in four haor upazilas in Kishoreganj district will not yield any paddy in the current season as sheaves do not bear grains. Agriculture Extension Department (AED) sources and farmers said.

Farmers however claimed that the area would be over 30,000 acres.

AED officials said the fields apparently look good and green but sheaves are not bearing grains.

This has caused great worries for agriculture officials and farmers as well as they invested whatever they had in cultivation of rice, the main crop in the areas. Most of the lowlying haors are single crop areas. Irri-Boro harvest is supposed to begin in the district in three to four weeks.

Deputy Director (DD) of Kishoreganj Agriculture Extension Department (AED) MA Baten said, about 24,000 acres of Irri-Boro fields in Itna, Aostagram, Mithamoin and Niklee upazilas in the district would yield no paddy as sheaves are hollow and empty without any grain.

Baten said, this could be because of 'cold injury', which might have been due to 'abnormal variation of temperature during day time and night'. Early planting of seedlings or bad quality seed may be other causes, he claimed.

Three agriculture scientists from Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) at Gazipur comprising Principal Scientific Officer Helal Uddin Ahmed, Dr. Jibon Krishna Biswas and Dr. Bilash Chandra Roy visited haor areas in Niklee upazila last week. Another team including a Chinese seed specialist of a private seed company also visited the areas.

Baten also quoted them as saying that wide variation in temperature between day time and

night might have caused this. But farmers differed. They attributed this debacle to inadequate irrigation due to diesel crisis and use of urea fertiliser far less than required.

Fertiliser and diesel crises during the peak season of Irri-Boro cultivation this year triggered violent protests by farmers in many areas of Kishoreganj like in most districts of the country.

They said paddy cultivation needs adequate irrigation but in most areas the fields remained almost dry when the plants needed water most, they told this correspondent during a visit to different haor areas.

Fertiliser has to be applied three times, but they could not use it timely due to crisis, they alleged.

Asgar Ali of Chhilmari village of Itna upazila said, he stood in the long queue three times in three days for urea but came back home empty handed. When he got it, it was untimely and inadequate, he added.

Principal of Itna College Chowdhury Kamrul Hasan of Thanesor village in Itna also refuted the AED officials' claim.

The area of affected paddy fields would be almost double the AED officials' estimate. He also refuted the officials' claim that the disaster could be because of early transplantation of seedlings.

"Every year farmers in haor areas transplant paddy seedlings at around the same time. Farmers are experienced and they do it timely. A difference of seven to ten days does not matter", he said.

"This year, most of the farmers will be ruined as they had to spend more due to high price of urea", he said.

Around 9,433 hectares were brought under Irri-Boro cultivation in the four haor upazilas this year, Kishoreganj AED officials said.



Boro plants used as fodder in Katakhal haor in Itna Upazila as sheaves bear no grain.

22 clinics, diagnostic centers closed in Jhenidah

A CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Twenty-two clinics and diagnostic centers have been closed in Jhenidah town and in five upazilas since March 5 for operating without valid papers, trained doctors and technicians and proper equipment.

There are 82 clinics and diagnostic centers in the district, of which 53 are registered, according to sources at the Civil Surgeon's office.

Civil Surgeon Ekramul Haq said he leads a team which is visiting every clinic and diagnostic centre in the district.

"We will visit all the clinics and close those operating illegally and are ill equipped", the civil surgeon told this correspondent yesterday.

UP chairman held with arms

RU CORRESPONDENT

Joint forces Tuesday night arrested Rezaul Karim, Hujripara Union Chairman in Paba upazila in Rajshahi district and recovered a firearm from his possession, police said yesterday.

The UP chairman who faces several criminal cases filed with Paba police station was a listed criminal, police said.

Joint forces picked him from the UP office, searched his house and recovered a shotgun from his house.

Cry for safe water in southwestern dists

Procession, rally held in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Several thousand people poured on streets of Satkhira district town yesterday demanding 'access to safe drinking water'.

They paraded the streets carrying banners and chanting slogans for immediate steps to ensure supply of safe water in Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat districts,

the rest are due to lack of dredging, creating crisis of surface water.

They said India's river interlinking project will aggravate the problems and create an environmental disaster in the region.

If the rivers are silted more, salinity will penetrate 80 km inside, aggravating the situation for over 50 lakh people living in coastal areas of Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat districts.

They deplored that successive governments in the last three decades did not take up any pragmatic plan to resolve the problem.

They urged the government to prepare a master plan to ensure safe water in the region by 2015.

BSF abducts one

A CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

A Bangladeshi farmer was abducted by Border Security Force (BSF) of India from Naodapara border in Raurnar upazila of Kurigram district yesterday.

Abducted Shahinur Islam, 27, is son of Sahajalal of Naodapara village.

BSF sources said, BSF personnel abducted the man from near border pillar no 1064 at 7 am.

Shahinur was going to his land to apply fertiliser.

BDR company commander of Bangla Bazar BOP sent a protest letter to BSE.

Campaign to grow Boro!

700 acres under Monu River Irrigation Project fallow for lack of farmer's interest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

About 700 acres of cultivable land in Moulvibazar Sadar and Rajnagar upazilas remain unutilized during Irri-Boro season every year despite good irrigation facilities due to lack of interest of landowners and farmers.

The lands are under the command area of Monu River Irrigation Project run by the Water Development Board (WDB) but the facility is not being utilised, WDB officials said.

About 1000 tonnes of paddy could be produced only during the Irri-Boro season if those lands were utilised, they said. Objective of the irrigation project is not realised as the lands remain fallow during Irri-Boro season, they said.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Moulvibazar said, from the beginning of implementation of the project, landowners in the area showed poor response to cultivate Boro paddy.

Local people cultivate Aus or Aman and, the lands remain fallow until the next season.

The DAE officials said they have been campaigning to motivate the farmers to grow Boro by using the project water. This has yielded some result, but at least 700 acres lands in Ekutia, Chadnighat and Akhali-Kura unions under Sadar upazila and Tengra, Rajnagar and Monsurnagar unions under

said.

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