



PHOTO: STAR

Grabbers encroached upon Laukathi river flowing through Patuakhali town at two points narrowing the river gradually but the authorities are indifferent to it.

Dealers of 7 dists finally taking ZFCL fertiliser

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

The fertiliser dealers, who had earlier refused to take delivery of the agri input from Zia Fertiliser Company Limited (ZFCL) at Ashuganj in Brahmanbaria, have started receiving fertiliser following a fruitful talks with the authorities concerned.

As many as 816 dealers from seven districts—Brahmanbaria, Kishoreganj, Netrakona, Chandpur, Comilla, Habiganj and Sunamganj—stopped taking delivery of fertiliser from ZFCL on Wednesday as the authorities asked them to take 50 percent imported fertiliser, which the dealers term low quality, along with their allotted one.

The issue was resolved at a meeting on Friday between the ZFCL authorities and the dealers with ZFCL Managing Director Mohamam Osman Gani in the chair.

The meeting decided that

from now on the dealers will take 85 percent ZFCL fertilisers and 15 percent foreign ones in each consignment.

The dealers of the seven districts stopped taking fertiliser from ZFCL, alleging that the ZFCL authorities forced them to take 'low quality' foreign fertiliser, especially China fertiliser.

They said the farmers are not interested in purchasing the imported fertilisers, saying that these are making their agricultural land infertile.

Ruhul Amin Buiyan Bakul, president of Brahmanbaria District Fertiliser Association, said the quality of fertiliser imported from China is poor. But they ZFCL authorities are forcing them to take the low quality fertiliser with ZFCL one.

Denying the allegation of the dealers, ZFCL managing director said the quality of fertiliser imported from China is not poor. It was a decision of the higher authority to give 50 percent foreign fertiliser with the ZFCL one to every dealer, headed.

'Katka tragedy day' observed at KU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Teachers and students of Khulna University (KU) observed 'Katka Tragedy Day' yesterday.

On this day in 2004, nine final year students of architecture department of Khulna University and two students of mechanical department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), Dhaka, met watery grave in the Bay near Katka while on a trip to the Sundarbans.

The day's programmes included wearing to black badges, mourning procession, placing of wreaths at the memorial for Katka victims, milad at the university mosque after Zohr prayers, feeding the destitute and condolence meeting. Vice Chancellor Prof Mohammad Saifuddin Shah led the mourn-

ing procession in the morning.

The Katka victims are Arnaz Rifat Rupa, Kausar Ahmed Khan, Ashrafuzzaman Toha, Kazi Abdul Mueed bin Walid, Munadil Raihan bin Walid alias Shuvo, Abdullahhel-Baki, Maksudul Aziz, Mostazi Nipun, Touhidur Enam Apu and Mahmudur Rahman Russel of Khulna University, and Shamiul Hasan Khan and Shamsul Arefin Shakil of Buet.

A group of 78 students of Khulna University and 20 others, including the two Buet students, set out from the campus on the night of March 12, 2004 for Sundarbans by launch.

They reached Katka at 11:00am the following day. At around 1:30 pm, they went to sea beach to take bath. Suddenly, 11 of them were washed away by a wave.

LAUKATHI AND LOHALIA AT PATUAKHALI

Rivers narrowing as grabbers active

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Laukathi and Lohalia rivers in the district are narrowing at different points as grabbers are building concrete structures on the foreshore.

There has been no action to stop land grabbing on the rivers while a proposal sent by the district administration to the land ministry for handing over around 25 acres of foreshore land to BIWTA (Bangladesh Inland Transport Authority) four years ago is still waiting approval.

BIWTA set up its Patuakhali office in 1975. According to Port Act 1966 and Port Rules 1976, 50-yard foreshore from highest water level should be under the control of BIWTA. But local BIWTA office does not have any authority over the

foreshore land as district administration is yet to hand it over to them by fixing boundary.

Land department of district administration and BIWTA jointly conducted a survey in September 2006 to fix up the boundary of foreshore land of Laukathi and Lohalia rivers flowing by the district town to the east and north.

After a survey from Patuakhali Bridge to 2 No dam in Jainkathi, the joint team measured 25.4 acres of foreshore land and the district administration on August 24 in 2006 sent a proposal to the land ministry for approval to hand over the foreshore land to BIWTA. But the ministry is yet take any step in this regard.

During a recent visit to the New Market area, this correspondent saw a number of

permanent structures under construction on the grabbed portion of the shore land.

"We could not maintain the foreshore land as it is yet to be handed over to us. The river channel is becoming narrow as some influential men are grabbing our land and building structures there," said Mostafizur Rahman, assistant director of Patuakhali BIWTA.

Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner Md Reaz Ahmed said, "We earlier prepared a map of the foreshore land and sent it to land ministry for approval. We also sent several letters to the authorities concerned demanding immediate steps in this regard. After getting approval we will hand over the foreshore land to BIWTA as soon as possible."

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

Housewife beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Housewife Rafeja Khatun, 25, was beaten to death allegedly by her husband for dowry at Jhutitola Maskhola village in Sadar upazila yesterday. Husband Ruhul Amin fled the scene after the incident. According to the victim's family members, Ruhul Amin married Rafeja three years ago being assured of getting Tk 50,000 as dowry. But Rafeja's family failed to pay the dowry. Because of it Ruhul Amin beat her mercilessly. She got severe head injuries and died on the way to Sadar Hospital in the afternoon.

Grocer stabbed to death

UNB, Bogra

A grocer was found dead beside his shop at Bijrul Mia Para village in Nandigram upazila yesterday. The victim was identified as Abdul Jalil, 45, son of Afsar Ali of the village. Police said some unidentified assailants attacked Jalil while he was coming to his shop after having dinner at his house on Friday night. The gang stabbed Jalil indiscriminately killing him on the spot. Locals found his body beside the shop yesterday morning and informed local police.

Two girls drown in Khulna

UNB, Khulna

Two girls drowned in a pond at Noakata village in Paikgachha upazila on Wednesday. The deceased were identified as Rikta, 6, daughter of Korban Sarder of Noakata village and Tahera, 7, daughter of Abbas of nearby Godaipur village. Tahera came to visit her maternal uncle Korban's house recently. Family sources said Rikta and Tahera drowned in an adjacent pond while taking bath at about 1:00 pm. They did not know how to swim.

15 houses gutted

UNB, Naogaon

At least 15 houses were gutted in a fire at Bakshabari village in Manda upazila on Thursday. Witnesses said the fire originated from a stove at the kitchen of Mozahar Hossain and soon engulfed the adjacent houses. Local people tamed the blaze after two hours of frantic efforts. The affected house owners claimed that cash and other valuables worth over Tk 10 lakh were gutted in the blaze.

Teenage girl raped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A Dakhil examinee was allegedly gang raped at Auvirampur village under Atghoria police station in the early hours of Thursday. Police arrested two boys of the village in connection with the rape. The victim was admitted to Pabna General Hospital in critical condition on Thursday afternoon. Sources said the 16-year-old victim girl was staying at his aunt's residence for the purpose of examination. The culprits entered the house and raped her as nobody was in the house. Police later arrested two in connection with the incident. They are Md Khorshed Alam, 17, and Masud Rana, 18, of the same village.

Youth's body recovered

UNB, Barguna

Police recovered the body of an unidentified young man from a water-body in Pathorghata upazila on Friday. On information, police recovered the body of the young man aged about 25 from Niljathimara beel in the morning. Police said miscreants might have strangled the man after torture and later dumped the body into the beel. The body also bore several injury marks in the throat and face.



PHOTO: COURTESY

Shahin Akter Reni, wife of Rajshahi city Mayor Khairuzzaman Liton, speaking at a function organised by Foundation for Women and Child Assistance, a non-governmental organisation, at Hargram of Rajshahi city, marking the International Women's Day recently.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmer and agronomists expect a higher yield of wheat in the northern region this season as plants have grown well due to favourable weather condition. Photo shows a wheat field at Akcha village of Thakurgaon district.

Wheat output in north likely to exceed target

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Farmers and agronomists are expecting a bumper production of wheat in the northern region this season as the plants have grown well due to favourable weather condition.

Prolonged winter and timely irrigation has helped wheat plants in the area to grow fast, said Dr Dinabandhu Pandith, principal scientific officer of Wheat Research Centre (WRC) in Dinajpur.

About 1.15 lakh hectares of land -- 53,000 hectares in Thakurgaon, 23,347 hectares in Dinajpur, 14,550 hectares in Panchagarh, 4,060 hectares in Rangpur, 2,080 hectares in Gaibandha, 12,050 hectares in Kurigram, 1,171 hectares in Lalmonirhat and 5,450 hectares in Nilphamari district in this season.

Production target in the eight northern districts is 2.77 lakh tonnes.

The target is likely to exceed much as farmers are expecting to get 12 to 15 maunds (one maund is equal to 37.32 kg) of wheat per bigha (0.3306 acre) of land and harvesting will start in the last week of March, DAE officials and farmers said.

The farmers faced trouble in collecting quality seeds at the beginning of the season as Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation failed to supply insufficient amount of seeds.

Farmers overcame the situation by using locally preserved seeds and buying seeds from private companies at higher rates.

The farmers of Thakurgaon, the highest wheat producing district in the country, last year produced 1.32 lakh tonnes of wheat from 57,500 hectares of land while the total production was 9.58 lakh tonnes from 4.39 lakh hect-

ares of land across the country, DAE sources said.

This season, about 3.69 lakh hectares of land have been bought under wheat cultivation to produce 10.20 lakh tonnes of wheat in the country.

Wheat cultivation is gaining popularity in the region due to its increasing demand, good prices, easy cultivation process and lower production cost than that of IRRI-Boro, farmers and DAE officials said.

"I have decided to cultivate wheat considering its growing demand and high price in the market," said Shahidul Islam, 42, of Farabari village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Cultivation of wheat, requiring only three times irrigation, is much easier and less costly than paddy cultivation, Shamsuzzoha of Shakoya village in Boda upazila of Panchagarh said.

Production cost of wheat on per bigha of land is Tk 4500 at the maximum while it needs around Tk 8500 to cultivate IRRI-Boro crops, he said.

WRC has developed two new high yielding varieties of wheat Hashi and Tista that will be introduced at the farmers' level in next season, Dr Dinabandhu said.

Now the farmers use high yielding varieties of wheat seeds Shatabdi, Prodeep, Shourav, Bijoy and Gouab that are developed by WRC.

The country produces 9 lakh to 10 lakh tonnes of wheat per year against the demand of about 30.35 lakh tonnes, WRC officials said.

November 15 to November 30 is the peak season for wheat cultivation. Good temperature, sandy-loamy soil and easy availability of water are needed for the cultivation.

'Kidnapped' 7 years ago arrested from hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A man allegedly kidnapped seven years ago, was arrested from the Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital Friday afternoon.

Police said, Joybanu Bibi of village Noapara in Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj district filed a general diary with the police on 14 June, 2003 alleging that her husband Lal Miah had been kidnapped by some villagers in the previous night.

She accused 10 people, including Mahram Ali, Abdul Gafur, Shahid Mia and others, who were later arrested by the law enforcers.

Police also submitted charge sheet against the accused in the case on 16 May of 2007. The case is still under trial in the district & Sessions Judge's Court of Habiganj.

Police said Lal Miah remained in hiding for the last seven years for reasons unknown.

Days ago, he came to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital to see one of his children under treatment there.

On information, Kotwali police caught Lal Miah from the hospital and handed him over to the Nabiganj police.

Another betel leaf garden 'torched' in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Another 'mysterious' fire yesterday destroyed betel leaves worth Tk 5 cr on 100 bighas at a garden at Khorda Roygram village under Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah.

While visiting the spot the affected owners, mostly Hindus, told this correspondent that this was for the third time that criminals belonging to some dishonest influential people have torched betel leaf gardens.

Most of them have borrowed money from different banks and NGOs. Besides, they took loan from different betel leaf wholesalers in Dhaka.

Bhanu Mallik, Amal Sen, Nimai Das and Arup Sen of Khorda Raigram village said, they took loan from Grameen bank. How will we repay the loan and maintain family?, the worried farmers said.

Elderly Krishna Gopal Mitra said, seeing the fire he rushed to the spot and informed fire service. After 35 minutes fire fighter units from Kotchandpur and Jhenidah Sadar reached the spot and extinguished the fire with the help of villagers, he said.

Betel leaf garden owner Palash Das of Khorda Raigram village said the fire incident followed a political feud in the village between BNP and AL. But he would not give details for fear of reprisal.

Ashit Das said, he has no other means for living. "If this goes on how we will cultivate betel leaf and maintain our family?," he said.

Earlier on February 2, betel leaves on 11 bighas were gutted in the same village causing around Tk 60 lakh loss to the farmers.

On March 10 betel leaves on 7 bighas were gutted in the same village.

Hundreds of locals later demanded setting up a fire station at Kaliganj upazila for urgent action in case of fire incidents in the area. They said each upazila but Kaliganj has fire service office.

Firemen of Kotchandpur upazila said, the loss due to the devastating fire will be around Tk 2 crore. But the victims and locals estimated the loss at more than Tk 5 crore.

Superintendent of police Rezaul Islam, local lawmaker Abdul Mannan, Kaliganj upazila chairman Anwarul Azim, Kaliganj upazila UNO Anjuman Ara Begum and AL leaders Israil Hossain and others visited the spot and expressed their grave concern.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rama Rani Roy said she visited the spot but nobody opened mouth in this regard. She said she will investigate the incidents and take necessary action against the culprits.



PHOTO: STAR

Another betel leaf garden on 100 bighas of land burns as criminals set fire to it at Khorda Roygram village under Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah district yesterday.