

North's 'rice bowl' sees steady price hike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Rice prices shot up by Tk 200 to 250 per 85kg bag in last two weeks although four northern districts of Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, Joypurhat and Panchagarh saw abundant rice production in last Aman season.

A bag of swarna, ranjit and pajam varieties of rice sold for Tk 2520, 2830 and 3230 about 15 days ago but the prices have now gone up to Tk 2750, 3100 and 3485 respectively, said local retailers.

Other long-grain varieties of rice have also seen price rise in recent days.

As buyers from different districts are collecting paddy and rice directly from the farmers, local markets see shortage of supply against the demand, said traders and brokers of several grain

markets in the district.

Akbar Ali, a rice trader of Nashipur Hat in Dinajpur, said he purchased swarna paddy for Tk 1,220 to 1,260 per bag [85kg] only 15 days ago but the same paddy is selling for Tk 1,300 to 1320 per bag.

When contacted, Md Mosaddeque Hossain, president of Dinajpur Rice Mill Owners and Operators Association, said the prices rose as buyers of different districts including Barisal, Tangail, Comilla, Kushtia and Mymensingh are purchasing paddy and rice directly from the farmers for high prices and taking it outside the district.

Despite scanty rainfall and adverse weather conditions in the region during the peak Aman season, four northern districts saw good rice production this year, said Department of

Agriculture Extension (DAE) officials in Dinajpur.

Field level data show that farmers in these districts got about 2.5 tonnes of paddy per hectare on an average although the target was about 2.4 tonnes per hectare.

Dinajpur DAE officials said about 6,26,000 tonnes of Aman rice have been produced from 2,51,920 hectares of land in the district.

Thakurgaon district produced 3,23,850 tonnes of rice from 1,27,500 hectares of land [2.54 tonnes per hectare], Joypurhat produced 1,80,000 tonnes of rice from about 72,000 hectares land [2.5 tonnes per hectare] and Panchagarh district got 1,19,370 tonnes of rice from 51,900 hectares [2.3 tonnes per hectare], said DAE officials concerned.



PHOTO: STAR
Bags of rice being loaded onto trucks as traders from 'outside' prepare to transport the item to different districts from Panchbarihat in Dinajpur Sadar upazila yesterday.

Prof Yunus murder case verdict now on Jan 28

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Speedy Trial Tribunal, Rajshahi, yesterday deferred the date for verdict in the sensational Rajshahi University teacher Muhammad Yunus murder case to January 28.

The verdict was deferred as the tribunal judge is on leave, court officials said. The tribunal had earlier fixed January 14 for delivering the judgment on completion of arguments in the case on December 31.

Yunus, a professor of economics department, was murdered while on morning walk near his Binodpur residence, a few yards away from the campus, on December 24 in 2004.

Inspector Mohammad Helaluddin of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) submitted the charge sheet in the case against eight JMB militants on September



PHOTO: STAR
Bomang Raja Aung Shoi Prue Chowdhury receives tax from subjects as the traditional Rajpunyah festival started at Raj Darbar in Bandarban yesterday.

Bandarban wears festive look as Rajpunyah starts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, BANDARBAN

Traditional Rajpunyah festival began in the district yesterday.

The 15th Raja of Bomang Circle Aung Shoi Prue Chowdhury accepted annual *jhum* (tax for farming) from his subjects holding mouzas at the Raj Darbar in the morning.

The 'troops' gave the chief of the circle a guard of honour when he along with the invitees entered the darbar from the royal palace.

Local public representatives, foreign guests, administration, police and army officials were present at the function.

A three-day folk fair also kicked off on the occasion. A large number of people joined the fair held on the ground of the royal palace.

Bandarban yesterday wore a festive look with scores of local and foreign tourists visiting the district town to witness Rajpunyah.

The British Raj divided the whole area of the CHT into three circles for easing revenue collection and deputed the responsibility of tax collection, land administration management and social arbitration with the circle chiefs called Raja.

Bomang circle was set up with 91 mouzas of Bandarban hill district and 14 mouzas of Rangamati hill district. Besides, Chakma circle was formed in Rangamati and Mong circle in Khagrachhari.

The royal Bomang family has been celebrating the occasion for generations.

The 9th Bomang king introduced the formal collection of tax in 1875. In last 134 years, the programme has been enriched by incorporating different cultural aspects of the people of different religions and castes living in the area. It has now become one of the biggest annual festivals of the people of the hill districts.

Four bombs recovered in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered four 'powerful' bombs from Kedarganj in Sadar upazila in Chuadanga on Wednesday night.

Following a tip-off, the elite force raided the backyard of Kedarganj Degree College and recovered the bombs from a dustbin and wrapped in a polythene bag.

None was arrested in this connection.

Rab suspected that criminals might have kept the bombs there for carrying out subversive activities.

Houses looted in several dists, 10 robbers held

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Robbers looted houses in several districts in the last few days while at least 10 people were arrested on charge of robbery.

Three people were seriously injured as robbers hit them with sharp weapons at Gopinathpur village under Gopalganj Sadar upazila early yesterday, reports a correspondent.

The injured have been admitted to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital.

Police said, the robbers came to the house of one Zulfikar Ali on Wednesday in the name of seeing his daughter for matrimonial purpose.

They stayed there at night and at about 1:00am, a gang of 8-10 stormed into the house.

The robbers broke open the door of the house and hit Zulfikar, 80, his wife Romechha Begum, 70, and daughter Rehana, 20, with sharp weapons injuring them seriously. They then decamped with cash, gold ornaments and clothes worth Tk one lakh.

Our Correspondent in Kushtia reports: Police on Wednesday arrested five members of an inter-district gang of robbers and recovered looted materials from them in Pangsha upazila in Rajbari.

A team of police raided the den of the robbers at Machpara at about 10:30 pm

and arrested them, police said. The team recovered ornaments, cash and other valuables from the arrestees.

According to the gang was engaged in different types of crime including robbery and mugging on Kushtia-Rajbari highway for long.

The robbers are Malek, Rafiqul, Lulu, Sujon and Ripon.

Another report from Rajbari adds: Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members arrested a robber and five gamblers at Doulatdia ferry point in Goalanda upazila on Tuesday morning.

A team of Rab-8 chased them because of suspicious movement and arrested Billal Hossain, 30, wanted in a robbery case and gamblers Alam Shikder, 35, Ful Chand Ali, 42, Rahim Mandol, 25 and Nazrul Islam Sheikh, 20.

They also recovered a pipe-gun and a bullet from an abandoned cottage.

A correspondent from Jessore reports: Four robbers were arrested in Jessore along with a vanful of chickens on Wednesday morning.

The arrestees are Billal, 20, son of Alak Sheikh, Nahid Munsi, 23, son of Eskender Ali, Zafrul Biswas, 21, son of Abdul Alim and Shamim, 22, son of Sadrul Ali of Bedgram under Sadar upazila in Gopalganj.

According to police, the robbers looted the chickens worth Tk 2 along with the van

injuring its driver.

They were arrested while trying to sell the chickens in Khaldar Road area in Jessore.

According to our correspondent in Pabna, robbers looted three houses at Sagarkandi of Sujanagar upazila in the early hours of Monday.

Police and locals said, a gang of robbers came on a microbus and stormed the house of Abdul Aziz Sheikh of village Khalilpur, Narayan Shaha of village Poddarpara and Abdullah of village Ulat in Sagarkandi union in Sujanagar upazila.

They then looted at gun point goods and valuables worth about Tk 10 lakh.

UNB from Naogaon reports: Robbers looted valuables worth Tk 50 lakh from an expatriate's house injuring two inmates at Par-Naogaon Dhopapara early Wednesday.

Locals said a gang numbering 10/12 entered the house of Mobarak Hossain breaking open the lock of the main gate at about 2am.

Later, they looted valuables, including Tk 1 lakh in cash, 150 tola gold ornaments and mobile phone sets, taking the inmates hostage at gunpoint.

The robbers also beat up Mobarak's wife Fahima Begum and his son Sabuj mercilessly as they tried to resist them.

One held with venison

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Pathorghata police on Wednesday night recovered 15 kg venison from a shop in Pathorghata upazila town and arrested one person in this connection.

Arrestee Harun-or-Rashid, 26, was owner of the fish shop in Bad area.

Police said, a team from Pathorghata police station raided the shop and recovered the venison from inside a sack.

The arrestee along with venison was handed over to forest officials. A case was filed with Pathorghata police station the next day.

In Khulna, an attempt to kill a deer by two poachers was foiled on Tuesday by the people of Maheshwarpur village under Koira upazila, reports our correspondent.

The incident took place as a deer was found moving at large near a sluice gate at the village.

The two poachers, however, managed to flee the chasing villagers.

According to range officer Rajesh Chakma of west wing of Sundarban forest division, the deer entered the village from the Sundarbans crossing the river Kobadak.

Being informed, two staff of Banikhali forest station caught the deer on Tuesday evening and released it in the forest.

6 sued on charge of killing FFs in '71 in Bagerhat

UNB, Bagerhat

Six people were sued on Tuesday on charge of killing three freedom fighters here during the War of Liberation in 1971.

Surjaban Bibi, of Sutlari village in Morelganj upazila, filed the case with the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court.

Judge Yarab Hossain took the case into the cognizance and asked the officer-in-charge of Morelganj police station to record it as 'ejhar'.

The accused are - Waliur Rahman, 58, Abdus Sattar Khan, 70, M Motaleb Hossain, 60, Habibur Rahman, 65, Nazir Uddin, 65 and Nur Islam Sheikh, 62, of the same village.

In her complaint, Surjaban

Bibi alleged that the aforesaid 'razakars' (collaborators of Pakistan occupation forces) had picked up her uncle Tasim Uddin and killed him in July, 1971.

She said after three days of independence in 1971, the accused swooped on the house of Tasim and beat the house inmates mercilessly.

They then picked up Saiz Uddin and Siraj Uddin, young sons of Tasim Uddin and took them to the adjacent Tetulbaria bazaar and slaughtered the two.

With this, 36 cases have so far been filed against 463 suspected 'razakars' in the district on charge of killing, looting and arson during the liberation war.

Hartal for gas link

A CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A half-day hartal was observed at Natore yesterday demanding gas supply to the district town.

Committee for Movement to Realise Gas called the hartal from 6:00am to press home its demand for supply of gas to the town and other important installations through pipeline.

Shops and business firms were closed, vehicles were off the roads and attendance of

students at educational institutions was nil.

Additional police were deployed in the town to maintain law and order. No untoward incident occurred during the hartal.

Addressing a rally in the town, the speakers urged the government to include Natore in the gas pipeline installation project. Otherwise, they threatened to launch a tougher agitation programme to realise the demand.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS



PHOTO: STAR
Action Committee for Implementation of North Rajshahi Irrigation Project forms a human chain in Chapainawabganj town yesterday demanding early implementation of the project to save the northern region from desertification.

3 held on murder charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'nawabganj

Three people, arrested on charge of killing BRDB official, were sent to jail yesterday. They are Harunur Rashid, Kawser Ali and Abdus Salam. Police arrested the three in different areas of the district on Wednesday night and produced them in the Judicial Magistrate's Court yesterday, seeking a seven-day remand. The court fixed January 28 for hearing of the remand prayer and sent the accused to jail. Criminals murdered Mohammad Abdullah, deputy project officer of Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB), in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila early Monday. He hailed from Rangpur. Abdullah's body was recovered from his residence at Sadar upazila Parishad compound on Tuesday night.

BSF hands over 7 to BDR

UNB, Sherpur

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Wednesday handed over seven Bangladeshis to Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) through Nakugaon border in Nalitabari upazila after expiry of their jail terms. They are Paritosh Sangma and Abdul Halim of Somoshchora village and Joyal Abedin of Litkuchi village in Nalitabari upazila, Arshila Marak of Kharamura village of Sreebordi upazila, Rantu Hajang of Netrakona district, Helal uddin and Mishu Kundu of Jamalpur district. Earlier, they were arrested on charge of intruding into Indian territory and the court sentenced them to different jail terms.

Man jailed in arms case

UNB, Sherpur

The Joint District and Sessions Judge's Court in a verdict on Wednesday sentenced a man to nine years imprisonment in absentia in an arms case. The convict is Abdul Quddus, 42, of Hatibanda village in Jinaigati upazila. According to the prosecution story, police raided the house of Quddus on August 8, 2004 and recovered a sharp weapon from there. A case was filed against him under Arms Act but later he went into hiding after being released on bail. After investigation, police submitted charge sheet against him the same year.

3 hurt as criminals open fire

UNB, Sylhet

Three people were injured as criminals opened fire at a restaurant at Taltala here on Wednesday night. The injured are Shabiul Islam, 35, owner of Famous Restaurant, his cousin Dilal Ahmed, 26, and a betel-nut shop owner Liton Ahmed, 25. Witnesses said, criminals numbering 7-8 entered the restaurant to take food at about 7:00pm. After taking snacks, they went to a shop in front of the restaurant for buying cigarettes. The criminals locked in a quarrel with shop owner Liton who asked them for payment. At one stage, criminals opened fire on Liton who took shelter at the restaurant. They chased him and entered the restaurant and sprayed bullets on Shabiul, Dilal and Liton leaving them critically injured. They also ransacked the restaurant.

50 injured as students, bus workers clash in Gopalganj

STAR NATIONAL DESK

At least 50 people were injured in clashes between students and bus workers over extra fare at Gopalganj yesterday.

Meanwhile, two groups of people clashed over taking control of an irrigation project in Kishoreganj yesterday, leaving 25 people from both sides injured.

The students of Gopalganj Government Bangabandhu College went on excursions to Cox's Bazar, Chittagong and Comilla in three buses and returned to the town yesterday, reports a correspondent.

As bus workers charged extra fare from the students just before entering the town, they (students) refused to pay the sum and locked in altercations with bus workers.

When the buses reached police lines crossing at around 11:00am, the bus workers swooped on the students, leaving at least 30, including college teachers Md Selim and Aminul Karim and college students' union vice president Nazrul Islam Hira and AGS Titu Baidya, injured.

of the college, put up barricades on Dhaka-Khulna highway at Bedgram point and in front of the college and damaged 15 buses.

They also locked in pitched battles with bus workers over a kilometre area from Police Lines to Bedgram crossing. At least 20 people, including 10 bus workers, were injured in the clashes.

The bus workers also put up barricades on the highway at Police Lines crossing and in bus terminal area protesting attack on them and ransacking of buses by the students.

According to a correspondent from Kishoreganj, two rival groups clashed over taking control of an irrigation project at Austagram in the district yesterday, leaving 25 people, seven by bullets, injured.

The bullet-injured people were admitted to Bajitpur Medical College Hospital, while the rest to Austagram Upazila Health Complex.

Locals said the two rival groups—one led by local Awami League leader and Kastal Union Parishad Chairman Sajjan Uddin Bhuiyan and another by Khairul Miah—attacked each other over taking control of an irrigation project at Kastal at around 8:00am.

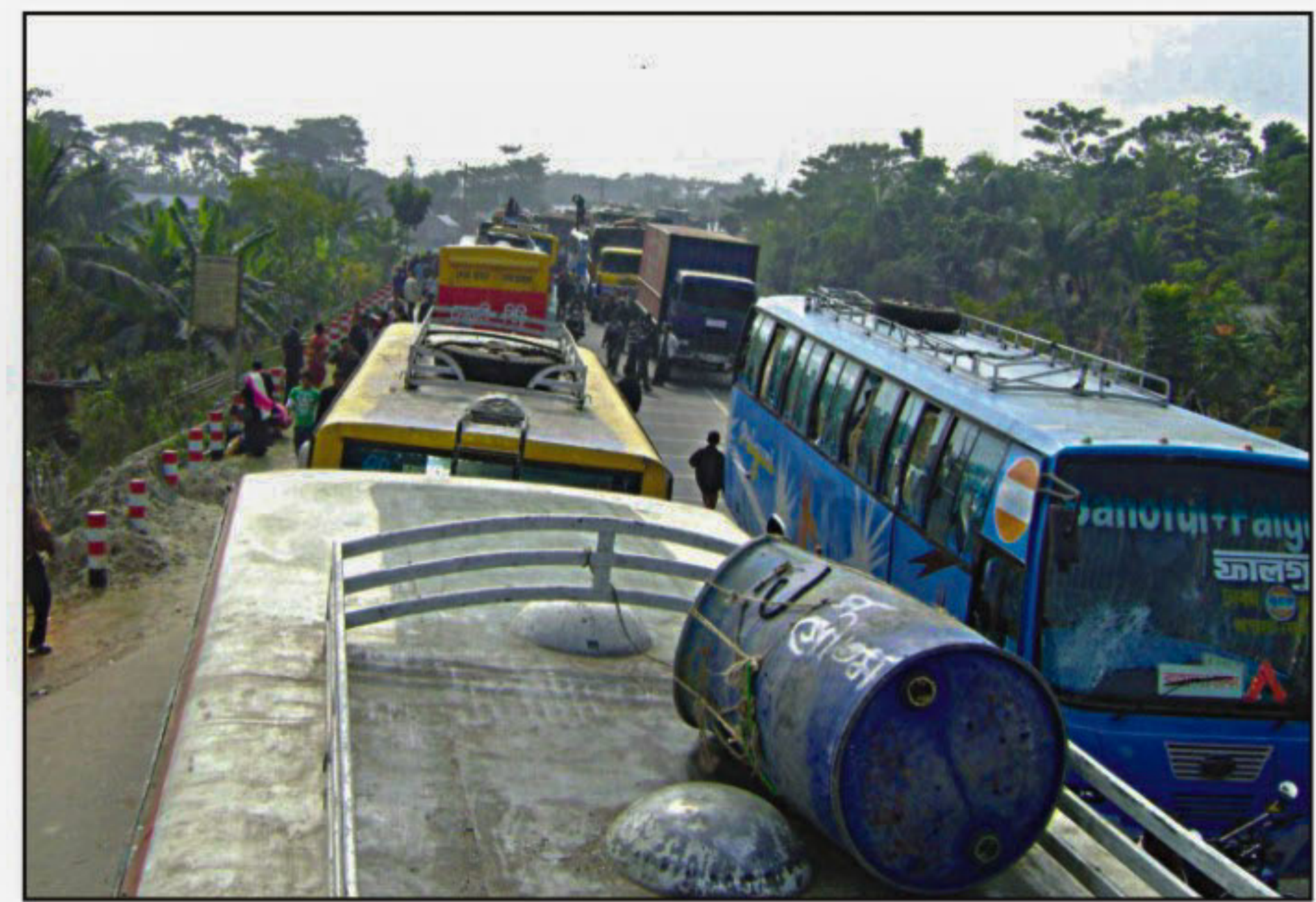


PHOTO: STAR
Vehicles get stuck in long tailbacks from Bedgram in Gopalganj town to Haridaspur bridge yesterday as students of Gopalganj Government Bangabandhu College and transport workers separately put road blockade on Dhaka-Khulna highway following clashes between the two groups.