



PHOTO: STAR

Once profusely flowing Pagla River has now turned into a narrow canal, making it possible to cross with the help of a bamboo-made bridge at Kalinagar village in Sundarpur union of Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila.

PRE-AND POST-UNION PARISHAD POLL VIOLENCE

Two killed, over 80 injured

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Pre-and post UP-poll violence in Tangail, Narsingdi, Munshiganj, Jamalpur and Rangpur district on Tuesday left at least two people killed and more than 80 others injured.

Our Tangail Correspondent reported that the supporters of elected member Abul Kalam Azad and defeated member candidate Shukur Mahmud clashed in Char Gabsara Union under Bhuapur upazila at 4:00pm on Tuesday, leaving at least 12 people from both sides injured.

The injured were admitted to the Tangail General Hospital and one of them named Sandesh Ali, 28, succumbed to his injuries yesterday morning.

In Narsingdi, Sohel Miah, 18, received injuries during a pre-poll clash in Binnabaid Union under Belabo upazila on Monday,

died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday.

Sohel sustained injuries on his head during a clash between the supporters of two chairman candidates at Charfayed Bazar in the union, reports our correspondent.

Our Munshiganj correspondent adds: At least 25 people, including a presiding officer and eight policemen, were injured in a post-poll violence in Sreenagar upazila on Tuesday night.

The injured are undergoing treatment at local clinics and hospitals.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abdul Latif said the incident occurred when supporters of defeated chairman candidate Abdul Aziz swooped on the election officials and the policemen while they were returning to the upazila headquarters from a polling centre in Tontor Union after announcement of election results.

Presiding officer of the centre Golam Mawla, Sub-inspector

Shafiq and seven constables are among the injured.

According to our Rangpur correspondent, post-poll clashes between the supporters of rival chairman and member candidates left at least 20 people, including two presiding officers, injured in Ramnathpur and Mithipur unions under Pirganj upazila on Tuesday night.

The supporters of chairman candidate Sadequul Islam beat up presiding officer Uttam Kumar of Ghola High School centre under Ramnathpur union and tried to snatch ballot boxes at around 8:00pm.

Hearing the news, the supporters of chairman candidate Jahidul Islam Jahangir rushed to the centre and locked in a clash with their rivals. The injured were admitted to Pirganj Upazila Health Complex.

In another incident, Kamrul Hasan, presiding officer of Mithipur

centre in Mithipur union was beaten up by the workers of member candidate Aminul Islam.

Kamrul was admitted to Rangpur Medical College and Hospital with head injury.

Our Jamalpur correspondent adds: At least 27 people, including seven police men, were injured during a clash between the supporters of two chairman candidates at Togarchar Govt Primary School centre under Jhawgora union of Melandah upazila on Tuesday night.

Police and locals said over 1,000 supporters of chairman candidate Mafiquul Islam Bablu besieged the polling centre when the vote counting was going on.

Hearing the news, the supporters of another chairman candidate, Hillul Sarker, reached the centre locked in clash with their rivals.

Police said they had to fire 97 blank shots to bring the situation under control.

Pumpkins on sandy chars bring fortune to erosion victims

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Pumpkin cultivation is changing the lives of erosion victim people in sandy chars (newly emerged landmass) on the Teesta River, thanks to a few local and international organisations that extended logistic and technical support to the hapless people in this regard.

During a recent visit to different char areas, this correspondent saw thousands of green and golden coloured pumpkins of different sizes and shapes on the sandy beds of Teesta River, showing all signs of life in the once barren lands.

Local NGO Jhanjira Samaj Kalyan Samity (JSKS) motivated char people to cultivate pumpkins on Purbo Chhatnai, Jhar Shinherswar, Chairman Para, Baish Pukur, Nek Bakth, Alsia Para, Gudam Para, Foramari, Purbo Kachua and Minar Para on the Teesta River in Nilphamari district under a project 'Pathways from Poverty', said Abtab Hossain, agriculture extension officer of Dimla upazila.

Project officer of JSKS Mamunur Rashid said 643 beneficiaries, all belonging to erosion and flood victim poor families, were selected for pumpkin cultivation on 135 acres (1 acre = 100 decimal) of land in the ten char areas. Each of the beneficiaries prepared 100 pits (small ditches where seeds are sown) and accordingly total 64,300 pits were prepared for making at least 1,20,000 pumpkin plants from seeds.

A cultivator is expecting to get 280-300 pumpkins, each weighing 5kg to 15kg, said pumpkin farmers



PHOTO: STAR

Two farmers collect pumpkins at Domar Char on the Teesta basin in the upstream of Teesta barrage in Nilphamari district. Cultivation of the vegetable on once barren lands brings bright prospect for the erosion-affected poor people in the area.

Shamsul Islam, Aref Mia and Jabbar Mia.

"We are expecting bumper production of pumpkin on the Teesta chars this year as we gathered experience last year under our three-year-project extending 2009-2012 period," said project facilitator Asaduzzaman Bipul.

Farmer Shamsul Islam said they can preserve the pumpkins for long time as JSKS helped each of the beneficiaries to make a three-storied storeroom made of bamboo and straw.

"Now we do not have to migrate to different places in search of work during the flood time. In lean period when there is scarcity of vegetables, we can sell our

preserved pumpkins at Tk 10-12 per kg which is only Tk 5-6 per kg in harvesting time. With this product we can easily drive away our poverty," he said.

Pulin Chandra, Ansar Ali and Lalmohon echoed the same.

"The project Pathways from Poverty has a goal to prevent char people from migrating to different towns and cities by helping them to gain self-reliance so that they can face all odds during floods and erosion," said Shakhawat Hossain, field coordinator of JSKS.

To implement the project, the government of Bangladesh and UK-based organisation DFID is funding them through a

programme titled 'Stimulating Household Improvement Resulting in Economic Empowerment' (Shiree), he said.

"Another organisation Practical Action is providing technical support. Under the project, the farmers are getting logistic and technical support free of cost. Another NGO 'OVA' is also cultivating pumpkins in other areas of Teesta chars," he added.

Contacted, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Nilphamari, Mamunur Rashid said, "By cultivating pumpkins in Teesta chars, the erosion and flood victim people are changing their lot and contributing to national economy as well."

Voting largely peaceful in districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Barring a few incidents of violence, election to the union parishads in Natore, Pabna, Naogaon and Thakurgaon districts was yesterday largely peaceful.

Our Natore correspondent reported that polling to five union parishads in Bagatipara upazila was held peacefully. According to district election office, 21 candidates contested the elections for five chairman posts, 196 for member posts 59 women for the reserved seats.

In Pabna, peaceful voting took place in four unions of Vangura upazila. Seventeen chairman candidates, 137 member candidates and 47 women for the reserved seats contested the election, reports our correspondent.

Police arrested a man in front of Patharghata Primary School centre at around 11:00am on charge of influencing voters to cast their votes in favour of his candidate. Mobile court later sentenced the arrestee, Md Montazuddin, to one month's imprisonment.

Election to 11 union parishads under Potnitola upazila of Naogaon district was held peacefully. Voters were seen standing in queues at 100 centres in the unions to exercise their right to franchise.

In Thakurgaon, peaceful election was held in eight unions under Ranishankoil upazila yesterday.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Ershad Hossain said about 100 people were fined for violating code of conduct during voting at different centres of the unions.

As many as 46 candidates contested for eight chairman posts, 327 for member posts and 107 women for the reserved seats.

Farmers protest urea price hike, hoarding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Farmers of Paikgachha upazila yesterday brought out a peaceful procession protesting price hike and hoarding of urea fertiliser.

They called for bringing down the price within their purchasing capacity and immediate steps against the dealers for creating an artificial scarcity during the peak season of Aus cultivation.

Meanwhile, urea fertiliser allegedly disappeared from Paikgachha area where 11 dealers were appointed by the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC).

Farmers said the dealers hoarded urea after its price was raised to Tk 20 per kg from Tk 12.

They said the dealers are refusing to sell urea on the plea that they did not lift

their quotas after price hike.

In fact, these dealers are selling it at Tk 1,000 per bag on the black market, said farmers Iman Sarder and Karim Ali Sana of Godaipur union.

Farmer Joydev Malakar of Purikati village alleged that all the eleven Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) dealers of 10 unions have formed a syndicate to hoard urea after the price hike.

They are doing this to make a windfall profit after artificial scarcity in the market, said another farmer Sahor Ali of Lata union under the upazila.

Aggrieved farmers said Ramprashad Pal, proprietor of Messers Pal Traders at Kapilmuni union, runs the syndicate as its ringleader.

His two younger brothers Laxman Pal and Bharat Pal are also among the eleven dealers of urea fertiliser.

Laxman and Bharat are proprietors of Messers Shapla Traders at Garhuikhali union and Messers Biponi Traders at Godaipur union respectively.

According to Paikgachha upazila agriculture officer Bibhash Chandra Saha dealers of the upazila lifted a total of 80 tonnes of urea in May at the previous rate of Tk 12 per kg.

The three brothers -- Ram Prashad Pal, Laxman Pal and Bharat Pal -- drew 44 tonnes out of total 80 tonnes, he said.

Besides, there were 38 tonnes of unsold urea, lifted in April, with these eleven dealers, he added.

"So, there is no reason for scarcity of urea in Paikgachha upazila. We have a plan to launch a crackdown on these dealers," said the upazila agriculture officer.



PHOTO: STAR

Sweet water tortoises are regularly hunted and sold for human consumption in different areas of Narail district, bearing testimony to people's utter callousness about preservation of the local species. The photo was taken from a market at Rugganj in the district town a few days ago.

Discord with chatal owners delays rice procurement

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Food department could not start rice procurement drive in Barisal division as of yesterday as the owners of rice processing firms (*chatal*) are yet to sign contract with the department.

Md Raka Mia, regional controller (RC) of food, said the government ordered the department concerned to start the drive on June 5 and procure 1,495 tonnes of rice (Tk 29 per kg) from Barisal division by August 31.

"Under the drive, the regional food department

needs to procure 785 tonnes of rice from Patuakhali, 557 tonnes from Barisal, 67 tonnes from Jhalakathi, 39 tonnes from Pirojpur and 47 tonnes from Bhola districts," he said, adding that Barguna district is exempted from the drive.

According to the government guideline, the department concerned will have to sign bilateral contract with the licensed *chatal* owners before starting the drive and none of the 36 owners of the five districts has signed the contract yet, the RC said.

"Chatal owners are not

interested to sell rice at procurement centres as the government rate is lower than the market price," claimed Hemayetuddin, a *chatal* owner of Uzipur area of Barisal district.

Some others alleged that the food department had often refused to take their rice in the past, saying quality of rice was not up to the mark.

Last year, the regional food department failed to procure rice against the targeted 3,428 tonnes. It purchased only 22 tonnes paddy against the target of 4,582 tonnes.

প্লট বিক্রয়

বসুন্ধরা বারিধারা প্রকল্পের এ, ডি, জি, আই ব্লকে এখনই বাড়ি/বাণিজ্যিক ভবন করার উপযোগী স্বল্পসংখ্যক প্লট (প্রাচীর ঘেরা) বিক্রয় হইবে।

মূল্য পরিশোধের ৭ দিনের মধ্যেই প্লট রেজিস্ট্রেশন ও হস্তান্তর।

প্লটের সাইজ ৪৩ - ১৫ কাঠা, ১.৫ বিঘা - ৪.৫ বিঘা

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