

# Khulna jute workers boycott work protesting 'unjust' pay

## Top BJMC official paints gloomy picture of 8 mills

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Production in sacking sections of four state-run jute mills in Khulna is suspended since Thursday as workers stayed away from work in protest against payment of Tk 80 instead of Tk 160 as daily wage.

The mills are Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills, Crescent Jute Mills, Star Jute Mills and Peoples Jute Mills.

Lay-off of the four jute mills was withdrawn early this month and sacking sections were reopened.

Workers alleged that the mill authorities gave them weekly wage slips at the rate of Tk 80 instead of Tk 160 per day, allegedly violating service rules. They refused to accept the wages slips,

blaming the mill's general manager for creating deadlock again after partial withdrawal of the lay-off.

The mill was laid off on April 19 along with three others in the face of agitation by workers in demand of payment of arrear wages.

The four-day violent agitation left one worker dead and over 100 injured in clashes with police.

The lay-off was partially withdrawn on May 28 and production only in sacking section was resumed. A total of 479 workers joined work on 'no work no pay basis.

CBA leaders said the less payment was a new ploy to sack workers on any pretext.

Talking to this correspondent

yesterday, BJMC Zonal Coordinator Shamim Ahmed said he sees 'no future of the state-run jute mills in Khulna-Jessore industrial belt'.

"I do not want to bluff workers to increase their displeasure any more. Because, there is no indication about further allocation of funds to run the eight state-owned jute mills properly to restore them as profitable concerns", Shamim said.

The future of jute mills in Khulna-Jessore industrial belt is uncertain as BJMC can not shoulder the huge bank liabilities of over Tk 500 crore, he said.

"No mill has ability to repay the huge bank loan and pay arrear

wages of workers. No one now wants to supply raw materials on credit as their outstanding bills are yet to be paid even partly due to fund crisis", said Shamim, also general manager of Crescent Jute Mills.

He said workers are reluctant to work in the sacking section of the four laid off jute mills without payment of arrear wages and lay-off benefits.

"Besides, we are not in a position even to pay their daily wages in full for working in the sacking section", he said.

Shamim said the BJMC chairman is likely to take up jute mills issue with the Chief Adviser of caretaker government to devise ways to resolve the crisis.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Existence of C&B Ghat, the lone river port in Faridpur, is threatened due to erosion by the Padma.

# Born under political clout they now suffer from bad health

## 34 schools under Sylhet Board to face action for poor SSC results

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Sylhet Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) has served show cause notices on 34 high schools in Sylhet division because of poor results in this year's SSC examination.

On getting replies, the authority will decide about action against the schools. The notices given on Saturday have to be replied within a week, Board sources said.

The Board is also contemplating sending proposals to the ministry for cancellation of affiliation of three schools, from which none passed the SSC examination. One of the three is Bara Chatul High School in Kanaighat from where three examinees appeared.

The rest two are Maiggram High School in Barlekha in Moulvibazar and Ekota High school of Chhatak upazila in Sunamganj which had only seven examinees.

All the 34 schools will face punishment, the sources said.

The 34 institutions include 11 in Sylhet, 11 in Sunamganj, 8 in Moulvibazar and 4 in Habiganj.

The 31 institutions had below 20 pass percentage.

These include Saptogram High School in Beanibazar upazila; Farhana Hossain High School, Paton Abdullahpur High School and Salam-Mokbul High School in Golapganj; Sajjad Majumder High School and Zakiganj Girls High School in Zakiganj; Rasulpur High School and CMP Academy and Sadrunnesa High School in Balaganj and Ganinagar High School in Sylhet Sadar upazila; Dhol High School and Tarol High School in Derai; Mahmud Nagar High School and Hafiz Ali High School in Shulla; Haji Abdul Khaliq High School, Jalalabad High School, Haji Jamal Uddin High School and Ganipur High School in Chhatak; Abdus Subhan High School and Paigaoon TM High School in Jagannathpur upazila of

Sunamganj.

In Moulvibazar district, the schools facing punishment are Shantikul High School and Kadomhata High School in Rajnagar upazila; Ragna- Batuli High School and Rajnagar High School in Kulaura; Kechhrigul High School in Barlekha; Abdul Mosobbir Academy in KAmolganj and Raipur High School in the Sadar upazila.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib High School, Ekdala High School and SNP High School in Nabiganj upazila and JDN High School in Baniachang upazila may also face the same fate due to poor results.

The sources said schools in remote rural areas suffer from infrastructure problems, absence of qualified teachers. Most such schools have 'almost inactive' managing committees.

Though the schools do not have the minimum number of teachers they managed affiliation by using political influence, the

sources claimed.

Baro Chatul high school in Kanaighat got approval in 2005. Only three students appeared at SSC examination from it for the first time this year and all failed.

Only one teacher of the school was on the MPO (government monthly pay order) list but he was dropped later on a complaint, the sources said. It has five other teachers, but they are not on the MPO list.

The sources said allegations have it that a good number of schools got affiliation for opening secondary section in a very short time without proper investigation.

"We will take some other measures in addition to action for bad results", an official of Sylhet Board told this correspondent.

"We have asked the schools to submit results of annual examinations to see what really is taking place there", the official added.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers and traders with boatloads of pineapple and other fruits from distant hills at a market in Tangamati town.

# Growers happy as fruits in Rangamati still pricey

## Bumper yield of pineapple, jackfruit, litchi and mango this year

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Pineapple and other seasonal fruits are plenty in local markets of Rangamati district but their prices are still high.

Farmers are very happy with the bumper yield and 'good' prices this year. Pineapples, jackfruits and mangoes started arriving in markets since mid-May and it will continue till mid-July.

A pair of big size pineapple is sold at Tk 12 to 15. Indigenous varieties of mango are available at Tk 25 to Tk 30 a kilogram and an average size jackfruit is sold at around Tk 25. Traders from different areas of the country and local retail buyers said the prices are high.

Prices of pineapples and jackfruit were reasonably higher last year also due to less production due to drought. Prices are yet to come down this year.

While this correspondent talking to some consumers, they said that the prices of seasonal fruits are high due to excess marketing of these fruits by the middlemen outside the district this year.

Growers coming from different areas told this correspondent that they are getting good prices of fruits this year.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said the yield this year would be nearly double that of last year in the hills due to adequate rainfall and favourable weather.

Over 1700 hectares of land were brought under pineapples cultivation this year, which is slightly higher than last year, DAE officials said.

At least 51,3,50 tonnes of pineapple have been produced against last year's 25,6,48 tonnes, they said. The output per hectare this year was 16.42 tonnes whereas it was 15.5 tonnes last year.

They said around 7,6,000 tonnes of jackfruit were produced in gardens covering 3,037 hectares against 7, 3,000 tonnes last year.

Production of mangos and litchis is also almost double that of last year, DAE sources said.

Two varieties of pineapple-- Jalpuri and Honey Queen--are mainly grown in Chittagong Hill

Tracts as they are popular among consumers.

"I got only Tk 12,000 by cultivating pineapples on four acres of land last year. I have already earned Tk 12,000 and expect more Tk 10,000 this year", said Durbachchamoni Chakma of Alutilla village, three kilometers from the district town.

Subashya Chaka of Noadam village said, "I got only Tk 7000 from five acres last year due to drought. This year, hope I will get about Tk 20,000. I have sold 2000 pineapples and jackfruits for Tk 10,000".

The soil and climate of CHT are suitable for cultivation of seasonal fruits like pineapple, jackfruit, litchi and mango but that needs motivation and government support.

More farmers are now inspired to raise orchards as it is more profitable than Jhum cultivation, farmers said.

Commercial cultivation of fruits started in the hills about a decade ago, DAE sources said.

# Harijan children meet Kushtia DC

## OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Leaders of Harijon Shishu Forum, a newly formed body of Harijon children, met Kushtia Deputy Commissioner (DC) Nurul Islam yesterday for equal right to education and jobs.

The team was led by its president Aduri Rani, 13.

They discussed discrimination in admission to schools. The DC gave them a patient hearing and assured them of steps to ensure equal right to education, sources said.

People of Harijon community, a low cast Hindu community, are socially deprived of various rights though the Constitution ensures equal rights to all.

Besides, those who get education do not get appropriate jobs because of social prejudices and discrimination, according to people of the community.

# BSF abducts one in Chuadanga

## OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday abducted a Bangladeshi farmer when he was working on his field near Thakurpur border in Damurhuda upazila in Chuadanga.

Deputy Commander of 35 Rifle Battalion Maj Matin BDR said BSF personnel from Ranglarpota camp in Murshidabad entered Bangladesh territory at about noon and picked up Jambu, 25, son of Liakat Ali of Karpudanga village on gun point when he was working on his field near border pillar no. 89.

BDR sent a protest letter but BSF did not respond to it till about 5:30pm.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Though banned, locally assembled three-wheelers called Nasimon ply busy highways in Jamalpur district, often causing accident and claiming lives.

# Step to stop smuggling of hilsha from Khulna

## STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Joint forces have imposed restriction on bringing hilsha fish to wholesale markets (arats) at Rupsha in a bid to check smuggling of the fish, sources said yesterday.

The action has been taken to stop smuggling of hilsha out of the country by some dishonest traders through unauthorised routes in south-western region, they said.

The unauthorised wholesale markets in Rupsha fish market at Natun Bazar in Khulna city are being run by Khulna City Corporation.

Joint forces got allegations from

some genuine fish traders that trawlers laden with hilsha are being forced to land at Rupsha fish market by dishonest traders instead of unloading those at Skid Ghat.

Officials of joint forces met the Chief Executive Officer of Khulna City Corporation at his office last week to know why unauthorised wholesale markets at Rupsha fish market are being run.

The KCC CEO however blamed a group of influential political leaders in the area for running those unauthorised wholesale markets. He could not show any document in support of running the markets, the sources

said.

Other sources said that illegal toll was collected from traders in the unauthorised markets.

A team from detective branch of Khulna Metropolitan Police has been assigned to monitor whether the restriction is carried out or not, sources said.

Hilsha fish is being sold at Tk 450 a kg in Khulna although there is plenty supply of supply the fish for about a month. The price increased due to smuggling, some genuine traders said.

# 3 children drown in Pabna

## OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Three children drowned in ponds in two separate incidents in Shujanagar and Pabna Sadar upazilas on Saturday.

Saikat, 7, and his cousin Naim, 6, were playing football near their house at Manikdir village in Shujanagar upazila in the afternoon. At one stage their football fell down a pond. When they went to collect the ball, both of them drowned as they did not know how to swim.

Another 3-year-old child, Touhid, son of Rafiqul Islam of Atua village in Pabna Sadar upazila drowned in another pond near to his residence.



PHOTO: STAR

A colourful procession was brought out in Khagrachhari town yesterday marking inauguration of a tree plantation week, organised by the divisional forest office.