

AL men muscle in on paddy fields of landless people

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Landless farmers who cultivated aman paddy on khas lands allocated by the district administration are now passing worrying time as criminals allegedly led by the ruling party men have engaged in looting the ripe crop from the fields.

Landless people in recent years got allocation of about 3,000 acres of khas land in Galachipa upazila, 474 acres each in Dashmina and Kalapara upazilas, 231 acres in Bauful upazila, 120 acres in Dumki upazila, 116 acres in Sadar upazila and 18 acres in Mirzaganj upazila under the district.

The beneficiaries, mostly in char (coastal island) areas, are expecting bumper production of paddy this season but groups of people led by local ruling party men have set up red flags in many places as part of their plan to loot paddy from such lands, said the affected farmers.

The group set up red flag on 4.70 acres of lands of Jahangir Akon, a farmer at Char Kashem in newly formed Rangabali upazila in the middle of November. However, Jahangir reaped paddy from his land on November 23. As he was bringing the paddy to Galachipa from Char Kashem by a trawler, on the way men allegedly set by Rangabali union parishad (UP) Chairman Nazrul Islam Pada, also an activist of local AL, and a Jubo League leader of Rangabali upazila, looted paddy from the trawler.

Jahangir Akon informed local tahshilder (land official) of the matter.

After examining land documents of Jahangir in presence of UP Chairman Nazrul Islam Pada, the tahshilder gave decision that Jahangir Akon is the genuine owner of the land and the looted paddy should be returned to him.

But instead of returning the paddy amounting 90 maunds, the looters sold it in the market at Tk 550 per maund, Jahangir Akon said.

One Eusuf Bapari said he bought 27 maunds out of the 90 maunds of paddy from Nazrul Islam Pada.

Eusuf Ali, a member of the local village police, also confirmed the matter of selling the paddy.

Asked about the matter, Nazrul Islam said, "My men did not take paddy from Jahangir Akon. He has valid documents of the khas land and so, the paddy should be returned to him."

Criminals also looted 28 maunds of paddy of Sohel Gazi, 25 maunds of Makbul Maulana, 22 maunds of Ashraf, 21 maunds of Ziaul Haque, 20 maunds of Zakir Howlader, 15 maunds of Abu Mollah, 12 maunds of Kalam Howlader, 13 maunds of Abdus Salam, and eight maunds of paddy of Mainuddin Howlader in Jugir Howlad and Char Tofazzel areas of the same upazila, said the affected people.

Mahe Alam, officer in charge of Rangabali police station, said, "Lands related matters should be decided by the land office. Nobody has filed any case in this regard. However, we are ready to take action if any violence occurs regarding cutting of paddy."

"If there is any complexity over a land only the land office has the right to set up a red flag. We will take step over the red flag issue after investigation," said Pankoj Ghosh, assistant commissioner (Land) of Galachipa upazila.

Dashmina police arrested three people of Hazikanda village under the upazila in a case for quarrel over khas land a few days ago, said the on duty officer of the police station.

Several farmers at Chargarabdi under Dumki upazila who cultivated aman paddy on 16 acres of allocated khas land are guarding their nearly ripe paddy overnight in fear of looting.

On behalf of the farmers, Motahar Khan submitted a written complaint to the deputy commissioner (DC) on November 30, stating that a gang led by Rashis Khan and Jalal Khan of Bamnekathe village in bordering Bauful upazila area are planning to loot their paddy as the group did the same in previous years.

The DC asked the UNO and the OC of Dumki upazila to take proper steps in this regard.

Abu Bakar Siddique, additional superintendent of police in Patuakhali, said, "We have already set up five temporary police camps in different char areas in the district to protect farmers' paddy from culprits."

Nine executive magistrates deployed in seven upazilas will work with local police camps till January 31 next year, said Additional District Magistrate Md Salim Fakir.



Criminals set a red flag, marking their occupation of a nearly ripe paddy field at Samudabad in Rangabali upazila under Patuakhali district. Landless farmers had cultivated the crop on the khas land after getting its allocation from the district administration.

PHOTO: STAR



PHOTO: STAR

Biting cold accompanied by dense fog disrupts normal life in Dinajpur. The photo was taken from Dinajpur town at around 11:30am yesterday.

COLD SPELL IN NORTHERN DISTRICTS

5 children die in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Cold spell sweeping across the district claimed lives of at least five children in the last three days since Tuesday.

The victims are seven-day-old boy of the district, 10-day-old girl from Nilphamari, seven-day-old girl from Gaibandha, 13-year-old girl from Dinajpur and 12-year-old Suborna from Thakurgaon, said Dr Tawfiqul Islam, director of Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH).

All of them died of pneumonia and cold-related diseases, he said.

Around 2000 people, most of them children and elderly people, have fallen victim to pneumonia, diarrhoea, asthma and other cold related diseases in last three days in the northern district, said Rangpur Civil Surgeon office sources.

Dr Tawfiqul Islam said usually children and elderly people get affected by pneumonia and other cold related diseases in the season.

Rangpur met office said the lowest temperature was

recorded 9.7 degree Celsius yesterday.

The met office also forecast that the temperature might come down further in next 24 hours.

Meanwhile, people of low-income people are suffering badly as cold spell has been lashing the region for the last few days.

Most of the day labourers are forced to remain at home

due to the chilly weather.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reports: At least 39 children with pneumonia and other cold related diseases were admitted to hospitals in the district town yesterday.

Of them, 12 were admitted to Sadar Hospital and 27 to Dinajpur Medical College Hospital, said hospital sources.

Dense fog blanketed the whole northern district amid shivering cold in the last few days, said Dinajpur Met official sources.

The Met office recorded 10.5 degree Celsius as minimum temperature yesterday. Earlier, the lowest temperature was 11.2 degree Celsius on Wednesday.



PHOTO: STAR

Parents with their pneumonia-affected children crowd Rangpur Medical College Hospital as cold related diseases have risen sharply under the impact of chilly weather in the northern districts.

2 BNP leaders of Noakhali, Jessore murdered

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Two BNP leaders of Noakhali and Jessore districts were murdered yesterday and the day before.

An elderly union-level leader of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) was killed at village Charkakra in Charkakra union under Companyganj upazila of Noakhali early yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The deceased, Abdul Wahab, popularly known as Wahab Raja, 60, was the vice president of Charkakra union BNP and also president of 7 No. ward BNP.

Relatives of the victim said Wahab came out of his home after getting a mobile phone call around 10pm. As he was not returning till 1am, his relatives searched for him in all probable places, but failed to find him anywhere.

Yesterday morning, Wahab's cousin Mobarak found the body in a garden near the victim's house.

On information, Companyganj police rushed to the spot and recovered the body and sent it to the Noakhali Medical College Hospital for autopsy.

Jessore BNP leader Nazmul Islam, 42, was murdered in Gazipur district while he was returning to his home district from the capital by his car on Wednesday night, reports UNB.

Police said Nazmul, treasurer of Jessore district BNP, was abducted on Wednesday at about 11pm. They recovered his body from Salna Bridge area in Gazipur early yesterday and sent it to Gazipur Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Jessore BNP has called a day-long hartal in the district on December 17 to protest the killing.

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