

Bumper turmeric yet growers unhappy over low price

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Bumper yield of turmeric has turned into a burden for growers in different areas as they are facing serious losses due to unusual price fall of the popular spice.

Profitable turmeric farming in Khagrachhari district seems to face a setback as serious price fall, allegedly caused by import of low-priced Indian turmeric, comes as a blow to both farmers and traders, reports our Khagrachhari correspondent.

This season, green turmeric is selling for only Tk 300 to 350 per maund (40 kg) but last year it sold for Tk 2,000 to Tk 3,000, said Jamini Mohon Tripura, a farmer of Thakurchhara area under Sadarupazila.

"I cultivated turmeric in one acre of land this season spending about Tk 35,000 and harvested about 63 maunds of the spice. But I got only Tk 23,000 by selling it," he added.

A few business companies importing low-priced Indian turmeric are responsible for the abnormal price fall, he said.

"We are counting loss of about Tk 50,000 per tonne of

dry turmeric as a large quantity of it remains unsold due to abnormal fall of price in the market. Consequently the local traders are losing interest to invest in turmeric business again," Swapon Devnath, a turmeric trader from Khagrachhari bazaar area, said.

He also blamed the import of Indian turmeric for the situation.

Sub Assistant Agriculture Officer of Khagrachhari Agriculture Extension Department Pranab Barua said farmers got bumper yield of turmeric from about 5,500 hectares of land in the district in this season.

The production season of green turmeric ranges from November to April and most of the growers have already harvested the spice due to favourable weather in this season.

The growers, who earlier eyed a good profit, are now anxious to get back their investment money.

"I took loan of Tk one lakh from Krishi Bank for investing in turmeric cultivation in my three acres of land but now I am worried to pay back the bank loan due to the unexpected price fall," said Kishore Tripura, a tur-

meric grower from Latiban area.

Sudarshan Dutta, director of Khagrachhari Chamber of Commerce and Industry, said, "Over 10,000 turmeric traders and a large number of farmers in eight upazilas of the district will suffer a lot if immediate steps are not taken to ensure fair price of turmeric."

Our Lalmonirhat correspondent adds: Sharp fall in turmeric prices has come as a blow to the farmers who cultivated the price on larger areas of land with hope of a good profit.

Lalmonirhat farmers are selling a kg of raw turmeric for Tk 5 to 7 in this season whereas it sold for Tk 50 to 70 last year.

Encouraged by bumper production and unexpected profit last year, Lalmonirhat farmers cultivated turmeric on 3600 hectares of land this year against last year's 450 hectares of land, said officials of Agriculture Extension Department in Lalmonirhat.

"I cultivated turmeric on 40 decimal of land last year. Encouraged by handsome profit that time, I have cultivated it in 102 decimal of land this year. But now I find

it difficult to recover even the production cost," said Bodiar Rahman, a farmer at Fulgachh village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Visiting different markets in Lalmonirhat district, this correspondent saw farmers with their turmeric waiting long hours but there are a few customers and the price unusually low.

Turmeric trader Abdus Salam at Durakuti Hat said they purchased one maund (40 kg) of turmeric between Tk 1800 to 3000 last year but they are purchasing it between Tk 200 to 300 this year as the supply in the wholesale market is much higher than the demand.

"We got supply of 300 to 400 maund of turmeric on each hat day here last year, but we getting supply 1500 to 2000 maund this year. It is the common scene at all the markets in the district," said a small trader at Durakuti Haat in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila agriculture officer agriculturist Mohammad Nuruzzaman said if farmers do not get marketing facilities for their production they will lose interest to cultivate it.



PHOTO: STAR

Huge supply of turmeric following its bumper yield in different districts causes drastic fall in its price, much to the frustration of farmers. The photo was taken from Durakuti in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila recently.

OLD-AGE ALLOWANCE

Long bank payment queue creates new problem

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A visitor could easily mistake it to be a road blockade programme aimed at pressing for some demands as a huge crowd gathered in front of Agrani Bank in Sadullapur upazila under the district, causing traffic jam on Sadullapur-Gaibandha road.

But the crowd comprise elderly men and women eagerly waiting for their turn to withdraw the money under old-age allowance.

The elderly people, most of them showing all signs of malnutrition and many having difficulty in movement and other problems including hearing and visual impairment, are there to maintain banking formalities to get a meagre Tk 300 per person as monthly allowance.

During a visit to the area on Monday, this correspondent saw the scene as the space inside the bank premise is too small for the large number of people coming from far-flung remote areas to draw the allowance.

Besides interruption in traffic movement, the situation increases the chance of accidents, said a few locals.

Earlier, authorities arranged giving cash to the beneficiaries on holidays at a specific school ground.

Following allegations of huge mismanagement in disbursement of the allowance for the elderly people and widows, the authority

enforced payment system through bank accounts to ensure reaching the full amount to the beneficiaries, said Saifur Rahman, manager of Agrani Bank Sadullapur branch.

There are 5,809 beneficiaries of old-age allowance in Sadullapur upazila and so, covering all of them takes much time to due to lack of manpower at the bank

branch, he added.

"The system for payment through bank has been enforced to avoid corruption and irregularities in disbursement of allowances for elderly people and widows. The process ensures full payment of allowances to the beneficiaries although it needs longer time," said Golam Mowla, Sadullapur upazila nirbahi officer.



PHOTO: STAR

The road in front of Agrani Bank Sadullapur branch crowded on Monday when the branch had to deal with nearly six thousand beneficiaries of government allowance for elderly people and widows in Sadullapur upazila under Gaibandha district.

Firearms seized in 2 districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

The law enforcers seized two firearms and eight bullets in Jessore and Chapainawabganj on Sunday and Monday.

In Chapainawabganj, members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested a young man along with a Chinese pistol and six bullets from Shaheed Birshreshtha Captain Mohiuddin Jahangir Bridge toll plaza area in the district town on Monday night, reports our correspondent.

The arrestee is Masum Mia, 32, son of Bulu Mia of Taliganj Khaserhat village in Shibgonj upazila, said Lt Col Jahangir Hossain, commanding officer of 39 BGB Battalion.

On suspicion, a patrol team of BGB arrested the youth from the area at around 8:15pm and recovered the arms and bullets from his possession, he added.

According to our Benapole correspondent, police seized a shutter gun and two bullets at Ramchandrapur village in Sarsa upazila of Jessore on Sunday night. However, no one was arrested, said Sarsa police.

Sensing the presence of a patrol team of police, three criminals ran away leaving behind a bag at Amtola Border in the village at about 11:00pm.

Later, the law enforcers recovered the firearm and ammunition from the bag.



PHOTO: STAR

Nageshwar Chanpa, a rare medicinal tree, blossoms on the premises of Ramkrishna Mission Ashram in Mymensingh town. The photo was taken on Sunday.

Early taking of answer scripts irks examinees

They confine invigilators to the centre for an hour

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Ten people were injured as police went into action to free invigilators from the SSC examinees' confinement at Panchagarh Girls' High School centre yesterday.

The trouble began as the members of a vigilance team including a magistrate took objective answer papers of chemistry 10 minutes before end of the examination time when the examinees involved in copying from one another at Room No 202 in the centre, sources said.

The agitated examinees encircled the members of the vigilance team and kept them confined for an hour. As they declined to free the members, police charged batons on the students.

Nine SSC examinees and a pedestrian were injured during the incident.

Later the students joined by their guardians barricaded Panchagarh-Dhaka highway demanding punishment of the invigilators. They also set fire to a motorbike in front of the school.

On information, Additional Deputy Commissioner Ahsanul Parvez went there and persuaded the demonstrators to leave the place by assuring them of taking action against the 'responsible' invigilators.

When contacted, Headmistress of Panchagarh Girls' High School Rekha Rani Debi, also the centre secretary, denied taking objective answer papers before end of the time.

BCL, JCD clash at Rokeya University

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

At least ten people, including a policeman were injured during a clash between the activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) at Begum Rokeya University here yesterday.

The trouble began in the morning when JCD leaders and activists brought out a procession on the campus protesting the class boycott programme announced by BCL demanding resignation of the university's proctor.

Campus sources said the BCL activists swooped on the JCD men, prompting them to retaliate. At least nine activists from both sides were injured. At one stage, BCL drove out the JCD men and took control of the campus.

Later, the JCD activists

regrouped outside the campus and brought out a procession. When the procession was heading towards the campus, police intercepted it.

The angry JCD activists hurled brick chips at the policemen, leaving Abdul Wahab, a sub-inspector injured. He was admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Law enforcers charged batons on the JCD men and brought the situation under control. They also arrested a JCD activist on the spot.

Meanwhile, at least 11 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups over land at Ulupur in Natore town on Monday afternoon, reports UNB.

Locals said, there was a long-standing dispute between Abdul Jalil and Kalu Gazi group over the ownership of a land in the area.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

Indian clothes seized

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized Indian clothes worth Tk four crore from a truck in Galkhali area under Khalishpur Police Station of the city on Monday and arrested a man in this connection. The arrestee is Shahin Sattar Biswas, 40, son of late Halim Biswas of Jhalakati district, said Md Waliuzzaman, deputy assistant director of Rab-6. Acting on a tip-off, a special team of Rab-6 led by ASP Rezaul Karim raided the area at about 6:30am and arrested Shahin along with the clothes. However, the trucker managed to flee, said Waliuzzaman. The seized clothes included sarees.

Celebrating Life programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Celebrating Life programme of The Daily Star will be held on the Khulna University (KU) campus tomorrow. Vice Chancellor Prof Md Saifuddin Shah will inaugurate the programme as chief guest. The programme includes open concert at 4:00pm and a film show at 6:30pm. Supported by Standard Chartered Bank, the concert and film show will be held also in cooperation with the KU movie club.

Two Shibir men held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police arrested two activists of Islami Chhatra Shibir from a students' mess at Baluchar village in Chatmohar upazila on Monday night. The arrestees are Robiul Islam, 25, president of Shibir Chatmohar upazila unit, and Delwar Hossain. Md Habibur Islam, officer-in-charge of Chatmohar Police Station, said the law enforcers arrested the duo while they were distributing leaflets containing anti-government statement at the mess.

Youth electrocuted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

A young man was electrocuted in Belkuchi upazila on Monday evening. The deceased is Selim Sheikh, 28, son of Dulal Sheikh of Subarnasara village. Locals said when Selim climbed a banyan tree, he came in contact with a live electric wire and fell to the ground. He was rushed to upazila health complex where the doctors declared him dead.



PHOTO: GRAMEEMPHONE

Grameenphone has started its 'rural activation programme' with the aim of popularising mobile phone use among village people. The photo was taken from Ghior upazila in Manikganj district recently.