

Victims of sheer neglect

Potatoes of hundreds of poor growers in Dinajpur get rotten in a cold storage

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

Hundreds of marginal potato growers of Dinajpur Sadar upazila yesterday demanded compensation as thousands of sacks of potatoes they kept in a cold storage at Gopalganj village under the upazila have rotten due to alleged negligence of the cold storage authorities.

Addressing a press conference at the local press club, the hapless farmers said they kept potatoes at Uttara Heemghar Limited owned by a ruling party man as he assured them of an alternative source of power supply to the cold storage during load shedding.

They alleged though the authorities assured them of frequent power supply to the cold storage by using emergency generator, it has remained out of order for several years.

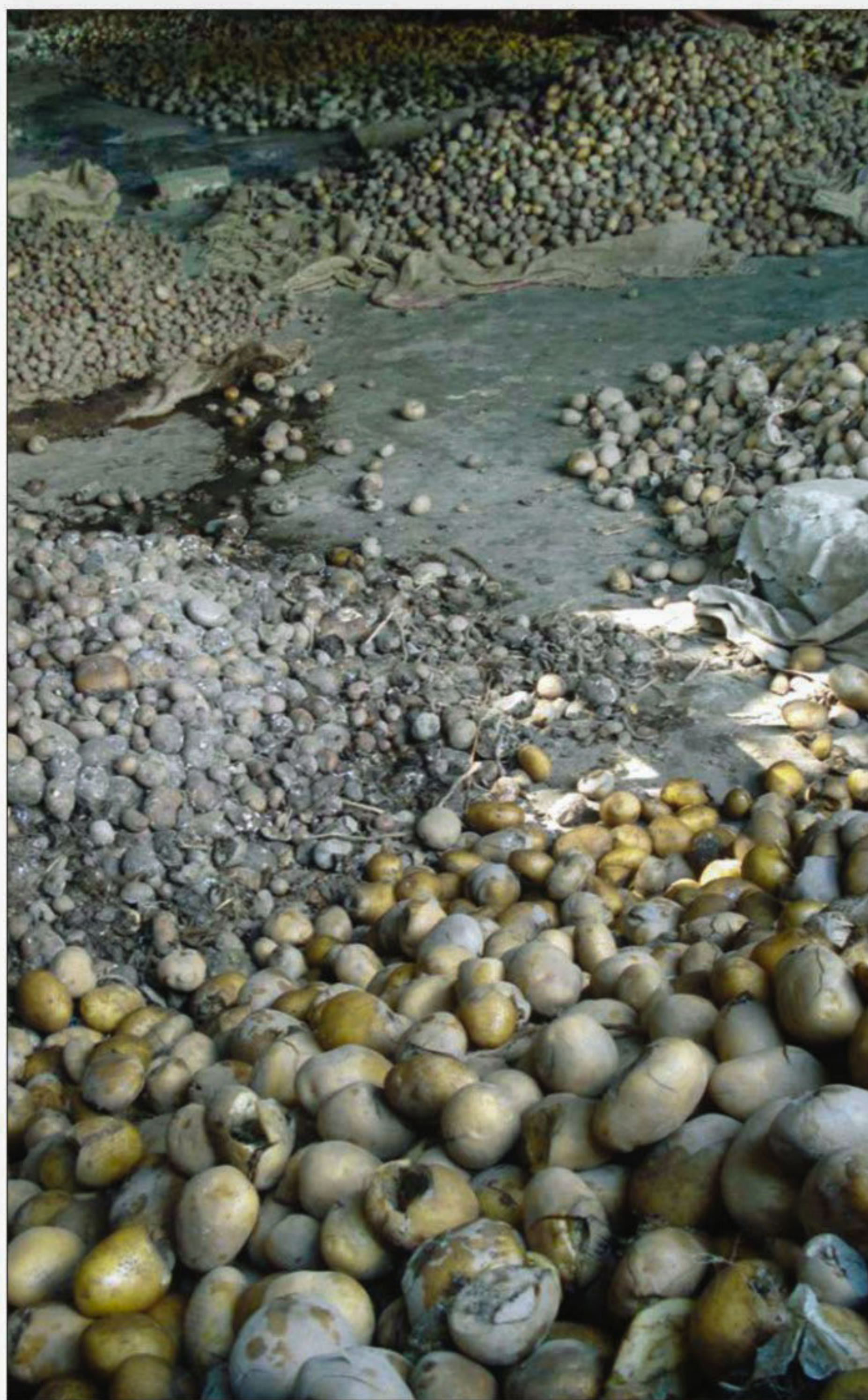
At least 90 percent of the potatoes in the cold storage have so far rotten, the growers claimed, putting blame on the authorities concerned for not taking steps to save the potatoes from being damaged. They also sought prime minister's help to get compensation for their losses.

President of Chehelgazi Krishak Kalyan Samity Pear Uddin Ahmed, General Secretary Md Nazrul Islam, potato growers Nazrul Islam, Saiful Islam and Atiur Islam addressed the press conference.

They said Uttara Heemghar Ltd has storage capacity of about 38,000 sacks of potatoes with 85kg each, but the authorities have kept about 54,000 sacks this season assuring farmers of alternative source of power during outage.

They threatened tougher agitation if their demand for compensation was not met by Sunday.

They said they also submitted a memorandum to acting deputy commissioner Md Shamsul Alam on Sunday last seeking his help. But the acting DC told us to file a case



A large amount of potato, kept in cold storage Uttara Himghar Ltd at Gopalganj village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila, rots as the owner, a ruling party man, allegedly overloaded the storage and failed to arrange smooth power supply to keep the cooling system operative.

against the cold storage, a farmers said.

An employee of the cold storage seeking anonymity said 6,000 sacks of potatoes have so far rotten due to lack of power supply.

Nicholas Maddi, caretaker of Uttara Heemghar Ltd, told this correspondent that the power generator of the cold storage has remained inoperative for several years.

This correspondent could

not contact Executive Director of Uttara Heemghar Limited Md Mirza Ashfaque Hossain, also the joint secretary of Dinajpur district Awami League, as he is now in China.

28 houses, godown gutted in Ctg fire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A devastating fire gutted 28 houses and a warehouse damaging property worth Tk 20 lakh in the port city yesterday. However, no casualty was reported.

Sources said, the fire broke out at the house of Mahajonghata under Potenga police station at around 1:45pm and engulfed the thatched and semi-pucca houses and the godown. Two fire brigade units from Dock and EPZ stations rushed to the spot and doused the fire at around 3:00pm.

The fire originated from electric short-circuits, locals said.

NGO chief arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

Head of a Joypurhat based non-government organisation (NGO) was arrested on Tuesday on charge of fraud.

Arrestee Razia Sultana Sheli, 35, is chairman of Nabadiganta Mohila Unnayan Sangstha.

Police said Razia collected money from the distressed villagers of Dewanpara, Sheikhpura and Natunhat villages of Joypurhat Sadar upazila assuring them of giving jobs, sewing machine and VGF cards.

But the villagers alleged they got nothing in last two years.

On Thursday, the victims gathered in front of the NGO demanding their money back. Later they went to Joypurhat police station demanding her arrest. On Tuesday police arrested her from her residence.

After the arrest, the affected villagers held a human chain in front of the NGO demanding her punishment. Later police on Tuesday night filed two cases against her. She was sent to jail yesterday

Acting KHDC chief also from AL

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Khagrachhari

The four newly appointed councillors of reconstituted Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC) yesterday selected Kujendra Lal Tripura as acting chairman of KHDC.

Kujendra Lal, also senior vice president of Khagrachhari district Awami League, is one of the four KHDC councillors who were appointed by the government on Tuesday.

Other councillors are district Awami League Vice President Biro Kishore Chakma Atal, acting Secretary Chaito Aung Marma and Joint



Kujendra Lal Tripura

Secretary Md Sahab Uddin.

The four councillors took over charge at 9:00am yesterday, said KHDC sources.

However, no one was appointed as chairman of KHDC as a case filed by ex-chairman Monindra Lal Tripura over the post is now under jurisdiction of the High Court, KHDC sources said.

KHDC Executive Officer Md Abdur Rahman Tarafdar said Kujendra Lal Tripura was made acting chairman as per Section 14 of KHDC Act 1989.

According to the Act, if the post of chairman remains vacant for any reason an indigenous councillor, selected by four councillors, will work as acting chairman until the government posts new chairman, he said.

DIKES COLLAPSE IN TWO DISTRICTS

Boro on 800 hectares goes under water

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Boro crops on around 800 hectares went under water on Tuesday as dikes collapsed in Kishoreganj and Netrakona districts.

In Kishoreganj, boro plants on at least 750 hectares submerged on Tuesday due to breach in the embankment of Prayag Haor (water body) in Karimganj upazila, according to UNB.

Locals said water level of Dhanu River increased following onrush of hill water from the upstream. The villagers through their voluntary works repaired the embankment 20-25 days ago.

But due to heavy pressure of water, a huge breach developed in the embankment washing away boro paddy on a

huge area Tuesday morning.

Locals blamed the district administration for not taking timely and necessary measures to protect the embankment.

Farmers of Sutarpara, Puran Chandra, Naya Chandra and Saguli villages are worst affected.

Our Correspondent in Netrakona reports: Fresh floods in the district damaged another 15 hectares of boro crops in Mohanganj upazila as a portion of Char Haijda flood protection embankment washed away at Gazipur point on Tuesday.

Onrush of hill water from across the border caused the breach, Water Development Board (WDB) sources said.

Sources said, thousands of locals worked round the clock

for last 15 days for protecting the Char-Haijda flood protection embankment but all their efforts went in vain. Water level of River Dhanu in Mohanganj has registered sharp rise and flowing over danger level. Apara and Kendua upazila may be flooded in next 24 years, they feared.

Netrakona Agriculture Extension Department sources said, three consecutive rounds of flood damaged at least 55 thousands hectares of boro crops in the district.

In the first week of this month flash flood damaged boro on 25 hectares in Khaliajuri, Mohanganj and Madan upazilas.

Again in the second week flood waters damaged 15 more hectares of boro in Kalmakanda upazila.

CLASH OVER TENDER DROPPING

Charges pressed against 12 in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police yesterday submitted charge sheet against 12 people, mostly leaders and workers of Awami League and its front organisations, in a case filed for creating anarchy over Tk 14 crore tender of district Public Works Department.

Sources said though most of the accused are former and present leaders and activists of AL and its front organisations, their political identities have been avoided in the charge sheet.

Mokhlesur Rahman, investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Judicial Magistrate Court of AKM Fazlul Haque. The court issued arrest warrants against six absconding accused and ordered the police to attach their properties.

The charge-sheeted accused are former president of Adarsha College BCL Ibne Foysal Ripon, Organising Secretary of Muktijoddy Projanma League Alal and treasurer of district unit BCL Habibur Rahman Sumon, former Jubo League ward unit president Murad Hossain, district Jubo

League sports secretary Momotazul Islam and assistant sports secretary Kalam, Jubo League leader Labu and former Ramnagar ward unit Jubo League president Nabi, ward unit Jubo League leader Murad Hossain, district AL leader Mostafizur Rahman alias Jewel and Shajahan Ali and Azmat.

Six of the accused were arrested on April 9, one day after a clash between two factions of the ruling party over the tender issue using lethal weapons that left 10 people injured. Later, general bidders dropped their tender documents in police protection.

Children at orphanage revolt in Panchagarh

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

Children residing at Panchagarh Shishu Paribar, an orphanage, yesterday went on the rampage, damaging furniture, windows, doors and official documents of the institution.

They demanded removal of the acting superintendent and other staff of the institution, alleging their mistreatment of the orphans.

At around 10:00am, the children shut the main gate of the institution, ransacked superintendent's office and classrooms and set fire to official documents. They later brought out a process-

sion on the campus.

The children said officials of the orphanage often torture them on trivial matters and force them to take stale foods. "If any child of the orphanage feels sick, they hurl abuse at him instead of providing treatment."

Acting Superintendent Md Shahidul Haque was not present while other officials of the orphanage managed to flee during the incident.

On information, Police Superintendent and the officer-in-charge of Panchagarh Sadar Police Station rushed to the spot and brought the situation

under control.

Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Nazrul Islam visited the spot and sat with the agitating children to know their grievances.

Tanil Islam and Shohaq, class nine students of the orphanage, alleged the superintendent and other officials torture them on trifle matters. They also supply stale foods to us almost every day, the children said, "If we feel sick and want medicine, health assistant Bhavendranath Barman beat us", said a boy.

Bhavendranath denied the allegation.

Teacher gets life for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Sathkira

A schoolteacher was sentenced to life term rigorous imprisonment yesterday on charge of raping a student.

The court also fined him Tk 5,000, in default to suffer more three months of rigorous imprisonment.

Convict Sukhen Chandra Mondal, 24, is son of Sudhir Kumar Mondal of village Porakatla in Shyamnagar upazila and teacher of Sundarban Forest High School.

Judge SM Rezanur Rahman of the Sathkira Women and Children Repression Prevention Court delivered the verdict.

According to prosecution story Sukhen made an illicit relationship with his student.

As the 13-year-old girl became pregnant locals pressed the teacher to marry her. But Sukhen made an attempt for abortion following which the hapless girl fell sick and died on April 27 in 2007.

Youth beaten to death

UNB, Mymensingh

A car mechanic was beaten to death by criminals at RK Mission Road in the district town Tuesday noon.

Victim Zakir Hossain Raju, 21, was son of Abul Kashem of the town.

Police quoting family sources said a gang picked up Raju from his RK Mission Road's house at 11:00am and beat him mercilessly, leaving him critically injured.

Locals rushed Raju to Mymensingh Medical College and Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Police arrested Moti Miah, 45, Kala Miah, 42, and wife of Kuddus of the area suspecting their involvement with the murder.



Farmers cutting immature boro paddy at Goderhat village in Gaibandha Sadar upazila as hailstorms during the last three days damaged the standing crops only a few days before its ripening.

TORRENTIAL RAIN, STORMS FOR THREE DAYS

Farmers cutting unripe boro in Gaibandha to avoid further loss

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Gaibandha

Farmers of Gaibandha district are worried about harvest as torrential rain accompanied by hailstorm lashed vast tract of boro fields during the last three days.

During a visit to Kamajani union in Gaibandha Sadar upazila, this correspondent saw many farmers cutting unripe boro crops in the low lying fields, already ravaged

by hailstorm and rainwater.

"We are worried as the sky remains overcast with clouds and torrential wind blows every now and then," said Fazlu Mia, a marginal farmer of village Uttar Gideri.

"I have cultivated boro on two bighas of land, but sudden hailstorm damaged the crops, only ten days ahead of harvesting," said farmer Saidur Rahman of Hatiya.

Boro plants on the low-

lying areas, especially marshy lands, are now nearly submerged by rainwater, said farmer Lal Mia.

Farmers in many places have started harvesting early variety of boro, but the prospect of late variety crop is uncertain as it will take 15 days more to harvest it, said Amzad Hossain, a farmer of Boali village in Sadar upazila.

"The nor'wester accompanied by hailstorm

affected 3,425 farmers in five unions. Due to damage of crop on 615.15 hectares of land the production will decrease by 1,882 tonnes. This season a total of 18,500 hectares of land have been brought under boro cultivation in Sadar upazila against the production target of 72,000 tonnes," said Gaibandha Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Mozaffar Ahmed.



PHOTO: STAR

Children residing at the government orphanage in Panchagarh town go on rampage yesterday protesting torture on trivial matters and supply of stale food.