

FERTILISER CRISIS

Tea production may fall short of target

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Tea production is likely to fall short of target this year due to fertiliser crisis in peak farming season, tea sector officials apprehended.

They said the production cost of the export item might go up due to withdrawal of subsidy in fertiliser price.

Tea crop needs much more urea than other chemical fertiliser, a scientist said.

Urea is a must for upper canopy of tea plants. Normally, fertiliser should be applied to foot of tea plants twice a year, once in April-May and again in July-August.

The tea gardens need about 15,000 tons of fertiliser a year. As in normal practice, the Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) supplies fertiliser through Bangladesh Tea Board according to demand of tea gardens.

Sources informed, at first fertiliser is supplied in the first half of May and then in the first half of July every year. This year

the total supply of fertiliser stands at over 5,000 tonnes, said an official in Tea Board.

A top scientist of the Bangladesh Tea Research Institute (BTRI), requesting anonymity said, a good number of tea gardens could not apply fertiliser on time as they had no buffer stock of it at the beginning of the season this year.

Delayed supply of fertiliser was the reason behind this. Besides, it takes sometime for allotment and transportation by the garden authorities. A few tea garden authorities feel if fertiliser supply is not made within two weeks for second term, the production will be hampered badly this year. It will happen because of delayed application of fertiliser, they said.

During this year's first allotment, fertiliser price was Tk 4800 per tonne but it went up to Tk 9,000 during second allotment, said an official in the Tea Board.

When contacted, manager of Sombhag tea garden in Barlekha upazila Md Shahjahan Akand said, the second applica-

tion of fertiliser is very important for the crop. If tea planters fail to use fertiliser within a week or two, they might incur a big loss.

Besides, there had been excessive rains for the last few weeks. Tea plants did not get necessary sunlight resulting in harm to photosynthesis.

On the other hand, there had been fall in temperature also, keeping a bad effect on the crop, added Shahjahan, also chairman of the Juri circle of Bangladesh Tea Association. Failure in application of fertiliser for second time during July-August might cause outbreak of diseases and pest attack on tea plants, the senior official have apprehended.

Noman Haider Chowdhury, general manager (GM) of Khadim Tea Estate here said, tea is considered to be a very sensitive crop which needs both rainfall and sunshine.

Noman, also Circle chairman of Bangladesh Tea Association, North Sylhet valley, said, the gardens in North Sylhet region lacks behind production by 20 per cent last year. We suffered at

the beginning of the season as there had been delayed rains in March-April. Still, we are suffering from excessive rains coupled with fertiliser crisis, Chowdhury said.

Tea production might fall short of target this year, he apprehended. 'We could not apply urea on time at the very beginning of cultivation in March-April while the time of its second application is also passing fast. Supply of Urea should be ensured within a week, otherwise, he said we shall have to suffer much. This is because of excessive rainfall during the last few weeks. It will be a tough task to achieve the national target this year, Chowdhury apprehended.

Tea is an important cash crop and one of the largest agrobased industries in the country. There are 164 tea estates including four small holdings having a total production of about 55 to 60 million KGs. Roughly two-third of tea is consumed at home, while the rest is exported abroad from which Bangladesh earns huge foreign exchange.

Manikchhari BNP leader's property attached

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

All Immobile properties of Manikchhari upazila BNP Secretary Anamul Hoq Anam has attached today (Monday) by Manikchhari thana police.

Police sources said, according to the cognigence court order given by first class magistrate Ahmad Kabir police attached his all immobile properties. Court served this order to Manikchhari thana police as Anam was hiding long time to avoid arrest.

Sub-Inspector Golum Kibria and Sanjit Das were present during the attachment of Anam properties.

Officer Incharge (OC) of Manikchhari thana Motier Rahman said Manikchhari upazila BNP Secretary Anam was accused in 5 cases and hiding long time to avoid arrest. Everything done as per order given by court, he said.

Four shops gutted in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Four shops were gutted in a big fire in a city market here on Sunday midnight.

Fire service sources and neighbours said the fire was originated from a wholesale shoe store named Selim brothers where welding work was going on at about 11 pm. Soon the fire engulfed the adjacent shops which were locked at that time.

On information, fire fighters reached the market but they could not start fighting fire for some time due to water crisis.

However, they collected water from a nearby Qudrot Ullah Mosque. The fire was brought under control after fighting for about an hour.

The cause of fire is yet to be ascertained.

The loss was estimated at about Tk 20 lakh.

Army medical team visits flood-hit areas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A medical team of the army visited the flood-affected areas of the district on Sunday and treated the flood victims.

The medical team led by Colonel Dr Abdur Rab visited the flood-affected Badiakhali, Udakhali, Fulchhari, Singria, Gozaira Zigaradanga, Erendabari, Paglarchar, Kalasonarchar areas. The members of the team attended about 5,000 patients and gave them medicine free of cost.

Freedom fighter passes away

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A freedom fighter passed away here Sunday night.

Freedom Fighter Israil Hossain Meser of Chak-Pailanpur area in Pabna town, died of cardiac arrest at about 10 pm.

His Namaj-e-Janaza was held at Chak-Pailanpur Mosque at about 11 am yesterday. Freedom fighters and people from all walks of life attended the janaza.

Later, he was buried with state honour.

Pabna district unit command of Muktiyoddha Sangsad, in a message, condoled the death.

FLOOD IN DISTRICTS



(Top-down) Boats have replaced bikes and vehicles on the streets of the flooded Sirajganj town; a flood-hit woman takes shelter in a school in Sherpur upazila of Bogra; a submerged hut at Nizampur village in Kalapara of Patuakhali and a collapsed bridge at Balupara of Saltha upazila in Faridpur.

AL leader held in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Police yesterday morning arrested an Awami League (AL) leader from Pirganj Press Club where he was observing a hunger strike demanding release of party chief Sheikh Hasina, police said.

Pirganj Police Station officer-in-charge Mokbul Hossain said, Panchgachhi union AL president Nazimuddin was arrested at about 11:00 am for violating emergency rules.

Police also seized a banner during his arrest.

Najimuddin was sent to Rangpur jail in the afternoon after producing him before a court here.

2-day training course for agri-officials ends

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A two-day training course for sub-assistant agriculture officers (SAOs) ended here yesterday.

About 100 participants attended the training course organised by Khagrachhari District Agriculture Office.

District Agriculture Office director (training) Mohammad Monirul Alam presided the concluding session while District Agriculture Office deputy director (DD) TM Monjurul Islam was present as chief guest.

Training was conducted on plantation of saplings and care, tree conservation, gardening including fruits processing, official sources said.

Among others, agriculture officers Mizanur Rahman, Pranab Barua, Uday Mutsuddi, Babotosh Sarker were present at the concluding session.



PHOTO: STAR

Commuters and pedestrians suffer due to heavy mud and frequent potholes on the Patuakhali Baufal road.

Roads in bad shape in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

About 75 kilometre roads have been badly damaged in the entire district in this ongoing rainy season, sources in the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) said.

The roads connecting four upazilas have become unfit for use resulting in sufferings to 10 lakh people, they said.

There are about 150 kilometre connecting roads in the four upazilas, they said.

The badly damaged roads are Kalapara-Kuakata road, Galachipa-Sakharia road, Patuakhali-Galachipa road,

Galachipa-Amragachia road, Patuakhali-Dumki road, Patuakhali-Baufal road and Patuakhali-Dashmina road, they said.

The break-up is 10 KM out of 22 KM Kalapara-Kuakata road, 10 KM of 17 KM Galachipa-Sakharia, a section of Patuakhali-Galachipa road, 5 KM out of 10 KM Galachipa-Amragachia road, 5 KM out of 15 KM Patuakhali-Dumki road, 20 KM out of 39 KM Patuakhali-Baufal road and 25 KM out of 47 KM Patuakhali-Dashmina road.

Many ditches and potholes were developed on the roads.

'We are facing loss in the Hilsa season as trucks are not moving smoothly on the roads', Niami Chandra, secretary of Mohipur Fishing Trawler Owners' Association said.

Passengers especially patients suffer a lot due to bad condition of roads.

The RHD repaired the roads in 2005, official sources said.

On contact, RHD executive engineer Abdus Salam said, 'We have already sent letters to the higher authorities for allocation of fund on emergency basis to repair the damaged roads'.

20 abductors get life in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A court here in a verdict pronounced yesterday sentenced 20 people to life-term rigorous imprisonment (RI) in an abduction case.

The convicts are Mosharraf Hossain, Ruhul Amin, Tara Miah, Shabuddin, Sirajul Islam, Abdur Razzaq, Rajab Ali, Hasan Ali, Dulal, Liakat Ali, Hossain Ali Fakir, Abdus Salam, Shahidul Islam, Ashraf Ali, Abdul, Abdul Khalque, Khaim Uddin, Kalu Munshi, Abdul Barek and Abdul hamid. Among the convicts, Mosharraf Hossain, Ruhul Amin, Tara Miah, Shabuddin, Sirajul Islam and Abdur Razzaq are absconding.

The case, in brief, is that the convicts entered the house of Chand Mian of Anantapur village in Phulbaria upazila on May 18, 1999. They abducted Moniruzzaman Monir, baby son of Chand Miah and Kalpana Akhtar, daughter of the elder brother of Chand Miah and demanded Tk 1 lakh as ransom.

Later, Chand Miah filed an abduction case with Phulbaria Police Station on May 19. Police rescued the abduc-

ted children on May 21.

After investigation, the investigation officer of the case pressed charges against 21 people. Sufia Khatun, one of them was acquitted of the charge.

Women and Child Repression Prevention Tribunal Judge Norendra Chandra Das handed down the judgement.

Arms found in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

An army petrol team yesterday recovered two arms from criminals' den at Gangrabill under Mohalchhari upazila in Khagrachhari.

Acting on a tip-off, an army petrol team from Sindukchhari zone raided a criminals' den at Gangrabill area and recovered 2 foreign-made arms.

Sensing trouble criminals fled to the deep forest, sources said.

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