

Tobacco cultivation expands in CHT

It reduces soil fertility, damages environment, replaces other crops: Occupied 2626 hectares of plain land last year against 2000 hectares in FY 2004-5.

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Commercial cultivation of tobacco is increasing in the three hill districts despite protests by environmentalists, damaging the environment, reducing soil fertility and occupying more and plain lands earlier used for growing rice and other crops.

Besides, at least 30 to 40 thousand tonnes of firewood are burnt in about 2000 tobacco processing kilns (chulli) a year, depleting natural forests, environmentalists said.

Over 2626 hectares of land were brought under tobacco cultivation in the three districts last year against 2000 hectares in 2004-2005 financial year, sources in Agriculture Extension Department (AED) said. The area will increase in the coming season, they said.

Last year's break-up areas under tobacco cultivation was 2312 hectares in Bandarban, 209 in Khagrachhari and 105 in Rangamati. Unofficial estimate will be much more, other sources said.

Last year, total production was 5758 tonnes worth about Tk 100 crore, of which 5440 tonnes were produced in Bandarban, 209 in Khagrachhari and 109 in Rangamati. Market price of a kilogram of tobacco is Tk 150 to Tk 200.

Two varieties --virginia and local variety are cultivated in CHT, AED sources said. Its cultivation starts in November.

"We are discouraging farmers not to cultivate tobacco as it seriously affects soil fertility and environment," an official in Rangamati AED told this correspondent seeking anonymity.

Tobacco needs more fertiliser than other crops. At least 150 kilograms of fertilisers is applied per hectare and in addition, high-power pesticides like Diconal and DDT powder are used in tobacco farms, threatening public health and environment, he said.

Tobacco is normally cultivated on low-lying plain lands areas, occupying lands suitable for other crops.

The sources said farmers are now virtually captive to tobacco companies who supply all inputs either in cash or in kind and buys the product. Some 7,000 farmers are involved in tobacco farming in CHT, AED sources said.

Staffs of tobacco companies visit from door to door and woo farmers, assuring all support and buy back facility, some farmers told this correspondent.

Each farmer gets assistance worth Tk 7000 for 40 decimals lands to cultivate tobacco, an official of a tobacco company said.

Contacted, Dewan Aminul Islam Nasim, assistant leaf officer of British American Tobacco in Khagrachhari said tobacco is a cash crop for farmers and its cultivation is not banned. Besides, BAT, there are six other companies involved with tobacco farmers.

Pradip Chowdhury, convenor of Khagrachhari Paribesh Suraksha Andolan, said we are trying to motivate farmers against tobacco cultivation. He said huge quantities of vegetables were produced in Dighinala and Mohalchhari ten years ago. Now tobacco has occupied a substantial portion of the lands.

Md. Abu Daud, member of Bangladesh Paribesh Ainjibi Samity in Khagrachhari said green forests are shrinking as huge quantities of firewood are burnt in numerous tobacco processing kilns (chulli).



A vast tobacco field in Dighinala upazila in Khagrachhari.

STAR FILE PHOTO

titles of firewood are burnt in numerous tobacco processing kilns (chulli).

Contacted, TM Monjurul Islam, Deputy Director of AED, in Khagrachhari said

besides use of more fertiliser, tobacco keeps the land occupied for about 130 days as the companies buy the crop in phases.

AED Deputy Director in Bandarban KM Lokman Hossain said roots of tobacco plants usually penetrate about 10 inches into the soil, which seriously affects fertility. Roots of other crops normally does go beyond four inches into the soil, he added.

"We are encouraging farmers to cultivate maize and wheat and giving them seeds", he added.

In Bandarban, tobacco is grown extensively in Ruma, Lama, Alikadam, Thanchi,

Nikhyangchhari, Rowangchhari and Sadar upazilas.

Kolabuniya, Gorosthan and Bhusionchhar in Barkal upazila and some areas in Longdu, Baghaichhari and Jurachhari are tobacco growing areas in Rangamati.

In Khagrachhari, it is grown in Dighinala, Mainee valley, Panchhari, and Ramgarh.

The tobacco companies have already distributed seeds, fertiliser, polythene bags, pesticide and loans to their registered farmers, who have started preparing seed beds.

Jagat Jyoti Chakma, chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council, farmers should be discouraged from tobacco cultivation. This can be done by giving more assistance for other crops.

Elect honest person in Rangpur-4

Freedom fighters urge people OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Leaders of Pirgachha upazila unit of Muktiyoddha Sangsad yesterday called upon the people of their constituency (Rangpur-4) to elect an honest, educated, competent and truly pro-people candidate in the upcoming parliament election.

Political parties and alliances should not nominate anti-social, anti-liberation, illiterate and politically incompetent candidate in this constituency in the next general election, the freedom fighter leaders said at a meeting on the premises of Pirgachha High School.

At the meeting organised by upazila unit of Muktiyoddha Sangsad, they called upon the people to refrain from casting vote for anti-liberation forces in order to keep the country free from Islamist militancy and terrorism.

Terming the former lawmaker from the constituency as incompetent, they said he failed to play any role for development of the area.

The people of the constituency will have to suffer if he is elected again, they said.

Sirazul Islam Pradhan, commander of Pirgachha upazila unit Muktiyoddha Sangsad.



Gazi Kamrul Huda Selim

Local AL for Gazi Selim's nomination in Manikganj-3

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Leaders of Manikganj Sadar Upazila Awami League (AL) at its extension meeting have demanded nomination of Gazi Kamrul Huda Selim as party candidate in Manikganj-3 (Manikganj-Saturia) constituency in the upcoming parliamentary election.

Gazi Kamrul Huda is Manikganj district AL secretary.

At the meeting, held at AL district office on Friday, the party leaders said Gazi Selim played vital role in bad days of the party BNP-Jamaat rule.

They urged the AL high command to nominate Gazi Selim, saying any other candidate will be resisted.

Manikganj Sadar AL President and Krishnapur Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Jalal Uddin Ahmed presided over the meeting, addressed by local party bigwigs including vice-president Wahed Uddin Ahmed Madhu and organising secretary Abdul Jolil Master. Presidents and secretaries of AL units in all 10 unions also attended the meeting.

The meeting took a resolution demanding candidature of Gazi Selim from Manikganj-3, meeting sources said.



CULTURAL ACTIVISTS AGAINST BIGOTRY: Sammilita Sangskritik Jote forms a human chain at Satmatha in Bogra town, top, and Aroni Sangskritik Sangsad does the same at Moulvibazar yesterday protesting demolition of Lalon's statue in the capital.

Badsha in despair again AL men demand party candidate in Rajshahi-2

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Workers' Party Politburo member Fazle Hossain Badsha is facing strong opposition again from local Awami League leaders in getting 14-party alliance nomination for Rajshahi-2 constituency though he quit the mayoral race in AL's favour on promise of alliance ticket in Jatuya Sangsad election.

AL leaders and activists close to Rajshahi mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton are now speaking out against Badsha's nomination from Rajshahi-2 comprising Rajshahi Sadar and Paba upazilas. They argue that Badsha did not work for Liton in the mayoral polls.

They said Badsha will not get support of AL leaders and activists even if he is chosen ignoring their demand for an AL candidate.

The Rajshahi Citizens' Committee, floated ahead of August 4 mayoral election to campaign for Liton, has also backed out from its promise that it would support Badsha in JS election on the plea of grassroots demand for an AL candidate in the constituency.

Badsha, however, said that he is working for the JS election and that his alliance nomination is 'almost assured'.

Badsha, who had earlier got alliance green signal to contest the mayoral polls, withdrew from the race in the face of strong demand from local AL for nominating Liton.

Talking to this correspondent, Mayor Liton said the alliance should not take a decision ignoring opinion of grassroots leaders and activists.

"I will not comment on his (Badsha's) nomination right now. It is solely the business of 14-party leaders... We will abide by their decision".

Dr Sayed Shafiqul Alam, member secretary of Rajshahi Nagorik Committee, also said this is not the time to make comment.

"Our promise was made in a separate perspective. After quitting the mayoral race, Badsha did never sit with 14-party leaders", he said.

Rajshahi city AL vice-president Rafiq Uddin said, "Badsha failed to maintain relations with local



Fazle Hossain Badsha



Prof Abdul Khaleque

Awami League and we, all leaders and activists are demanding for selection of a party candidate.

They said party men may give their opinion for selecting Prof Abdul Khaleque, former vice-chancellor of Rajshahi University and central AL adviser, for nomination in Rajshahi-2.

When contacted, Prof Khaleque said, "I will agree to run the race if party men want".

Talking to The Daily Star, Badsha said, he is taking preparations so that he can win the election race.

"Awami League will understand the necessity of staying united to fight fundamentalists".

"After securing 14-party nomination and taking all preparations, I quit the mayoral race officially and thus paved the way for Liton. What bigger support for Liton could be there on my part?"

2 'most wanted' BCP outlaws held in Dumuria

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police arrested two 'most wanted extremists' from a shrimp enclosure at Shalue village under Dumuria upazila of Khulna district in the early hours of yesterday.

The arrestees were Rupchand Biswas, 42, and Pratap Biswas, 36. They are younger brothers of Shailen Biswas, 'operation commander' of outlawed Biplobi Communist Party (BCP).

The were sent to jail yesterday afternoon, showing them arrested in cases for extortion, illegal occupation of shrimp enclosures giving death threat and planning criminal operations in south-western districts.

Police recovered a pipe gun and seven live cartridges from their possession.

According to police, Rupchand Biswas was long wanted in three murder cases. There are fifty four general diaries (GDs) filed against him with Dumuria police station.

Pratap Kumar Biswas was wanted in a murder case in addition to over 40 GDs filed against him.

The CMM court will hear a petition for their remand today, court sources said.

Police said that the two BCP outlaws recruited young boys in the party and collected tolls for Shailen, now staying in India.

53 Khulna jute workers sued

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khalishpur industrial belt has become tense again following pressing of three separate charge-sheets to court by police against 54 workers of Platinum Jubilee Jute Mills, Crescent Jute Mills and People's Jute Mills.

Jute Mills Workers' Development Committee will go for tougher agitation within a week to demand withdrawal of the cases, said its convenor Gazi Masum Ahmed.

Most of the charge-sheeted workers who are now on bail were thrown out of jobs by management of their mills for participating in last year's agitation.



Abdul Mannan

AL men demand Mannan in Jhenidah-4

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Top leaders and union-level activists of Awami League (AL), at a meeting held at Arpara in Kaliganj yesterday, demanded of party high command to nominate their upazila unit president Abdul Mannan, also former mayor of Kaliganj Pourashabha to contest the upcoming parliamentary election from Jhenidah-4 constituency.

Abdul Mannan chaired the meeting while it was attended by former lawmaker and Jhenidah district AL president Abdul Hye as chief guest and Jhenidah AL secretary Advocate Azizur Rahman as special guest.

Speakers strongly opposed candidature of Kaliganj upazila AL secretary Anwarul Azim Anar who is trying to get party nomination. They said they will not work for any person other than Abdul Mannan.

If nominated, Anar will not be able to compete with BNP candidate as he (Anar) remained absconding for a long time due to his alleged criminal activities including nine cases for murder, possession of illegal arms, extortion and other cases, they said. They also termed Anar as an Interpol-listed criminal.

School students ransack hospital after teacher's death

Allege negligence in treatment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Hundreds of agitated students of Sunderganj Abdul Majid Mandol High School yesterday went on rampage ransacking Sunderganj Upazila Health Complex, residence of district medical officer (RMO) and a local private clinic following death of their teacher due to alleged negligence of doctors, police and eye-witnesses said.

Jahurul Islam Nazrul, 30, a teacher of the school fell ill during school hours, they said. He was immediately rushed to Sunderganj Health Complex but no doctor was available at the complex.

Despite repeated appeals by the attendants, RMO Dr Shafiqul Islam or thana health officer Dr Abdul Wahab did not attend the patient. In the meantime, the patient died without treatment.

As soon as the news spread all over, students turned violent. Equipped with sticks, they ransacked the health complex, RMO's house and private-run Seva Diagnostic Centre.

being informed, police rushed to the spot and brought situation under control.

When contacted, Gaibandha civil surgeon Dr Shamsul Haque admitted the fact saying departmental action will be taken against the physicians for alleged negligence in duties.

Girl students vow to resist corruption

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

About 1,000 girl students at a meeting here vowed not to bow down to corruption practices and resist the vice.

The unique event took place at Gaibandha Government Women College where the local corruption resistance committee held a view exchanging meeting to create awareness among school and college students against corruption.

Speakers at the meeting said development of the country is being hampered mainly due to corruption.

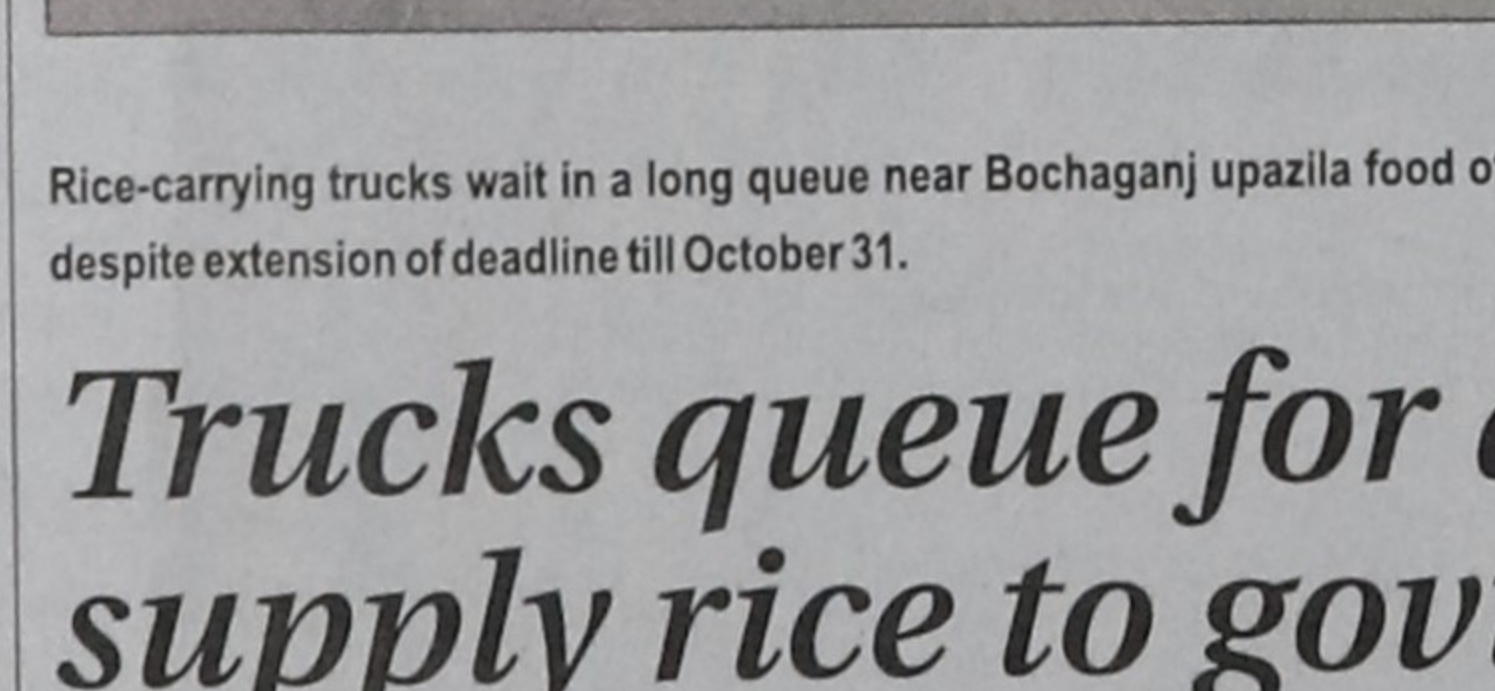
Everyone should resist corrupt practice at every level, be it small or big, they said and urged the youths to motivate people against corruption. A social movement should be launched so that none dares to do corruption, they said.

Corruption is also tarnishing the image of the country they said and urged political parties to nominate honest people in the coming national election.

Corruption can not be checked if dishonest people are elected to parliament, they added.

The said corruption eats up about Tk 6,796 crore annually, which is enough to build at least 12,000 primary schools or 8,000 hospitals. Latter the students formed a human chain in front of the college against corruption.

The meeting was presided over by Prof Mofazzal Hossain, president Gaibandha district corruption resisting committee.



Rice-carrying trucks wait in a long queue near Bochaganj upazila food office that unilaterally stopped taking rice despite extension of deadline till October 31.

PHOTO: STAR

Trucks queue for days to supply rice to govt godown!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Hundreds of rice-carrying trucks brought by Bochaganj rice millers have remained stranded for seven days in front of Bochaganj upazila food office as the authorities stopped procuring rice without any prior notice to the suppliers.

Rice mill operators of the upazila, already facing 'losses' to supply rice to government godowns, will incur further loss of Tk 10cr due to the authorities' unilateral decision, the millers told The Daily Star correspondent in front of Bochaganj Government Rice Procurement Centre yesterday.

As the authorities extended the

period of rice procurement drive till October 31, the rice mill operators in Bochaganj upazila, one of biggest rice producing areas of Dinajpur, faced extra burden, traders said.

Earlier the procurement drive was scheduled to end on August 31.

Millers agreed to supply rice to government due to repeated pressure from government officials but the authorities stopped procuring rice on October 21 without any prior notice, Md Razzak Karim, owner of Jamuna Rice Mills Ltd said, adding that he had to incur loss of Tk 1.5lakh to supply rice to government godown.

Md Zakir Hossain, owner of Hossain Brothers Husking Mill of

Vorora under Bochaganj upazila, alleged that district food officials told him to supply 1008 sacks (each sack containing 85kg) but the authority stopped taking rice after about half the amount.

Traders said 208 of the 300 rice mill operators in Bochaganj upazila signed contract with the government to help achieve the target of 26,298 tonnes during the ongoing Boro rice procurement drive.

Authorities disconnected power lines of remaining 92 rice mills for their failure to supply rice to the government godown.

Upazila Food Officer Md Shohrab Hossain declined to make any comment about the matter.

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

উত্তরা ক্লাব লিমিটেড-এ জরুরী ভিত্তিতে নিম্নবর্ণিত পদ সমূহে নিয়োগ করা হইবেঃ

পদের নাম	সংখ্যা	বয়স	শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা
উপ/সহকারী সচিব	১	অনুর্ক ৪৫ বছর	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> এমবিএ অথবা সমমান ডিগ্রী ইংরেজীতে কথা বলা ও লেখায় পারদর্শী কম্পিউটার জ্ঞান সম্পন্ন একই ধরনের কর্মকাণ্ডে ন্যূনতম ৫-৭ বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা প্রতিরক্ষা বাহিনীর অবসর প্রাপ্ত সদস্যদের অধাধিকার প্রদান করা হইবে
মেইস্টেন্যান্স ইন্সপেক্টর	১	অনুর্ক ৩৫ বছর	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ডিগ্রামা ইন সিভিল/ মেকানিক্যাল ন্যূনতম পাঁচ বৎসরের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন ইংরেজীতে কথা বলা ও লেখায় পারদর্শী কম্পিউটার জ্ঞান সম্পন্ন

উল্লেখিত পদের জন্য আশোচনা ব্যাপেক্ষ আকর্ষণীয় বেতন নির্ধারণ করা হইবে।

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