

Thus they steal rice from every VGF cardholder

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Nilphamari

Beneficiaries of the government's vulnerable group feeding (VGF) programme in Dimla upazila ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha are getting less than the allocated amount due to alleged malpractice by the people in charge of distribution.

During visits to Gayabari and Nautara unions of the upazila on Wednesday and Thursday, this correspondent found that almost every cardholder was getting 8-9 kg of rice although they are supposed to get 10 kg each as per the government rule.

This correspondent talked to several beneficiaries of the programme including Morjina Begum having VGF card No 299, Mizanur Rahman (card No 2234), Monam (card No 1934), Rabiul (card No 2014), and

Jyotsna Begum (card No 353) -- all hailing from Gayabari union of Dimla upazila.

They said the chairman and members of the union parishad concerned are giving a bag of 81 kg rice to nine cardholders so that each person gets 9 kg.

But as per government rule, the nine cardholders are to get altogether 90 kg of rice for getting 10 kg each.

In the same way, nine kg of rice is being given to almost all the 2200 VGF cardholders in Nautara union of the upazila.

Asked about the matter, Gayabari union parishad Chairman Shamsul Huq admitted giving one kg rice less to each cardholder.

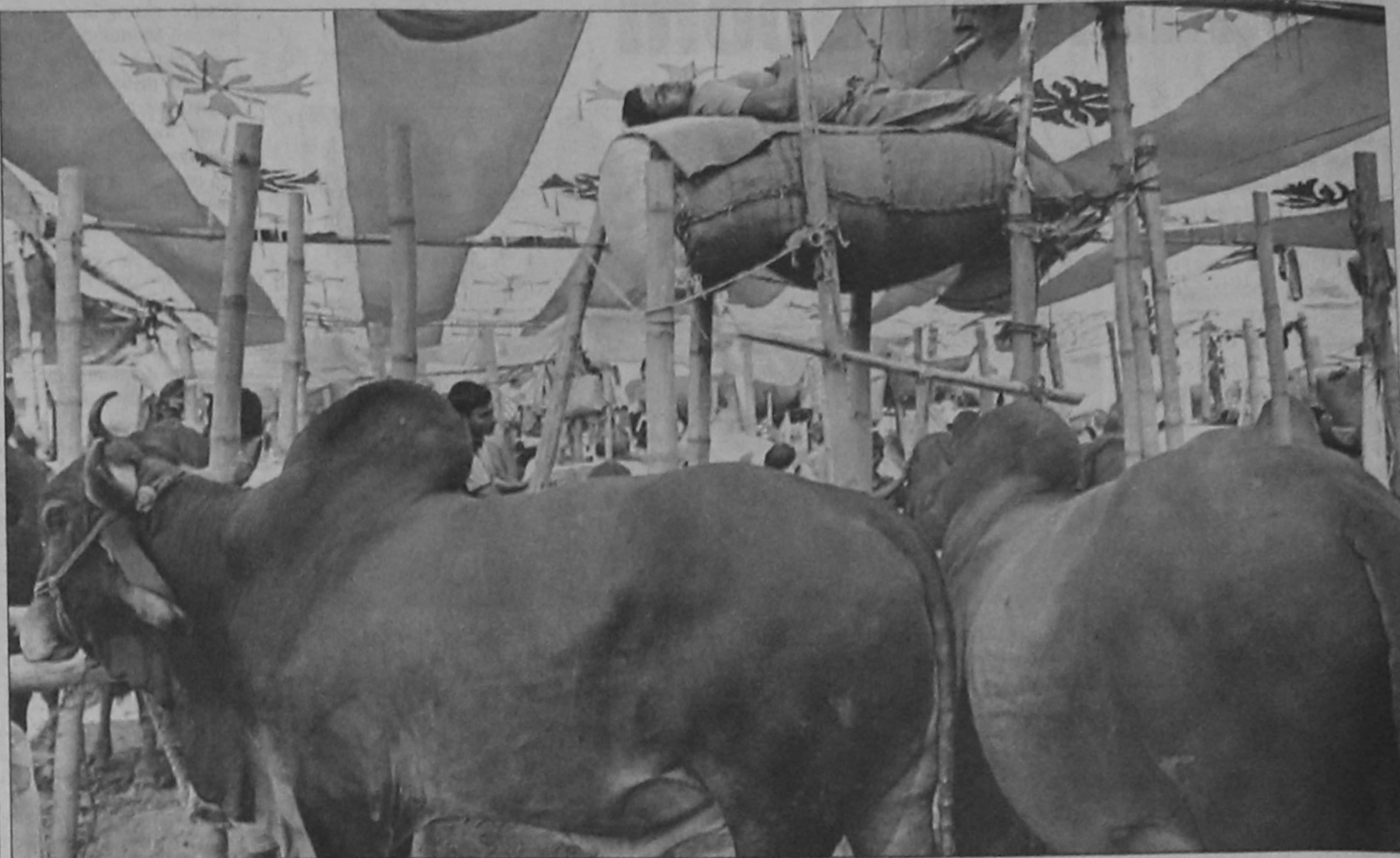
"After giving rice to the beneficiaries in this way (1kg less), the remaining amount will be sold to bear the costs of transportation, payment to

volunteers and others," he said.

There are 2200 cardholders in each union of Dimla upazila, sources said, adding that if each beneficiary gets 1 kg rice less than allocation, 2200 kg of rice worth about Tk 48,000 (1 kg rice sells at about Tk 22 now) would be 'saved'.

'Tag officer' Suvash Chandra Roy, also the 'women affairs officer' set by the upazila authorities to monitor rice distribution administration in Gayabari union, said the allegation of giving one kg rice less to almost each beneficiary has been found true.

"It is a mandatory for the UP officials to give 10 kg rice to each cardholder. They cannot give less than 10 kg rice to a beneficiary as the government bears costs for transportation and others," said Mojibur Rahman, the project implementation officer in Dimla upazila.



A cattle trader having a nap at Sagarika makeshift as sale of sacrificial animals in Chittagong is yet to take off. A large number of cattle have started arriving in the port city ahead of the Eid-ul-Azha.

KMC tense as students demonstrate on campus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Khulna

Students of Khulna Medical College (KMC) accompanied by outsider Chhatra League activists yesterday demonstrated on the campus demanding immediate removal of Principal KP Sarker and his punishment for 'dishonouring' father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The agitation followed removal of posters bearing Bangabandhu's portraits from the walls of KMC by its staff on Saturday night.

Recently the principal imposed ban on political activities on the campus but Chhatra League activists

pasted posters on the college walls demanding withdrawal of the ban.

All the posters had photograph of Bangabandhu. Asked by Principal KP Sarker, college employees under the supervision of head clerk Moniruzzaman torn off all the posters on Saturday night.

Hearing the news, students of two residential halls staged demonstration at midnight in protest against what they said audacity of the principal.

Later, members of Teachers' Academic Council intervened to pacify the agitated students.

When contacted, Principal KP Sarker said, "I had ordered removal of the

posters pasted on the notice board, not on walls. The head clerk and other employees did excess to defame me. I have formed a three-member committee headed by Dr Dulal Krishna to probe the incident. I have also served notices on responsible persons to show cause within three working days why departmental action should not be taken against them for the excess."

On the other hand, Head Clerk Moniruzzaman said, "I had just carried out the principal's order with the help of employees. The principal did not tell me specifically to remove only the posters on the notice board. So, the question of doing any excess does not arise at all."

Fugitive JMB man involved in Aug 17 blasts arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

A fugitive member of banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) was arrested in front of Panchagarh Sadar Hospital in the town yesterday afternoon.

Acting on a tip-off, a special police team launched a drive in the area at around 5:00pm and arrested the JMB man.

The arrestee is Golam Mostafa alias Manik, 35, son of Atiar Rahman Master of Munshipara village under Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari district.

Police said Golam Mostafa

was involved in serial blast in Nilphamari on August 17, 2005 and wanted in a case filed with Nilphamari Sadar Police Station in this connection.

They said Mostafa had been in Panchagarh for over a year hiding his real name.

When contacted, Panchagarh police superintendent said they are quizzing the JMB man. "After interrogation, we will hand him over to Nilphamari police," he said.

The arrestee confessed to his involvement with JMB during interrogation. Officer-in-charge (OC) Jamiruddin of Panchagarh Police Station said.

Muladuli 'bean zone' expanding fast

The biggest market now supplies 60-70 trucks of beans a day

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR
TOPU, Pabna

A large number of farmers in Pabna and Natore districts are now engaged in bean cultivation as the profitable farming has changed the lives of many people in the region.

Some 60/70 trucks loaded with beans leave 'Muladuli bean zone', the biggest bean-producing area, for capital Dhaka and other parts of the country every day as beans worth around Tk 1 crore is traded daily at the local market, traders said.

Over 1.5 lakh families are now involved in bean cultivation and its business in the region that sees increasing bean cultivation for the last several years, local sources said.

Bean farmers from Pabna and Natore districts take their products to Muladuli market and sell it to wholesalers who supply it to different places including Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and Narayanganj.

Farmers from all the villages of Muladuli union under Ishwardi upazila, Khidirpur, Per Khidirpur and

Ramchandrapur unions of Atghoria upazila and Zednail, Haripur and adjoining villages of Chatmohar upazila under Pabna district bring their beans to the market for sale, said Abdur Razzak, secretary of Muladuli Vegetable Traders Association.

The farmers from Boraigram, Gopalpur and Lalpur upazilas in Natore also bring their beans to the country's largest wholesale bean market, traders said.

"The local market sees trading of 1,800 to 2,100 maunds of bean every day. The amount is on rise as there has been a bumper production of the vegetable this year," said Md Sohel, a wholesaler of the market.

"Each maund (37.32 kg) of bean now sells between Tk 270 and Tk 300 while the same amount sold between Tk 3,500 and Tk 3,600 a few weeks ago. The price will decrease further as the supply is on rise," said Abdur Razzak.

Sources in Pabna Agriculture Extension Department said at least 3,000

hectares of land have been brought under bean cultivation in the district this year while it was around 2,200 hectares last year.

This year beans were produced on over 6,000 hectares of land in the region.

"I have cultivated beans on six bighas of land this year while it was only one bigha a few years ago. After obtaining my master's degree, I joined a school. At the same time I started bean cultivation as it is very profitable," said Md Mukter Hossain.

"Bean farming on a bigha of land costs Tk 12,000 to 14,000. If there is no natural calamity, a farmer can get 80 to 100 maunds of bean from the land in a season. One can easily earn a profit of Tk 15,000 to 20,000 from per bigha," said Md Latif Joarder, a small bean farmer.

A few bean farmers, however, said they often fail to get fair price of the product.

Local farmers and traders have demanded that the government build a cold storage in the area so that they can preserve their agricultural products.



PHOTO: STAR

Villagers look on in despair as the Jamuna has continues devouring areas at Hasilkandi in Saghata upazila of Gaibandha district.

Landless people's leaders 'loot' shrimp enclosure

20 sued in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Twenty leaders and activists of local organisations of landless people were sued on Saturday night for allegedly occupying a 270-bigha shrimp enclosure on khas land at Norarchak in Debhata upazila.

They were also accused of looting cash, fish, damaging office building and beating up the staff of the enclosure on November 15.

The accused include Satkhira district landless association president Kawsar Ali, Norarchak landless association president Abul Hossain and general secretary Nazrul Islam and local landless leaders and activists Mokarram Sheikh, Golam Sana, Sirajul Islam, Yad Ali Moral, Esad Ali Moral, Shahidul

Islam, Abdullah Gazi, Kenaram Mondal, Ayub Hossain, Paritosh Biswas, Bishnu Pada Biswas, Shashi Biswas, Supada Mondal, Bappi Mondal, Baburam Mondal and Rafiqul Islam of Norarchak in Debhata upazila and Nazmul Arefin Miltu, son of Fazlur Rahman of Sultanpur in the town.

Syed Joydul Abedin of Munjitpur in the town, also a staff of the shrimp enclosure, filed the case against 20 landless leaders and activists.

The complainant said, Dr Abu Yusuf Abdullah, a teacher of Dhaka University set up a farm named Bengal Scientific Shrimp Culture Ltd taking lease of the khas land covering 270 bighas at Norarchak to cultivate shrimp in 2006.

He alleged that over 200 landless peo-

ple led by Satkhira district landless association president Kawsar Ali, Norarchak landless association president Abul Hossain and general secretary Nazrul Islam attacked the staff of the enclosure and damaged its office and occupied the area on November 15.

Seven staff of the enclosure were also injured in the attack. They are Abdul Bari, China Begum, Abdus Sattar, Khokon, Nur Ali, Golam Sana, Kabir Gazi and Hossain Gazi, said the allegation.

Later they looted fish, cash and other valuables worth over Tk 70 lakh from the shrimp enclosure, it said.

Contacted, officer in charge (OC) of Debhata police station Samsul Haque said, a case was filed accusing 20 people.

"We are trying to arrest the accused", he said.

Four boys buried alive

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Sirajganj

Four children, including two siblings, were buried alive under a huge chunk of soil that fell upon them while playing by the Karotoa river in Shahajadpur upazila of Sirajganj on Saturday.

The victims were identified as Yamin Ali, 10, and his brother Yasin Ali, 8, sons of Joydul Abedin, Arman Hossain, 8, son of Abul Kashem and Rafiqul Islam, 9, son of Mazam Ali in Narina Dakshinpara village of the upazila.

Family sources said the children went there in the afternoon to play but did not return home.

After a hectic search, their relatives found the bodies at riverbank.

Punishment to killers of schoolboy demanded

UNB, Barisal

Children formed a human chain in the city on Saturday afternoon demanding punishment to the killers of schoolboy Ishtiaq Khan Sourav.

The programme was organised by Barisal district and city unit of Khelaghar, a children organisation, in front of Barisal Ashwini Kumar Hall.

Police recovered the body of Sourav, 13, a class-VII student of Barisal Zila School, from a pond of the BSCIC estate at West Kaunia in the city on November 16, five days after he went missing.

Father of the victim lodged a murder case on the same night.

Police arrested three youths - Abidur Rahman, Mehedi Hassan Emdad and Rafiqul Islam Jamil in connection with the killing on November 17 and Sarol Mistry, another youth of the area early Saturday.

A huge pile of beans is kept for sale, below, traders packing beans, at the country's largest bean market at Muladuli in Pabna district, as the area sees good yield of the winter vegetable this season.



PHOTO: STAR

