

BUMPER YIELD, GOOD PRICE

Fortune smiles on wheat growers in 8 districts

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Bumper yield and good price have brought smile to the wheat farmers in eight northern districts of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Nilphamari, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh this year.

They are making handsome profit by selling it in markets as wheat harvesting started in the region in the third week of March.

The harvesting is expected to be complete this month.

Severe cold, timely irrigation and availability of fertiliser at fair price have helped wheat plants to grow fast, said agriculture officials and farmers.

Sources at the regional office of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rangpur said they set a target to produce 2.8 tonnes of wheat in a hectare or a total of 3.44 lakh tonnes in the region this year.

But the target is likely to exceed much as ongoing harvest shows that farmers are getting 2.90 tonnes per hectare on an average and about 1.23 lakh hectares of land has been brought under wheat cultivation in the eight northern districts this year.

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

To overcome the situation, farmers used locally preserved seeds and seeds bought from private compa-

nies for higher prices although quality of those seeds is questionable.

Wheat cultivation is gaining popularity in the region due to its increasing demand, good prices, easy cultivation process and lower production cost than Irri-Boro paddy and potato, said DAE officials and farm-

ers.

Mid-November to first week of December is the peak period for wheat cultivation. Sandy-loamy soil, favourable low temperature at initial stage and facility to drain out rain water from the land are preconditions for a good harvest.

Wheat cultivation requires only three times

irrigation, is much easier and less costly than boro cultivation, said Abed Ali, 45, a wheat farmer of Jaldhaka upazila.

Another farmer, Abdul Mannan Shah, 50, of Fakirpara village in Nilphamari district said, "I have decided to cultivate wheat as its demand is very high in the market. I can get at least Tk 1,000 for a maund of wheat (1 maund =40 kg) and Tk 9000 in a bigha as my yield is nine maund in a bigha (1 bigha= 30 decimal).

Production cost of wheat on per bigha of land is around Tk 4500 at the maximum while it needs Tk 8,000-9,000 to cultivate boro in the same area, informed farmers.

Now, the farmers use high yielding varieties of wheat seeds like shatabdi, prodip, shourav, bijoy and gourab. Wheat Research Centre in Dinajpur has recently developed high yielding varieties of wheat called hasi and teesta. Their introduction to the farmers will help to increase wheat production even more, said DAE officials.

The country can produce only one third of its annual demand of about 31 lakh tonne of wheat and the rest is to be imported.



PHOTO: STAR

A profusely yielding wheat field at Bhobaniganj village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila waits harvest. The eight northern districts will exceed the target of wheat cultivation due to favourable weather condition this season, say farmers and agriculture officials.



PHOTO: STAR

Razia, 22, who was set afire allegedly by her husband for dowry at Adarshapara under khagrachhari Sadar upazila early yesterday, is seen at Khagrachhari Adunik Hospital. She was later shifted to Chittagong Medical College and Hospital.

Housewife set afire, three others killed for dowry

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A housewife was set afire while three others murdered allegedly by their husbands for dowry in four districts yesterday, on Friday and the day before.

A young housewife was set afire allegedly by dowry-greedy husband and in-laws at Adarshapara of Salban area under Sadar upazila of Khagrachhari district yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The victim was identified as Razia Begum, 22, wife of Dulal Mia.

Police quoting locals said, Dulal Mia and his family members recently demanded Tk 20,000 more dowry. They started to torture Razia as her family expressed their inability to give the amount.

Following an altercation over the issue early yesterday, her husband and in-laws poured kerosene and set Razia on fire.

Hearing the cry for help, locals rushed in and rescued Razia in a critical condition.

She was admitted to Khagrachhari Adhunik Sadar Hospital and then shifted to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital.

Hosan Ali, father of the victim said, Razia was married to Dulal six month ago on condition of Tk 40,000 dowry but recently her in-laws demanded more Tk 20,000.

"As I refused to giving the amount they started to torture my innocent daughter. They set her afire in an attempt to kill her," he said.

Police detained Dulal

Mia, victim's father-in-law Abdul Matin and mother-in-law Faruzi Begum in the morning.

In Brahmanbaria, another housewife was killed allegedly by her husband and in-laws at Gokorno village in Nasirnagar upazila Friday evening.

The deceased was identified as Jesmine Akhter, 23.

Police and local sources said Jesmine was married off with Afzal six years ago and Afzal went abroad soon after the marriage.

He returned home three months ago and started torturing Jesmine to bring dowry from her family.

On Friday, Afzal and his mother picked up a quarrel with Jesmine over the issue and at one stage they strangled her to death.

In Nilphamari, a housewife, also mother of a child, was killed allegedly by her husband on Friday noon at Uchabody village of Ranachandi union under Kishoreganj upazila as she failed to meet the dowry demand, reports our correspondent.

Police and locals said Maleka Bagum, 25, daughter of Fazlul Haque of Koimari village of Jaldhaka upazila was married off with Hazrat Ali, 32, son of Kadua Mamud of Uchabody village of Kishoreganj upazila about two years ago.

At the time of marriage, the poor parents of Maleka gave Hazrat Ali Tk 10,000 as dowry. But after some days, Hazrat Ali demanded another Tk 10,000.

As Maleka could not

manage the amount, he started to torture her.

Two days before the incident, Hazrat Ali again tortured Maleka and sent her to her father's house at Jaldhaka upazila to bring the money.

As she returned empty handed, Hazrat Ali became furious and beat her dead.

After the incident her husband and other members of her family fled away from their house.

In Satkhira, a housewife was killed allegedly by her cruel husband and his family members for dowry at Fayjullahpur village in Sadar upazila Thursday night, reports UNB.

The victim was identified as Shahanara Khatun, 28, daughter of Tazuddin o Matiadanga village of Sadar upazila.

SI Asaduzzaman of Sadar PS said, Shahanara got married with Rafiqul Islam, 32, son of Shahar Ali Sarder of Fayjullahpur village seven years ago. Rafiqul used to torture Shahanara for dowry regularly and at one stage she fell sick due to torture.

In the name of treatment, her cruel husband called a fake doctor who pushed poisonous injection into her body.

Police said locals found Shahanara dead in her house and informed them. Later, police recovered the body and sent it to Satkhira Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police arrested Rafiqul's 'doctor' friend Abu Sayeed 30, son of Samsur Rahman of the same village, but Rafiqul fled away.

SNIPPETS

Youth stabbed to death

UNB, Bogra

A youth was stabbed to death by criminals at Joleshwaritola in the district town early Saturday. The deceased was identified as Abdur Rahim, 18, son of Babu Pramanik of Malatinagar area of the town. Police said, Abdur Rahim was returning home after shutting down his shop at about 12:30am. When he reached Joleshwaritola, a gang stabbed him indiscriminately, leaving him critically injured. Locals rushed him to Bogra Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital where the attending doctors declared him dead.

Jewellery trader killed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Owner of a jewellery shop at Shankhola Bazaar of Chunarughat upazila in Habiganj district was killed by an armed gang early yesterday. They also looted 8 tolas of gold ornament and Tk one lakh from the shop. Officer-in-charge of Chunarughat PS inspector Syed Mahbubur Rahman said, Bijon Das, 25, went to bed at his shop named 'Bijon Das Jewellery' at around midnight. The criminals broke into the shop in the early hours, stabbed him to death and took away the gold and cash money.

Freedom fighter murdered

UNB, B'baria

A freedom fighter was hacked to death by his rivals over previous enmity at Senda village in Sadar upazila yesterday morning. The deceased was identified as Dhon Miah, 70, of the village. Police said the assailants hacked Dhon Miah indiscriminately at about 7:00am when he was going to his crop field for irrigation. He died instantly.

Two outlaws arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police arrested two outlaws belonging to PBCP Sharbahara faction from Nuruddinpur area of Sujanagar upazila on Saturday. The arrestees are Eusuf Ali, 28, son of Ramjan Ali and Ershad Ali, 25, son of Abdur Rashid of Indrajitpur village in Sujanagar upazila. The two were hardened operatives of outlawed PBCP Sharbahara faction and accused in several cases including that of murder, police said. Officer-in-charge of Sujanagar police station Md Ahasanul Haque said the two went into hiding after a murder case long ago, he said.

25 injured in clash

UNB, Jhenidah

At least 25 people were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers on Saturday over occupation of khas land at Dobila village in Moheshpur upazila. Police and local people said, there was a longstanding dispute over occupation of a khas land between the people of bordering villages of Moheshpur upazila in Jhenidah and Chougachha upazila in Jessore. When the villagers of Kadbila and Ogoldanga in Chougachha upazila came to occupy the khas land in the morning, villagers of Sayedpur and Narayanpur tried to resist them. At one stage hundreds of villagers equipped with lethal weapons locked in a fierce clash that lasted for one and a half hours.

Passengers suffer just for a pontoon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Launch passengers are suffering a lot as the pontoon of Galachipa launch terminal set up over 10 years ago has become dysfunctional due to lack of renovation.

Eighteen launches plying seven routes in Galachipa uapzila have to anchor in the middle of the river as the pontoon of Galachipa launch terminal does not float due to entrance of water through several holes on it.

Passengers, especially women and children have to suffer much as they have to get on launches with the help of small boats or walking through mud.

Most its doors and windows are broken. "Launches can anchor at the pontoon for 5/6 days in a month during only high tide when water level rises. During the remaining period, launches have to anchor in the middle of the river. We received lease of the

launch terminal for Tk 14.60 lakh for running year from BIWTA but we are facing loss as the number of passenger is decreasing due to the useless pontoon," said Ibrahim Dafadar, lessee of the terminal.

Abdur Razzak, joint director for BIWTA, visited the terminal three months ago and he assured to solve immediately the problem but in vain, he told.

"We have to bear over cost to bring goods by launch as we have up load on the middle of the river by small boat. Now we are trying to bring goods from Dhaka and others places by truck to avoid sufferings," Kalu Mia, a businessman of Galachipa upazila town said.

When contacted, BIWTA Assistant Director Md Mostafizur Rahman, also in charge of Patuakhali port office, said, "I sent several letters to higher authorities to solve the problem but to no effect."



PHOTO: STAR

The virtually inoperative pontoon at Galachipa launch terminal.

Imam sued for fatwa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

An imam of a mosque has been sued on charge of giving a questionable fatwa (religious edict) that triggered a clash, leaving seven people injured on the premises of Sardar Bari Jame Masjid in Gournadi upazila under Barisal district on Friday.

Esahaq Melkar, of Kamalapur village under Gournadi upazila on Saturday lodged the case with Gournadi police station against eight people including Maulana Sobhan Sheikh, imam of the mosque, and Fazlul Huq Sardar, local leader of Tablig Jamaat, said Mezbahuddin, officer in charge of the police station.

Maulana Sobhan recently announced a

fatwa banning circulation of Azan of the mosque over loudspeaker and this created sensation among the local musallis (practising Muslims), goes the case statement.

As Esahaq Melkar protested the fatwa, the imam and his associates injured him by beating after the Juma prayers on Friday, the complainant alleged.

Later Esahaq's supporters rushed to the spot and engaged in a clash with the imam and his associates in the afternoon.

At least seven people from two groups including Esahaq Melkar, Syed Melkar, Zahid, Sohel Melkar, Fazle Huq Sardar, Khokan and Shipon were injured in the clash, locals said.

Two fishermen buy freedom

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Two fishermen, who were abducted by the pirates from Badhalata area of Mathabhanga canal in the Sundarbans on Thursday, bought freedom with a ransom of Tk 20,000 on Saturday evening.

The released fishermen are Sanyasi Biswas, 27, son of Tarapada Biswas of village Mirgang and Amol Raptan, 31 son of Shushil Raptan of Jyotindra Nagar in Shyamnagar upazila.

Four fishermen including Sanyasi and Amol went to the Sundarbans to catch fish taking pass from the Kadamtala forest office in the Sundarbans on Thursday.

No sooner had they reached Badhalata area of Mathabhanga canal, they were attacked by the pirates.

The pirates looted cash and other valuables from the boats and abducted two fishermen from the boat and demanded Tk 20,000 from the family of each, police quoting the victims' relatives said.

The pirates set a four-day deadline for the ransom.

Barapukuria power plant workers on indefinite strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

At least 250 outsourced workers of Barapukuria coal-fired power plant began an indefinite strike yesterday morning as the authorities concerned decided to keep a worker off work for seven days for his alleged misconduct.

Sources said Md Nuruzzaman, president of Barapukuria Power Plant Workers Union, entered the room of Chief Engineer Md Abu Taher on Saturday and locked in an altercation with him for not sending necessary papers relating to job confirmation of the workers to the Power Development board by April 7.

At one stage, the chief engineer forced Nuruzzaman to leave the room and imposed restrictions on his activities inside the power plant for the next seven days.

The outsourced workers joined their work yesterday morning but the security personnel prevented Nuruzzaman from entering the power plant.

Action of the authorities concerned triggered protest among the workers. The immediately held a protest meeting and decided to go on an indefinite strike from 8:00am.

Contacted, Chief Engineer Md Abu Taher said Nuruzaman's entry into the plant is restricted for seven days as he 'misbehaved' with him.

The agitating workers said they will continue their strike until the authorities' restrictions on the leader's activities are withdrawn.

The power plant authorities sat with the leaders of the workers union yesterday afternoon to resolve the issue. But the meeting failed to yield any positive result.