

Boro farmers worried as quality seeds scanty, pricey

Production fall feared in 8 northern districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Farmers of eight northern districts, the country's prime paddy growing area, are worried in the beginning of the boro season as supply of quality seeds is much less than demand while unscrupulous traders are marketing inferior seeds under different brand names.

As supply of quality seeds produced and marketed by BADC (Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation) is too meager and pricey, farmers are compelled to buy mostly low quality seeds from other sources, reports our Nilphamari correspondent.

Additional director's office of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rangpur set a target to bring 8 lakh 6 thousand hectares of land in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts under boro cultivation which is about 31,000 hectares higher than the previous year.

High yielding variety (HYV) paddy will be produced on 5,59,293 hectares, hybrid on 2,44,126 hectares and local variety on 2491 hectares.

DAE sources said that requirement of HYV paddy seeds on a hectare is 20kg, that of hybrid and local variety paddy in same area are 15 kg and 30 kg respectively. Accordingly, the demand of boro seeds in eight northern districts would be 14.5 thousand tonnes.

Officially, boro cultivation season began on November 16 and will continue till the end of December.

Now aman harvesting is going on in full swing and large areas of land have been vacated. Farmers are busy in preparing their vacant lands for boro cultivation.

Farmers said that they usually prefer boro seeds of BADC as those are grown and preserved in scientific way, making them free from virus and fungus and high yielding.

BADC supplied only about 4.05 thousand MT of boro seeds, which meets only 28% of total demand in eight northern districts, BADC sources said, adding that official price of a 10 kg bag of boro seed is fixed at Tk 330 to



Farmers spray boro seeds at their field in Polhat village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila. Inset, a sack of pricey boro seeds processed by Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation.

Tk 350, depending on variety. But in most cases, farmers are not getting their required variety of paddy seeds from BADC sale centres. They alleged that they had to buy a 10 kg bag boro seed of popular BRRI Dhan-28 and BRRI Dhan-29 from seed dealers for Tk 450-Tk 500.

Visiting different seed markets in the region including Tengonmari Haat, Suti Bari Haat of Nilphamari, and Sakoa Haat of Panchagarh, this correspondent found that boro seeds are selling for high prices. Kept in colourful bags in the names of different companies, they remain mostly out of quality testing.

A 10kg bag of boro seed of different companies other than BADC is selling for Tk 600 to Tk 650 while a 2kg bag of hybrid variety paddy, mostly

imported from India, is selling for Tk 240-Tk 260. Monju Alam Sarker, field officer of Seed Certification Agency in Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat, said that his department certified only 312 MT and 103 MT of boro seeds in the two districts.

"Seeds from different districts are coming to this area for sale. Quality of those seeds is questionable. But due to manpower shortage we could not launch drive against low quality or untested seeds," he said.

Several farmers said production will be hampered due to shortage of quality seeds. Our Dinajpur correspondent reports: Amid short supply of BADC seeds farmers in the district have to pay exorbitant prices for buying quality seeds from the

appointed dealers. BADC fixed boro seeds price Tk 330 and Tk 350 for each 10kg bag. But field visit by this correspondent revealed that the farmers were collecting BADC boro seeds for Tk 550-600 per 10kg seed bag.

Many farmers are returning from BADC sales centres empty-handed as the supply of seeds is much less than the demand. An appointed dealer of Birampur upazila seeking anonymity alleged that they have to pay additional charge for collecting the seeds from the sales centres of BADC.

Denying the allegation of charging additional money from the appointed dealers of BADC, BADC Deputy Director (Seed) Md Mofazzal Hossain said, "Following report of

overcharging for BADC seeds two market monitoring committees have been formed to monitor the market." Our Gaibandha correspondent adds: Innocent farmers are being cheated as low quality boro seeds under the cover of brand companies have flooded local markets.

Most of BADC seeds supplied to the local dealers are being sold to the black marketers, alleged farmers. A bag of 10 kg BADC boro seed is selling for Tk 420 to Tk 430 against the government rate of Tk 330. DAE fixed target of boro farming on 1,22,323 hectares of land in the district this season. Hybrid will be cultivated on 25,251 hectares, HYV on 96,059 hectares and local variety on 1,022 hectares with a production target of 4,89,654 MT of rice.

Stop this nuisance

Obscene dance under the guise of jatra goes on at several places of Shaikupa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Obscene dance under the guise of jatra (open air drama) is going on at several places including Bhatari Bazar, Garaganj Bazar, Mailmari Bazar and Ashurhat-Sekhira Natun Bazar in Shaikupa upazila of Jhenidah district during the last few days.

Some unscrupulous people have also arranged gambling at Langalbandh Bazar in the same upazila.

The activities are run throughout the night, much to the disturbance of students ahead of the primary terminal and annual examinations.

In the name of jatra, some ruling party men are conducting obscene dance and other anti-social activities at Saptapally of Ashurhat-Sekhira Natun Bazar through managing the personnel of police outpost at Hatfazilpur Bazar since November 15, locals said.

Chairman of Shaikupa upazila parishad Nayeb Ali Joarder is leading the activities there, the villagers said, adding that Nayeb Ali's brother Soyeb Joarder is leading another open air drama team at Bhatari Bazar on Jhenidah-Kushitia highway, only 8 kilometres from the district headquarters.

Gambling has been arranged round the clock at Langalbandh Bazar where ganja and other harmful items are sold, villagers said, adding that many innocent people are becoming

losers due to this. Admitting organisation of the jatra at Saptapally of Ashurhat-Sekhira Natun Bazar without legal approval of the administration, in charge of Hatfazilpur police outpost Sub Inspector Madhusudan Datta said he had informed the officer in charge of Shaikupa police station of the matter.

"The upazila parishad chairman advised me to recommend the approval for open air drama at Saptapally of Ashurhat-Sekhira Natun Bazar," said Anwar Hossain, officer in charge of Shaikupa police station.

When contacted, Chairman of Shaikupa upazila parishad Nayeb Ali Joarder said, "No nude dance is being performed here. I have ordered the organisers not to hold any gambling at the jatra party compound. I have sought permission to the authority but I have not got any letter yet."

Shaikupa Upazila Nirbahi Officer Azmul Haq said, "I have joined the office recently after the Eid vacation. I will investigate the matter and inform the higher authority."

Superintendent of Police Rezaul Karim said jatra has been permitted but obscene dance and gambling is not allowed there. Necessary action will be taken if such illegal activities are run.

Asked about giving permission of jatra ahead of primary terminal examinations, he declined to make any comment.

TRIAL IN JAMALPUR, RANGPUR

Charges against 106 mutineers read out

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The special court-17 yesterday read out the charges against 52 mutineers of Six Rifles Battalion headquarters in Jamalpur while the special court-13 read out the charges against 54 rebels of Rangpur Sector headquarters and 34 Rifles Battalion under the sector the same day, report our correspondents.

Headed by Kushtia Sector Commander Col Md Nazrul Islam Sarker, the special court-17, set up at Six Battalion headquarters in Jamalpur, started trial proceedings at 11.00am and continued until 12.00 noon. Two other members of the court are Lt Col Gazi Md Salah Uddin and Major Md Ashraf Hossain.

At the beginning, Deputy Assistant Director (DAD) Md Azizul Islam of the battalion under Mymensingh sector brought allegations against 52 BDR rebels. Lt Col Md Abdul Khabir Sarker, commanding officer of the battalion, is the prosecutor, court sources said.

The court took the charges into cognisance and ordered arrest of eight of the 52 accused, who were in service until yesterday. The court also asked the authorities concerned to produce all the 52 accused before it at 8:00am today.

As per court order, the authorities concerned later arrested the eight and sent them to Jamalpur district jail.

Police arrested 44 BDR members of the battalion following a mutiny case filed against them on May 17 last year. Later the case was transferred to the District and

Session Judge Court. In Rangpur, the special court-13 read out the charges against 54 mutineers of Rangpur Sector headquarters and 34 Rifles Battalion. Of the accused, 11 are from Rangpur Sector and 43 belong to 34 Rifles Battalion under the sector.

The court, headed by Dinajpur Sector Commander Col Md Saleh Ahmad, adjourned the trial until 10:00am today. Two other members of the court are Lt Col Mahfuz Alam and Major Didar Al Latif.

Accepting the allegations brought against the accused, the court asked the authorities concerned to produce all the accused before the court on October 20.

In Khagrachhari, the trial of the mutiny case filed against 42 members of Khagrachhari BDR sector began at special court-15, set up at the sector headquarters, yesterday, according to a correspondent.

Assistant Subedar Md Serajul Islam of Khagrachhari BDR Sector, who filed the case against 42 BDR jawans after February 26, 2009, read out the charges. He alleged that the accused joined the mutiny at Khagrachhari BDR sector on February 26 last year, expressing solidarity with mutineers of BDR headquarters at Pikhana in the capital.

After hearing the charges, court chief Lt Col Zahedur Rahamn, Chittagong sector commander, asked the authorities concerned to produce all the 42 accused in the court at 9:00am today.

The special court-14, set up at Sylhet sector headquarters, resumed trial at 8:55am yesterday. As many as seven

2 arrested in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Two members of Gonotantrik Juba Forum, an associate body of anti-peace treaty outfit United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), were held yesterday by the security personnel from the office of the UPDF at Bilachhari upazila headquarters.

They were identified as Sumon Chakma, son of Shanti Lal Chakma of village Ghilachhari and Mongprue Marna, son of Mongisla Marna of village Bangal Kaba in Kengrachhari union under the upazila.

A press release issued yesterday by Sonamoni Chakma, press secretary of UPDF, said the two were preparing to go to Dhaka to attend a convention organised by UPDF and scheduled to be held on November 29.

The security personnel also shut down the UPDF upazila office yesterday, it claimed.

Leader of UPDF, Rangamati unit, Shantideb Chakam and district convener of Gonotantrik Juba Forum Mithun Chakma in a statement also condemned the incident and demanded unconditional release of their men.

7 get life for killing Bogra AL leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A court yesterday sentenced seven people to life term imprisonment for killing a union level leader of the ruling Awami League (AL).

Judge Nitai Chandra Saha of Bogra Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court-3 delivered the verdict in the case for killing AL leader Sharafat Hossain centering a land dispute in 2007.

The convicts are Nurul Amin, 55, Sekandar Khoybor, 60, Liton Ali, 26, Mahbubur Rahman, 28, Jagul Huda, 50, Mithun, 40 and Shaikat Hossain, 32.

In Pabna, a union level Awami League leader was murdered on Tuesday allegedly by the outlaws at Jagannathpur village of Failzana union in Chatmohar upazila, reports

Outlaws kill Pabna AL leader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, our correspondent.

The victim was identified as Md. Golzar Hossain, 55, son of late Ayen Uddin of the village.

Golzar was AL vice-president of Ward No-7 of Failzana union and a fish trader, said Failzana UP chairman Azad Hossain, also AL president of the union.

Sub-inspector Nazmul Hossain of Chatmohar police station said, a gang of outlawed operatives picked up Golzar from his house at about 9.00pm on Tuesday and hacked and slaughtered him near a Madrasa near his residence.

On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Pabna General Hospital morgue for autopsy yesterday morning.

A case was filed with Chatmohar police station.

Dealer punished for illegal storage of potato seeds

Over 100 sacks seized from assoc leader's possession

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Authorities yesterday suspended the license of a Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) seed dealer in Rajshahi after they seized 118 sacks of 'illegal' potato seeds from his possession the previous night.

Poba upazila seed distribution and monitoring committee also asked the dealer Fazlur Rahman, general secretary of Greater Rajshahi BADC Seed Dealers Association, to show cause in 24 hours as to why punitive actions would not be taken against him.

During the raid on Tuesday evening, the committee members headed by UNO Abu Selim Mahmudul Haq accompanied by police found that 100 sacks of potato seeds, each containing 40-kg, at Fazlur Rahman's house and 18 such sacks at his shop were stored without any legal documents.

The committee immediately sealed off Fazlur's sales centre and the room of his house where the illegal seeds were found. The authorities also sealed the dealer's private seed godown as he was not present with keys during the raid.

affairs) of BADC in Rajshahi Arif Hossain Khan, also a member of the committee, said they found seals of BADC Kushtia office on the seized sacks of seed while the concerned BADC office denied selling any seeds to Fazlur Rahman.

"The seeds were stored for black marketing or it might be adulterated. Many local farmers alleged taking higher prices than scheduled or providing adulterated seeds by the dealer. The final decision would be taken after properly examining all documents and pieces of evidence," he said.

Contacted, the dealer Fazlur Rahman said, "I have legal documents for all the seized seeds. I could not show the documents as I was outside Rajshahi when the raid was conducted. I am applying for freeing the seized seeds showing proper documents today."

"The raid was arranged to harass me as I recently led a dealers' protest against corruptions of BADC Deputy Director Arif Hossain Khan," he said.

Contacted again, Arif Hossain Khan refuted the allegation, saying, "The raid was conducted following specific allegation from the locals."



Growers put into sacks early variety tomato at Rajabari in Godagari upazila of Rajshahi district yesterday. Harvest of the popular vegetable, however, fails to make farmers happy as the production has suffered a downfall allegedly due to supply of low quality seeds by a company.

POOR PRODUCTION IN GODAGARI

Tomato growers blame low quality seeds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Tomato growers of Godagari in Rajshahi have demand compensation for losses they suffered from 'low quality' seed and consequent poor output.

They held a rally at the upazila headquarters on Tuesday and then submitted a memorandum to the prime minister through the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO).

The farmers alleged that Sobol F1 tomato seed, marketed by Syngenta Bangladesh, was not of good quality, resulted in its poor yield.

Rezwanul Karim, a marketing officer of Syngenta said, "We provided good seed, but winter came late. Many farmers, in the hope of maximising

profit, cultivated tomato two months earlier than the proper time."

Godagari Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Zulia Moyeen assured the farmers of taking action against the persons responsible for supply of low quality seed. "A five-member committee, headed by upazila DAE (Department of Agriculture Extension) Officer Dr Saiful Islam, has already started investigating the allegation," he said.

Dr Saiful Islam said some farmers got 50 percent of the expected yield while some others got only 25 percent or less this year.

Ashim Kumar Paul, deputy director (DD) of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Rajshahi,

however, said time has not yet come to declare a low yield.

"Winter is yet to set in and tomato plants are likely to bear fruit when temperature dips", the DD added.

Ratan Mia, a buyer from Shariatpur said, "I used to send two to three truckloads of tomato to Dhaka everyday this time in the previous years. This year, it is difficult to buy even one truckload of the fruit daily."

Local lawmaker Omar Faruk Chowdhury said the upazila administration is investigating the matter and action will be taken on the basis of probe report. "Seventy percent of tomato is supplied from Godagari. So, the government is committed to protect the interest of the tomato growers," the lawmaker added.