

Awareness, protests cut tobacco cultivation in southwestern districts

Farmers say it destroys soil fertility

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Tobacco cultivation in seven southwestern districts which got a big boost several years ago is declining due to awareness about its harmful effect on soil and health following protests and campaign and also because of farmers' need to grow more food.

Farmers now say its cultivation decreases fertility and deposits harmful ingredients in soil.

According to sources in the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and officials of now defunct Tobacco Development Board (TDB), tobacco cultivation declined to 14,000 hectares in the areas in the current season from last year's 17,000 hectares.

The highest production was recorded in 2005 when tobacco cultivation covered about 22,435 hectares. It was 20,222 hectares in 2004 and 17,000 hectares in 2003.

Sources in its cultivation said the declining trend may continue in the next season as pressure for growing more food will persist.

The seven districts known for tobacco cultivation are Kushtia, Meherpur, Jhenidah, Chuadanga, Magura, Jessore and Rajbari.

Tobacco cultivation increased in the country mainly at the behest of cigarette and bidi companies. Its main buyers were 17 companies including multinational British American Tobacco (BAT).

The companies together fixed a production target at 40,000 tonnes in the current season in the seven districts against 38,000 tonnes last year, according to sources in the companies.

Only BAT gave loans and other assistance to farmers to cultivate tobacco on 2,47 hectares, up from 1,200 hectares in 2007.



People in Kushtia town holding a rally demanding stoppage of tobacco cultivation.

last year's 7,000 hectares.

There are also at least 70 different types of tobacco processing factories in the districts—3 in Jhenidah, 2 in Magura, 4 in Jessore, 2 in Bagerhat, 10 in Chuadanga, 3 in Meherpur and the rest 46 are in Kushtia.

The processing companies supply tobacco to cigarette and bidi companies after processing raw tobacco.

According to sources, Bidi and cigarette companies have been using various 'unhealthy' techniques to lure farmers into tobacco farming for long. They provide interest-free loans, seeds, fertilizers, technical support and buy back

facilities to farmers.

These companies have a large number of field workers to do the job. They lure farmers into tobacco cultivation, and get 'tips' from companies for 'good performance'.

The companies give loans up to 15,000 against one bigha (30 decimal) of land, with buy-back assurance.

The companies supply fertilizers, which they get from the Ministry of Food and Agricultural under an 'institutional quota', sources claimed.

This correspondent talked to several farmers in Meherpur, Kushtia and Chuadanga during a

recent visit. They admitted getting loans and other facilities from companies but declined to be named, saying their names will be dropped from the list of companies.

They said they are no more interested to cultivate tobacco as land fertility declines due to use of Ammonium Sulphate.

"No crops gives good yield after tobacco is grown in a field for two-three years," said a farmer in Gangni in Meherpur.

Officials of some cigarette companies however claimed that they give more emphasis on export than local consumption of tobacco products.

Khulna mayor, chief engr face another extortion case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Detained KCC mayor Sheikh Tayebur Rahman and chief engineer Liakat Ali Sharif have been sued in another extortion case.

This is the tenth extortion case against the mayor since November 2 last year and second against the chief engineer since April 6 this year.

Jahangir Hossain of Jughati village under Rupsha upazila of Khulna district filed the extortion case against the mayor and the chief engineer with Khulna Sadar Police Station on Tuesday. Eight others were also made accused in the case.

The complainant said in the FIR that the accused took Tk one crore and 46 lakh from him in the name of allotting shops in favour of fish traders of Natun Bazaar wholesale fish market.

The eight others accused in this case are Revenue Officer Tasduzzaman and Assistant Accounts officer Abdul Ahad of Khulna City Corporation, Ruhul Amin, Alamgir Khan, Haider Ali, Iddris Ali, Saiful Islam Bhuiyan and Nasiruddin Howlader.

MULADULI CSD SCAM Case against 4 food officials sent to ACC

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The case against four food officials and a labour leader for misappropriating 158 tonnes of rice from government-run Muladuli CSD (central supply depot) godown in Ishwardi upazila has been handed over to the Anti-Corruption Commission.

"We received the case documents from police on Tuesday. We will start investigating the case if the ACC head officer gives permission," Md Abdul Goffar, deputy director of ACC, Pabna, told this correspondent over phone yesterday.

After an official inquiry revealed misappropriation of 158 tonnes of rice worth about Tk 35 lakh from government CSD godown in Muladuli of Ishwardi upazila, deputy controller of food on March 13 filed a case with Ishwardi Police Station.

The four officials — Muladuli CSD godown manager Md Sirajul Islam, godown in-charge Rafikul Islam, block supervisor Mofizul Haque Khan Mojlish, sub inspector of food department Sayed Halim Kabir — were arrested on March 16. Labour union secretary Md Akhter Hossain is absconding.

RU PROF TAHER MURDER PWs complete deposition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi Speedy Trial Tribunal yesterday concluded the recording of prosecution witnesses' deposition in the case for killing Rajshahi University professor Dr Sheikh Taher Ahmed.

Judge ATM Mesbaudoula fixed April 15 for examining the accused under Section 342.

The trial of the case started on June 18 last year against six persons including RU teacher Dr Mia Mohammad Mohiuddin, and former RU unit of Islami Chhatra Shibir President Mahbubul Alam Salehi.

Other accused are — Jahangir, his brother Salam and brother-in-law Nazmul who made judicial confessions and Azimuddin Munshi.

Dr Taher, a senior professor of geology and mining department of RU, was killed on February 1 in 2006 and his body was recovered from a sewer behind his campus residence three days later.



Residents of Dariapara in Sylhet city stand with lighted candles on the dark street Tuesday night in protest against power outage for several days.

Bumper Boro yield likely despite BLB attacks in some areas Agri adviser says in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Despite Bacterial Leaf Blight (BLB) infection in fields some areas in the country, Boro production will exceed the target this year, agriculture adviser Dr. CS Karim said here yesterday.

The bacterial disease will not affect production much as affected fields are recovering in some areas after use of medicine, he said.

District Agriculture Extension Department (AED) sources said, about 731 hectares have so far been affected with BLB disease while the total area under Boro cultivation in Satkhira is about 73,470 hectares. The production target 2,85,109 tonnes may exceed in Satkhira as cultivation exceeded by 55,140 hectares, DAE sources said.

AED officials said they have taken remedial measures and this is working. Dr Karim visited fields in different areas of the district and held a meeting at Satkhira deputy commissioner (DC)'s conference room.

Arms recovered from shrimp farm

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered two firearms and five bullets from a shrimp enclosure at Chunkuri village in Shyamnagar upazila yesterday.

Tipped-off, Rab personnel led by Maj. Suman raided the shrimp enclosure 'forcibly occupied' by Khora Bakkar of Sultanpur in the town last year. Rab recovered a pistol, a gun and the bullets but Khora Bakkar managed to escape.

Shyamnagar thana officer-in-charge Abdur Razzak said a case was filed against him and they are trying to nab him.

Britain proud of Bangladeshis

British secy says in Sylhet

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

British Home Secretary Jaqui Smith yesterday said British citizens of Bangladesh origin had been playing a laudable role in British society for long.

"We are proud of their contribution in our economy, industry and other sectors", she said while addressing the local elite at Sylhet Circuit House.

Sylhet is a little more important to the UK as about 97 percent of the Bangladesh origin people there are from this region, she said.

British high Commissioner to Bangladesh Anwar Chowdhury and some other officials of British embassy in Dhaka accompanied her when she flew in here in a helicopter in the morning.

Replying to a question, she said, "We will talk to Bangladesh officials on how working relations can be made more effective and workable on issues like facing the terrorism, safe migration and human rights".

She also launched a campaign against forced marriage on Circuit house premises.

Later, the British secretary flew to Bahubal in Habiganj district and laid foundation of a model police station.

Legal Notice

In the Supreme Court of Bangladesh
High Court Division
(Statutory Original Jurisdiction)
Company Matter No. 68 of 2008

IN THE MATTER OF:

Muhammad Hossain, son of Late Hazi Abdus Sattar of 86/1, New Eskaton Road, Dhaka and others

PETITIONERS

VERSUS
Tejgaon Re-Rolling Company Limited, Zahura Mansion, 28, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka, at present 181-182, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka and others

RESPONDENTS

Notice is given to all concerned that an application under Section 43 of the Companies Act, 1994 was filed by the petitioners on 24.03.2008 before the Hon'ble High Court Division of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh for rectification of share Register of Tejgaon Re-Rolling Company Limited, Zahura Mansion, 28, Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Dhaka, at present 181-182, Tejgaon Industrial Area, Dhaka (respondent No. 1). That Mr Justice Syed Refaat Ahmed of the said Hon'ble Court was pleased to admit the said matter and fix 05-05-2008 for hearing of the same. Any person interested in the said application may appear on the date fixed for hearing either personally or through authorised advocate. Copy of the said application may be obtained from the undersigned on payment of prescribed charge.

Kamal-ul-Alam
Barrister-at-Law
Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh
Room No. 325 (2nd Floor)
Supreme Court Bar Association Building
Dhaka-1000

C-1079

APPLICATION INVITED FOR "SAARC AWARD-2007"

SAARC invites applications in English from individuals and organisations from the Member States for the SAARC Award-2007. The aim of the Award is to honour individual citizens and organisation of South Asia for their exemplary work to promote peace, understanding, friendship and development in the region.

Objectives

- To encourage individuals and organisations based in South Asia to undertake programmes and activities complementing and supplementing the efforts of SAARC;
- To honour outstanding contributions and achievements of individuals and organisations of the region in the fields of peace, development, social service, poverty alleviation, environment protection, cultural progress and in other agreed areas of regional cooperation; and
- To recognize any other outstanding achievements, not covered above, of individuals and organisations in the region whose work or contribution has benefited or inspired the region.

Description of the Award

The Award consist of a citation, a gold medal and cash prize of US\$ 25000 (twenty-five thousand US dollar).

Terms and Conditions

- Nominations must be made on the prescribed Nomination Form available on the SAARC Web Site www.saarc-sec.org with link SAARC Award-2007 and be supported by the required documents.
- Nominations must be made in accordance with the terms and conditions as contained in the Web Site. Forwarding letters will not be necessary.

Last date

The last date for receipt of nomination at the SAARC Secretariat, Kathmandu, Nepal is 15 May 2008. The nominations may be sent to the following address:

SAARC AWARD-2007
SAARC Secretariat
P.O. Box 4222
Tridevi Sadak, Thamel
Kathmandu, NEPAL
GD-1661

SAARC Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Dhaka

Seven held for illegal sale of OMS rice

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) on Tuesday and yesterday arrested three dealers and four others for black-marketing rice meant for OMS.

Police arrested Shah Kalam, an OMS rice dealer at Annada Bazaar centre under Fulchhari upazila on charge of selling rice in black market yesterday, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

Shah Kalam was allocated 1020 kg rice for sale under OMS.

Following a case filed by upazila food officer, Fulchhari police arrested Shah Kalam.

Our Brahmanbaria correspondent adds: Police arrested three persons with 50 kg OMS rice at Farooki Market under Brahmanbaria pourasabha on Tuesday.

The arrestees are OMS dealer Mojibur Rahman, his assistant Kawsar Mia, and rice shopkeeper AbdulAwal.

As Brahmanbaria deputy commissioner Md Abdul Hye watched a person carrying a sack of OMS rice

from a dealer's house to a shop, he ordered police to arrest him, police said.

Following his confession, police arrested Mojibur Rahman and AbdulAwal.

Kawsar Mia confessed that OMS dealer Mojibur Rahman sent him to sell the OMS rice at AbdulAwal's shop, Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Kamal Uddin said.

Our Barisal Correspondent reports: Rab on Tuesday arrested a dealer and his two accomplices for black marketing rice meant for OMS.

Acting on a tip, Rab members searched the stock of OMS dealer Kabir Hossain, who is also a local BNP leader, and found a shortage of three sacks in his stock at Bhatar Khal in the city, Rab said.

As Kabir confessed to his selling OMS rice in black market with assistance of Siraj Mia and Jasim, Rab arrested them too.

The three arrestees were handed over to police after lodging a case on Tuesday afternoon.

8 human chains formed in Rangpur for university

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Human chains were formed at eight upazila headquarters and at Rangpur town simultaneously yesterday demanding immediate implementation of the government declaration for setting up a full fledged university in Rangpur.

People of all classes spontaneously joined the human chains organized by the Biswa Biddalaya Bastobayon Samonnoy Porishid (BBSP), a newly formed non-political body to press the demand.

They also urged the government to take steps to start academic activities at the proposed university from this year.

The human chains were formed in front of Press Club in Rangpur town and at upazila headquarters of Kaunia, Pirgachha, Gangachara, Mithapukur, Pirgonj, Badargonj and Taragonj.

Convener of BBSP former principal of Carmichael College Prof



The human chain in front of Rangpur Press Club formed yesterday as part of a district-wide programme for Rangpur university.

Dr. Rezaul Haque led the programme in the district town. Chief Advisor Dr. Faequddin Ahmed on February 2 declared that a full fledged university would be set up at Rangpur.

Dr. Rezaul Haque later told

newsmen that the government should make allocation in the upcoming budget to start work immediately to keep its commitment and fulfill a long cherished desire of people in northern districts.