

Pest attacks sugarcane fields in Mohimaganj 'mill zone' areas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Prospect of sugarcane production in Mohimaganj Sugar Mills areas in Gaibandha seems bleak following widespread pest attack that badly affected sugar production ahead of the coming crushing season.

According to mill sources, this year only 7,000 acres of land have been brought under sugarcane cultivation against the target of 12,000 acres under mill zone areas of Gobindaganj, Sadullapur, Palashbari and Gaibandha Sadar upazilas.

Most of the areas affected by pest attack were identified in Gobindaganj where stem borer, (locally called mazada poka) attacked vast areas of sugarcane fields including mill

farm areas of Sahebganj and affected the crops are drying up, said local people.

Despite spraying pesticide no fruitful result is marked and the pest attack is spreading rapidly, said Altaf Hossain, a farmer of Kaiyaganj village in Gobindaganj upazila.

Areas of sugarcane cultivation this season has been less than that of stipulated target due to shortage of seeds, said sources at the agriculture section of sugar mills.

Besides, last year huge quantities of sugarcane were used for molasses production through power crushers and other manual equipment and consumed many of the cane as oral drink.

Molasses has great demand in the rural areas and so growers are eagerly

supplying sugarcane to the power crusher owners in exchange of ready cash, said Hamidul Islam, a molasses trader of Mohimaganj Bazar.

It is better to supply cane to local power crusher owners as getting bills from mill authorities often takes long time, said another farmer Afzal Ali.

This year the mills have a target to produce 4,900 tonnes of sugar by crushing 70,000 tonnes of sugarcane in the coming crushing season.

"The pest attack marked alarming in the mill zone areas, it is due to changing trend of climate and we are suggesting cut down the attacked cane and are getting some positive result from the growers," said Madon Mohan Shah, managing director of Mohimaganj Sugar Mills.

Tk 4.67 lakh rice looted from truck in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Criminals robbed a Chittagong-bound rice-laden truck from Gazipur and left it after looting 280 bags of rice worth Tk 4.67 lakh early Monday.

Authority of N Zaman Automatic Rice Mill of Pulhat commercial area of Dinajpur filed a general diary (GD) with Dinajpur Police Station the same day.

On Sunday, authorities of N Zaman Automatic Rice Mill loaded 280 bags (each containing 85kg) of rice in a truck (Dhaka Metro Ta-14-6955) that left for National Rice Agencies, a rice trader of Pahartali in Chittong, said police referring to the GD.

In the early hours of Monday, a gang of robbers stopped the truck at Gazipur, beat up its driver and helper and left with the rice-laden truck, said Md Ruhul Amin, manager of the rice mill.

On Tuesday, the empty truck was recovered from about four kilometres south of the spot of robbery, said the manager of the rice mill.

With injuries inflicted by the criminals, the driver and the helper of the truck were admitted to a hospital in Tongi.

The robbery of a truck-load of rice has raised concerns among the rice traders of Dinajpur.

Stalker arrested in C'nawabganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'nawabganj

Police arrested a youth for stalking a schoolgirl in Namoshankarabati area in Chapainawabganj town yesterday.

The arrestee is Mesbahul Haque, 20, son of Mozammel Haque of Matilapara-Namoshankarabati area under Chapainawabganj Municipality.

Mesbahul teased the student of Namoshankarabati Girls' High School in front of the school on Wednesday. As her father lodged a complaint with Sadar Police Station yesterday, law enforcers rushed to Namoshankarabati area at around 11:00am and arrested Mesbahul.

Man killed over land dispute in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A man was killed over land dispute at Shahapara village under Debiganj upazila of Panchagarh district on Wednesday.

The dead was identified as Mohadeb Kumar, 30, son of Sanjoy Kumar of the village.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Debiganj Police Station Mominul Islam told this correspondent over cellphone that Mohadeb engaged in an altercation with his neighbour Prasanno Kumar and his brother Mohan Roy over a disputed land Tuesday afternoon.

At one stage, Prasanno hit on the head of Mohadeb, leaving him seriously injured. He was rushed to Debiganj Health Complex later shifted to Rangpur Medical College and Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries on Wednesday.

Victim's father filed a case accusing three people, including Prasanno, his brother Mohan Roy,



Teachers, students and guardians join human chains in Nilphamari town yesterday demanding punishment to the killers of college teacher Mizanur Rashid in Bagatipara upazila of Natore district and Chanpa Rani in Modhukhali upazila of Faridpur district. Wrath of the criminals was vented on them as Mizan had protested stalking of his female students while Chanpa Rani had complained to local authorities against stalkers of her daughters.

Two outlaws shot dead by rival partymen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two members of outlawed outfits were shot dead over internal feuds in two incidents in Pabna yesterday.

The deceased were identified as regional leader of outlawed Sharbahara faction Mostak alias Milon, 30, and Purbo Banglar Communist Party's Janajudha faction cadre Rana Ahmed, 27.

Sheikh Jilur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Bera Police Station said outlawed party rivals shot Milon at Notakhola

Gogadia Char, a remote Jamuna shoal of Bera upazila.

Police rushed to the spot and recovered the body around 4:30pm.

"Milon is one of the prime accused in a murder case filed for killing three policemen at Daspara in Dhalarchar of Bera upazila on July 20," said the OC.

He was absconding since then.

Police have sent the victim's body for an autopsy. Meanwhile, Chatmohar police recovered bullet-hit body of Rana from a field of

Kuabasi village in Chatmohar upazila yesterday morning.

Locals and police sources said criminals picked up Rana from his residence early yesterday.

Md. Saiful Islam, officer-in-charge of Chatmohar Police Station, said Rana might have been shot dead over party's internal feud.

Rana was accused in several cases including two cases for murdering two police men, he added.

Victim's body has been sent to Pabna General Hospital for an autopsy.

Fake Rab official held

UNB, Naogaon

Police arrested a fake RAB officer from Sapahe upazila headquarters on Wednesday.

The arrested was identified as Russell alias Milon, 35, son of Ramiz Uddin of Moheshpur village in Patnitala upazila.

Local said Russell came to a bazaar in the area at around 9:00am, identifying himself as Rab official and demanded huge amount of toll from traders businessmen.

He also threatened to take action against the traders if his demand went unheeded.

Being suspicious of his conduct, local people caught him and later handed him over to the police.

A fraud case was filed against him.



A sugarcane field affected by stem borer at Bakchar in Kamardaha union in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha district.

Teacher's savagery on class II boy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Victim of merciless beating by his teacher on Tuesday, a class II student, is undergoing treatment at a local clinic.

The injured boy is Mahin Hossain, 7, a class II student of Khalishpur Rotary School in the city and son of Nazim Hossain.

Mahmuda Khatun Rupa, a teacher of the school, caned the minor boy right and left in the classroom at 9:30am on Tuesday as he went to

toilet to respond to the call of nature without her permission.

Mahin was soon admitted to a clinic as he fell sick after a bout of vomiting in his classroom, said his father Nazim Hossain.

Aggrieved by the incident of merciless corporal punishment meted out by the boy's teacher for no fault, over a hundred guardians demonstrated in front of the headmaster's office on Wednesday demanding legal action against teacher Mahmuda.

On Wednesday afternoon, the headmaster issued a show cause notice to Mahmuda Khatun Rupa, asking her to explain as to why stern action should not be taken against her for caning the boy in defiance of the government order not to give corporal punishment to students.

Mahmuda, who has remained absent from her school since Wednesday, could not be reached over phone despite several attempts for her comment on the incident.

Advertorial

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Wave of changes in rural Bangladesh: Laily Begum, Rokeya Begum and Shilpi's story

Eradicating extreme poverty and hunger along with promoting gender equality, and empowering women are two of the cornerstones of the Millennium Development Goals. While they are geared towards diverging areas and sectors, in many ways they are interlinked. Often women are left behind in the development bandwagon; their marginalization eventually leads them into poverty which is also a circle completed with hunger.

Women empowerment is just as important as eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, and if somehow an initiative can do both, then it is nothing short of a godsend. At Grameenphone such an initiative exists with the assistance of Grameen Telecom and it is called the Village Phone program. The Village Phone Program itself is empowered with strong, consistent nationwide network facility of Grameenphone. The aim of this program is to provide a good income-earning opportunity to more than 500,000 rural people, mostly women who are borrower members of Grameen Bank, by making them Village Phone operators in rural areas.

In 2005 Bangladesh made quite a breakthrough, as there was gender parity in both primary and secondary education, the fact remained that there was no real parity in tertiary education level, which left women without proper representation in educational institutions. When situations such as that occur, women must then turn onto their entrepreneurial spirit to succeed, and that is exactly what happened with the proliferation of the Village Phone.

Laily Begum, initially a housewife of a day laborer of the village Patia in Dakkhin Khan is the first woman whose life has been changed radically by Village Phone. With her husband's suggestion, Laily took loan from Grameen Bank and initiated her Village Phone enterprise through which she



started earning 20,000 to 25,000 taka a month and even managed to save a little. With the savings, she and her husband set up five shops, running some themselves and renting out the rest. That spelt an end to Laily's poverty. Her three children now go to school.

Rokeya is another village phone lady from Manikganj. She transformed her life a few years ago after buying a mobile phone, and to this day she is reaping the benefits of that purchase. "Six years ago, I was just a simple housewife; I did not do anything except cooking, cleaning and looking after our children". One day, her husband fell ill and they did not even have enough money to take him to a hospital. That was when the alarm really started ringing which drove her to step forward to self-reliance and village phone seemed to be the best option for her. Soon she was earning up to Tk. 10,000 a month. "This was the biggest decision of my life and I knew if it failed, my family would fall apart"

Shilpi, now owes her middle class way of life to the mobile phone. "Five years ago, I wanted to be more than just a housewife; so I purchased a mobile phone. Within weeks of taking out a loan, I was able to pay it back, and since then I have continued to make good

money to this day". She stated that, most of her income comes from reload charges, which is a sizable sum. Her husband, a constable in the police station is proud of his wife. He says - "The shop next to our house is now better known as Bhabhi's Doka, and I am being identified as her husband rather than people calling her my wife".

Rokeya, Shilpi and Laily are just a few out of thousands, who have prospered through the village phone program. We are proud to have assisted them and hundreds of thousands of others like them achieving their dreams, so that our development bandwagon keeps on striding forward.

Grameen Bank, Grameen Telecom and Grameenphone's joint initiative like Village Phone have thus been changing the lives of indigent women all over Bangladesh. Laily Begum is a pioneer; she has led the way for women to do away with poverty, and bringing meaning to their lives.

With this end in view, it is proved beyond doubt that even the illiterate poor women can confidently handle the state of the art information technology, and thereby positively contributing in changing their lives for better.

RAHIMAFROOZ

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