

THREE NORTHERN DISTRICTS Seed crisis ahead of boro season worries farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Farmers of Dinajpur, Panchagarh and Joypurhat districts are facing problem in preparing their seedbeds as Agriculture Extension Department (AED) has failed to ensure availability of sufficient seeds in the local markets.

Most of the farmers have failed to start preparing their seedbeds although the boro season begins in mid-December and preparation of seedbeds in the region usually starts in end of November or early December, said field-level agriculture officials.

The crisis has deepened due to the increase of demand for BR-28 variety seeds, AED officials said, adding that achieving the target of boro production is now a great challenge.

Frustrated farmers are now purchasing seeds with higher prices from private seed producers to prepare their seedbeds as the time for preparing seedbeds is running out.

Several farmers taking to The Daily Star correspondent alleged that the employees of government-authorised outlets distributed the seeds in an 'unfair' way.

Many of them had to return empty-handed

despite standing in long queues for the whole day, they said.

According to AED offices in Dinajpur, Panchagarh and Joypurhat districts, about 9,950 tonnes of seeds are needed as about 2,86,925 hectares of land was targeted for boro cultivation.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) supplied 1,133 tonnes of seeds that has already been sold out. This year BADC fixed its seed price at Tk 250 per 10 kg bag.

"I purchased BR-28 seed at Tk 520 per bag which is much higher than the government rate," said Asaduzzaman of Danihari village under Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

Several other farmers of the district made similar allegations.

Due to shortage of seeds, farmers of these districts could not collect the quality seeds supplied by BADC, even for double the price.

Admitting the crisis of seed and its higher prices, deputy directors of Dinajpur, Joypurhat and Panchagarh AED offices said they have sought help of Seed Certification Agency to monitor the market to enable farmers get seeds for fair prices.



PHOTO: STAR

Looters taking away logs after cutting roadside trees in Chaugacha upazila of Jessore district, right, a 100-year-old rain tree being felled at Narayanpur union under the upazila. No action has been taken although the malpractice started around two weeks ago.

Festivity, nostalgia for good old days mark CU day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Chittagong University Day was observed yesterday with a vow to contribute more to nation building activities.

Hundreds of former students as well as teachers in a festive mood participated in the daylong programme that marked the 43rd anniversary of the university, which was set up in 1966.

Dr Alauddin Ahmed, adviser to the prime minister on education, inaugurated the daylong programme by opening a hanging bridge built over the canal between social science and arts faculties and releasing balloons and pigeons at around 11:30am.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Dr Afasul Amin, Chief Whip Abdus Shahid and Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury were also present as special guests.

Addressing the function Dr Afasul Amin lauded the role of Chittagong University in the country's Liberation War, democratic movements and nation building activities.

The minister called for an allocation of Tk 25 crore for infrastructural development of the university in the current fiscal year.

Dr Alauddin Ahmed in his speech observed that the university nestled in hillocks and green-



Different departments of Chittagong University display their achievements in different fields at makeshift stalls, below, Dr Alauddin Ahmed, education advisor to the prime minister, cuts a cake marking the Chittagong University Day on the campus yesterday while Primary and Mass Education Minister Dr Afasul Amin, Chief whip Abdus Shahid and Chittagong City Corporation Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury look on.

PHOTO: STAR

VICTORY DAY GREETING TO CITY DWELLERS

Ctg fugitive criminal makes poster with fake identity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Mamunur Rashid Mamun, former ward commissioner and a fugitive criminal, stuck four-colour posters with fake identity to greet people on the occasion of the Victory Day raising eyebrows of city dwellers.

The posters put up on the walls identified Mamun as a city Awami League leader along with the photographs of Bangabandhu and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, much to the surprise of law enforcers.

Mamun was awarded life-term imprisonment in a case and accused in as many as 17 criminal cases filed with different police stations in the city for murder, abduction and extortion.

He, on the posters, introduced himself as the assistant secretary general of Mukti Juddher Bijoy Mela Parishad that has organised victory fair each year in Chittagong since 1989.

Interestingly, the Parishad has no such post at all. When contacted, Bijoy Mela Parishad Secretary General Abul Hashem said, "We don't have any assistant secretary general in our committee. We don't have any contact with Mamun either."

At the bottom of the posters publication credit was given to the city unit of Awami League and its affiliated bodies.

The leaders and activists of Awami League, however, expressed resentment over the putting up of such posters of Mamun under the banner of Awami League.

Chittagong City Awami



PHOTO: STAR

Fugitive Chittagong criminal Mamunur Rashid Mamun conveys Victory Day greetings to locals through posters that described him as an Awami League leader and assistant secretary general of Bijoy Mela Parishad.

League General Secretary Kazi Enamul Haque expressed his surprise over the issue and said, "We have no hand in publishing the posters."

City Jubo League President Chandan Dhar also denied his organisation's involvement in publishing Mamun's posters.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) sources said Mamun is an absconding accused and most wanted criminal. Mamun entered the country through Parshuram border

of Feni in the last week of August this year. But he went into hiding when there was a news report on his entry into the country.

Contacted, Chittagong Metropolitan Police Deputy Commissioner (North) Banaj Kumar Majumder said that Mamun is not in the country.

Police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) sources said Mamun is an absconding accused and most wanted criminal. Mamun entered the country through Parshuram border

"There is no legal bar to publishing posters with victory greetings. But if Mamun had returned he must have been caught by our forces," said Banaj.

Boro cultivation facing setback due to salinity

Bagerhat farmers worried as seedlings on vast land damaged

UNB, *Bagerhat*

The target of boro cultivation may not be achieved in the district in the current season as the seedlings on a vast tract of land have been damaged due to high salinity and scarcity of water.

Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources said a scheme has been taken up to bring 50,000 hectares of land under boro cultivation in the district.

Of the total area, hybrid paddy will be cultivated on 17,000 hectares of land while high yielding variety

tract of land was affected by saline water that entered the cropland during cyclone Aila and remained stagnant for a long period.

Accordingly, seedbeds have been prepared on 2,331 hectares of land in the district.

But farmers apprehend that the production may fall short of the target as the seedlings on many seedbeds are turning yellowish after growing 4-5 inches high due to soil salinity and water crisis.

While visiting different areas, it was found that a vast

tract of land was affected by saline water that entered the cropland during cyclone Aila and remained stagnant for a long period.

Besides, farmers are not getting sufficient normal water due to fish rearing by erecting dams on canals by a section of local influential people.

The target of transplanted aman cultivation also could not be achieved in the district this year as 23,140 hectares of land remained uncultivated due to soil salinity and insufficient rain, DAE sources said.

Brig Gen Md Mozammel Hossain accompanied by army and civil administration officials and public representatives distribute winter clothes among the underprivileged people in Matiranga upazila of Khagrachari district as Matiranga Zone of the army arranged the programme yesterday.

Tea labourers hold rally

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

About two thousand tea garden labourers held a procession followed by a grand rally in court point area of the city on Sunday last protesting alleged grabbing of the office of central tea labourers union. The agitating labourers also burnt the effigies of two of their leaders -- Rajendra Prasad Banerjee and his son-in-law Bijoy Banerjee on charge of their involvement in grabbing union office. The speakers at the rally alleged that a committee, elected during the caretaker rule, were holding office at Srimongal. But a group of men with the blessings of the ruling party people captured the office illegally on November 25. Despite repeated attempts it could not be retaken while agitation continued at the different tea gardens. The speakers vowed to go for tougher agitation soon to get back the office. The tea workers later took out a procession in the city and handed over a memo to the divisional commissioner of Sylhet.

Police, villagers in Gopalganj beat up agitating students

A CORRESPONDENT, *Gopalganj*

At least 30 students of Gopalganj Polytechnic Institute were injured as police and villagers swooped on them during a road blockade programme at Gopalganj yesterday.

Students of the institute put up a barricade on Dhaka-Khulna highway at Chandra Digholia bus stand at around 11:00am to press their demand for holding examinations and withdrawal of programme by the teachers and employees appointed under development sector.

The agitating students alleged that a police team led by the officer-in-charge of Gopalganj Sadar Police Station came to the spot at noon

and started beating up the students. Some people of the nearby village also sided with the law enforcers and beat up the students, they added.

All Akbar, one of the injured, said police along with some villagers foiled their peaceful programme and beat up the students. They added punishment to those responsible for the attack.

Contacted, Gopalganj Additional Police Superintendent Haider Ali Khan said a magistrate was present on the spot. Whatever police did, they did it at the directive of the magistrate. "If the local people have done something wrong, police will take action against them," he said.

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PHOTO: STAR