

Potato remains a sorrow for the growers

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Potato growers blocked Lalmonirhat-Rangpur road at Mohendro Nagor in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila for five hours yesterday demanding electricity connection to a newly set up cold storage to facilitate storing of their produce.

Meanwhile, a large number of small and marginal potato growers in Jessore and Narail districts are now worried about recouping their capital as they have to sell the produce for very low prices due to lack of storage facilities.

Four cold storages in Lalmonirhat district have already stopped receiving potato due to lack of space while newly set up Total Cold Storage at Mohendro Nagor is unable to use most of its capacity as it is yet to get electricity connection, reports our Lalmonirhat correspondent.

"The 8000-tonne capacity Total Cold Storage has been recently constructed at Mohendro Nagor and the authorities earlier campaigned among the growers for storing potato there," Mohsin Ali, 50, a potato grower of Mohendro Nagor village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said. "I have produced 90 sacks of potato this year and stored 20 sacks of potato in this cold storage a week ago. But they have stopped taking any more of it, saying that they have no electricity connection. My eight sacks of potato have already rotten. If I cannot store the remaining potato within a few days, I will face a huge loss."

The manager of Total Cold Storage, Abdul Mojib said, "The cold storage authority completed all process for getting power



PHOTO: STAR

Huge quantity of potato lies in a field at Harati village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila as growers have nowhere to shift it. The situation appears as space in the local cold storages is too inadequate to accommodate the large quantities of potato produced in the area this season while the low price of the vegetable is not sufficient even to recoup the production cost.

connection two months ago but we are yet to get it due to unknown reasons. As many growers have already stored their potato here we are using partial capacity of the cold storage with diesel engine but it is very expensive."

Masudur Rahman, assistant engineer of Lalmonirhat Power Development Board, said, "Two months ago, we sent letter to the concerned ministry requesting permission to connect power at Total Cold storage at Mohendro Nagor in Lalmonirhat Sadar but we are yet to get any response. We will connect electricity to the cold storage

after getting official permission from the ministry."

Lalmonirhat Sadar UNO Shamim Alam said, "I have already sent a message to the higher authorities about potato growers' road blockade and demonstration demanding electricity connection to Total Cold Storage. I hope the cold storage will get power connection within a couple of days."

Our Narail correspondent adds from Jessore: Potato growers in Jessore and Narail districts are now unhappy as they have to sell their potato at prices much lower than last year's due to lack of storage facility.

Several growers said potato prices are lower by Tk 180 to 200 per maund (37.50 kg) this year.

"As growers cannot preserve potato due to space crisis at cold storages, a section of dishonest middlemen are buying our produce at cheaper rates to make windfall profit," said Moni Babu of Chanpur village under Narail Sadar upazila.

Farmers in Jessore and Narail are apprehending losses from potato cultivation as the vegetable is now selling between Tk 6 and 7 per kg in local markets.

Farmers cultivated potato on vast areas of land in the area this season as

they earned good profit from it last year.

Favourable weather conditions and adequate supply of necessary fertilisers and pesticides are the reasons behind the bumper production of potato, said Dr Sunil Kumar Roy, regional project manager of Second Crop Diversification Project in Jessore.

In Jessore, 3,037 hectares of land has been brought under potato cultivation with production target of 53,148 tonnes this year while in Narail, the area is 81 hectares with production target of 1,418 tonnes, said sources at DAE Jessore regional office.

12 Al-Badrts sued on war crime charges

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A case was filed against 12 alleged Al-Badrts with the District Judge Court on Monday.

Al-Badrts were the collaborators of the then Pakistan occupation forces of 1971 and members of paramilitary wing of Jamaat-e-Islami.

Mobet Ali, son of late Sobahan Sheikh of village Purbo Shympur of Melandah upazila filed the case accusing them of killing, looting, violating women and arson during the War of Liberation in 1971.

The accused are Md. Sirajul Haque Dudu, 60, son of late Sahazuddin Mandol of village Durmuth, Md. Nurul Islam, Mandol (Peku), 60, son of Asgor Ali Mandol of village Jangalia, Md. Abdul Quddus Mandol, 70, son of late Kayem

Uddin Mandol of village Kulia, Md. Abdus Sattar, 70, son of late Rahim Uddin of village Dhalivita, Md. Shahjahan, 65, son of late Nasim Uddin Fakir of village Romerpara, Md. Samsuddin Master, 60, son of late Moyna Munshi of village Fulkucha, Md. Babor Ali, 62, son of late Abdul Gafur of village Nagerpara (Adipoita), Md. Harun-or-Rashid, 65, son of late Abdul Khaleque Akand of village Fulsenna, Md. Abu Taher Ali, 65, son of late Rahmat Ali Mandol of village Baniabari, Md. Nawsher Ali, 60, son of late Abdul Khaleque Akand of village Fulsenna, Md. Kafi, 65, son of late Baha Uddin of village Sagilapur, Md. Nazrul Islam, 64, son of late Dalu Munsu of village Imampur under Melandah upazila of the district.

Complainant Mobet Ali alleged that the accused killed his father Sobahan Sheikh, brother Sobet Ali, neighbours Kalu, Yunus, Khabor Uddin and Nazrul on October 2, 1971 at Amritola Ghat in Islampur upazila.

All the victims and the complainant himself were on a boat on the way to Islampur upazila from Melandah, he said.

He witnessed the killings but escaped death as the killers left him in a crop field presuming dead. The accused tied up his hand and legs before the incident, he said.

He further alleged that the accused were also involved in looting, violating women and other crimes against humanity during the liberation war being the active members of Al-badr in 1971.

Two villagers abducted in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Two villagers were abducted allegedly by the members of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) from Kengrachhari and Bhalachhari under Balaichhari upazila of the district on Monday night.

The victims are Nango Chakma, 50, karbari (village chief) of Kengrachhari village, and Dhenga Chakma of Bhalachhari village.

In a press release yesterday, anti-peace treaty organisation United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) blamed the armed cadres of PCJSS for abduction of the two. The PCJSS cadres also beat up seven villagers at Kengrachhari village, said the release signed by Sonamani Chakma, press secretary of UPDF.

Refuting the allegations, Sajib Chakma, assistant publicity secretary of PCJSS, said the incident might be an internal feud of UPDF.

Case against 54 for Imran killing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Slain BCL leader Fakir Imran Hossain's elder brother Fakir Shaheb Ali lodged an FIR on Monday night with Terokhedha police station naming 54 people as accused of killing his brother on Saturday.

Sheikh Shahidul Islam, a prominent leader of Terokhedha upazila unit of ruling Awami League, has been named as the main accused in the FIR that was recorded as a regular case at 11:30pm the same day.

Shahidul Islam, who is a chairman candidate in Terokhedha Sadar union parishad, went into hiding soon after the murder of BCL leader Fakir Imran Hossain.

Raiding his house on Saturday night, police seized his licensed gun and six bullets.

The gun was used to fire shots at a motorcycle procession brought out by supporters of another chairman candidate Wahiduzzaman Fakir, also belonging to the same party. One of the bullets claimed life of the BCL leader who was heading the motorcycle procession.

None of the FIR-named accused has so far been arrested in connection with the murder case, said Terokhedha police station Officer in Charge Jalaluddin.

All the 54 FIR-named accused belong to a local faction of the ruling party loyal to Molla Jalaluddin, lawmaker from Khulna-4 constituency, said Inspector of Terokhedha police station Mamunur Rashid, who has been made investigation officer of the case.

Verdict in case against 21 mutineers Apr 12

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'nawabganj

The special court-12 will deliver judgement in the mutiny case against 21 jawans of 39 Battalion under Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in Chapainawabganj on April 12.

On completion of arguments between the accused and the prosecution witnesses (PWs), Col Ebia Azam Khan, Rajshahi sector commander and chief of the three-member judges' panel, yesterday announced the date. Two other members of the court are Lt Col Khalid Hossain and Lt Commander (BN) Touhidul Islam.

On Monday, the special court recorded statements of all the 25 prosecution witnesses (PWs) in the mutiny case.

The court on Sunday framed charges against 21 jawans for their involvement in the mutiny at the battalion headquarters on February 26 in 2009. Six of them confessed to their involvement in the mutiny and begged for mercy while the rest

claimed innocence.

At the beginning of trial proceedings on the day, Prosecutor Lt Col Abu Bakar Abu, also the commanding officer of the battalion, read out the allegations against the rebels and submitted a list of witnesses to the court. He appealed to the court to frame charges against all the 21 as they took part in the mutiny.

He told the court that the jawans revolted against their officers, looted firearms from armoury and fired blank shots.

The accused are Subedar Md Mostofa Mia, habildars Benoar Rahman and Ruhul Amin, nayeks Eskendar Ali and Rahmat Ali, lance nayeks Shafiqur Rahman and Taus Mia, sepoy Mujibur Rahman, Zahangir Alam, Abdul Wazed Pramanik, Abdur Rahim, Syed Monirul Islam, Abul Bashar, Rony Ahmed, Zahidul Islam, Nazrul Islam, Jamal Mia, Panchanan Das, Moshfiqur Rahman, Muhammad Ruhul Amin Shikdar and driver Abdul Mannan.



PHOTO: STAR

Transparency International Bangladesh in cooperation with local citizens' bodies form human chains in front of Satkhira Press Club and near Shaheed Satu Hall in Chapainawabganj town for ensuring safe drinking water for all marking the International Water Day yesterday.

Aila-hit coastal dists still face water crisis

STAR NATIONAL DESK

On the World Water Day yesterday, people of Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat districts demanded access to safe drinking water.

Leaders of Khulna divisional unit of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association (Bela) yesterday demanded steps to resolve acute crisis of safe drinking water in the Aila affected coastal belts of the south-western region.

They made the demand at a press conference at Khulna Press Club, reports our staff correspondent.

They said that several lakhs of Aila affected people are still passing their days in untold sufferings while the underground water table is falling sharply.

He said Khulna Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) supplies only 2,27,000,00 litres of water against daily need of 9,45,000,00 litres.

At least 54 percent of total population collect water from unsafe sources while 75 percent of water used by city dwellers is collected from underground source.

Bela then placed a 12-point demand before the government for resolving severe crisis of safe water and protecting environment from pollution.

The demands include supply of safe

drinking water urgently to all Aila affected coastal belts, stoppage of shrimp cultivation releasing saline water in crop fields and allocation of adequate fund in the upcoming national budget to resolve water crisis.

In Satkhira, people of the district town formed a human chain with empty earthen pitchers and placards in hands, brought out a procession, held a rally and submitted a memorandum demanding access to safe drinking water, reports our correspondent.

The human chain was formed in front of Satkhira Press Club. Later the participants carrying banners joined a rally at Satkhira Sadar upazila auditorium premises and demanded immediate steps to ensure supply of safe drinking water in Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat districts.

All the three districts are severely affected by salinity in surface water and arsenic contamination in ground water.

Kendrio Pani Committee (central water committee), a newly formed citizen's body, Sachetan Nagarik Committee Satkhira district chapter of TIB and a local NGO Uttaran jointly organised the programmes in observance of the World Water Day.

Speakers at the rally deplored the successive government's 'indifference' to the need for people's access to safe drinking water.

All candidates pledge to meet voters' demand

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Candidates in the upcoming election to Rajihar Union Parishad (UP) under Agoiljhara upazila of Barisal district on Monday pledged to give priority to the voters' demand for re-excavation of canals in the area, if elected.

Five chairman and 20 member candidates made the promise at a programme styled 'face-to-face with people' at Basil village of the union.

Sushashoner Janno Nagorik (Sujan) Barisal district unit organised the programme aimed at bridging the gap between the candidates and the voters about electoral commitments and their implementation.

Sujan central secretary Badiul Alam Majumdar, Barisal city unit acting president Akkas Hossain, repre-

sentatives from socio-cultural-professional, human right, election monitoring organisations exchanged views with the chairman and member candidates at the discussion with Ramesh Chandra Das, local organiser of Sujan, in the chair.

Emphasising more empowerment for union parishad, the lowest tier of local government, the Sujan leaders called upon the voters to elect honest and competent candidates to strengthen democracy and help sustainable socio-economic development of the country and overall well-being of the nation.

The voters reminded the candidates of their moral responsibility to go by the commitments they make to the electorate.



PHOTO: STAR

Fellows carry a student of food technology and nutritional science (FTNS) department of Maolana Bhasani University of Science and Technology in Tangail as 50 of some 200 FTNS students, who started an indefinite hunger strike on Sunday demanding renaming of their degree as BSc (Engineering) instead of BSc (Honours), fell sick on the third day of their fasting yesterday. The agitating students, however, withdrew their strike after the authorities assured them of considering their demand.