

Govt mills cannot pay farmers' dues as sugar unsold

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, *Thakurgaon*

Around 8,873 tonnes of sugar worth about Tk 48.80 crore produced by government-run Thakurgaon and Panchagarh sugar mills has remained unsold as their selling price is higher than that of private sugar factories and refineries.

Consequently, hundreds of farmers who had supplied sugarcane to the mills during the recently ended crushing season are yet to get their dues.

Thakurgaon Sugar Mills Ltd owes Tk 1.5 core to 500 farmers while Panchagarh Sugar Mills Ltd owes about Tk 3 crore 50 lakh to 2,500 farmers.

The farmers are regularly approaching the mill authorities for their dues, but they have to return either empty-handed or with small amounts as partial payment.

The situation may discourage farmers to grow sugarcane in the coming season.

"I cultivated sugarcane on 10-bigha (a bigha = .3306 acres) of land and supplied 58 tonnes of sugarcane to Thakurgaon Sugar Mills. But I am yet to get my dues despite coming to the mill several times. My family plan had to be changed due to the situation," said Md Habibur Rahman, 45, a sugarcane grower of Nargoon village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Yasin Ali, 40, of Maligaon village in Atwary upazila in Panchagarh district, said he cultivated sugarcane on 15-bigha of land and supplied 70 tonnes of sugarcane to Panchagarh Sugar Mills but still he has dues of Tk 50,000.

"I cannot manage the expenditure of the ongoing boro cultivation due to the delay in payment," he said.

Thakurgaon Sugar Mills produced about 4,781 tonnes of sugar by crushing 79,480 tonnes of sugarcanes in 67 days of operation period starting on December 2 last year, said Managing Director (MD) Sibendranath Sarcar.

Panchagarh Sugar Mills produced 4,363 tonnes of sugar by crushing 77,387 tonnes of sugarcane in 86 days from December 2.

Considering the production cost and the

value of produced sugar, Thakurgaon Sugar Mills Ltd incurred loss of Tk 15 crore and Panchagarh Sugar Mills Ltd Tk 16 crore in the last crushing season, said MDs of the two sugar mills.

Of the total production, only 71 tonnes of sugar of Thakurgaon Sugar Mills and 200 tonnes of Panchagarh Sugar Mills have been sold, mill sources said.

"We are yet to draw sugar from state-owned sugar mills as the private companies are selling a kg of sugar at Tk 53 while the rate of state owned mills is Tk 55," said Yakub Ali, a sugar dealer of Thakurgaon.

Blaming government policy for the situation, MD of Thakurgaon Sugar Mills Ltd Sibendranath Sarcar said the private companies who import raw sugar set their prices lower than the price fixed by state-own mills.

He demanded increasing the import duty on raw sugar to save the state-owned sugar mills as livelihood of thousands of families is related with it.

The authorities of the losing mills have urged the higher authorities to arrange sufficient funds to enable them to pay off the arrear dues of the sugarcane growers, he said.

Farmers are losing interest to cultivate sugarcane as they have to face hassles to get their dues for supplying sugarcanes to the mills every year, said Yunus Ali, president of Thakurgaon Sugarcane Growers' Association.

"Sugar mill workers and employees suffer much as the mill authorities fail to pay salary in time when sugar remains unsold. The government should control the market price of sugar so that the private mill owners cannot take undue advantage by fixing lower rates," said Jobidur Rahman, president of Thalurgaon Sugar Mills Workers and Employees Union.

Fifteen state-owned sugar mills in the country produced 69,307 tonnes of sugar by crushing 10 lakh 47 thousand 559 tonnes of sugarcane this year while last year they produced 93,577 tonnes of sugar by crushing 14 lakh 79 thousand 881 tonnes of sugarcane.



PHOTO: STAR

Huge TSP fertiliser imported for the ongoing boro season by Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation lies under the open sky at No 4 jetty area in Khulna city as the assigned clearing and forwarding agents have stopped transporting the item under the pretext of rise in carrying cost due to fuel price hike.

Imported fertiliser at mercy of C&F men

QUAZI AMANULLAH, *Khulna*

Around 50,000 tonnes of fertiliser imported by Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) and Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) have been lying in open space as clearing and forwarding (C & F) agents have stopped its transportation due to unusual rise in carrying costs.

As carrying costs have risen due to price hike of fuel twice in last two months, the C & F agents are waiting for next June to renew their agreement quoting new rate for transporting the fertilisers to cope with the increased carrying costs, sources said.

Non-urea fertilisers imported by BADC were kept in open space at Roosevelt Jetty in Khalishpur of Khulna city while urea fertiliser imported by BCIC was kept at Skidghat in Khulna Sadar.

As in every year, five C & F agents were appointed in June last year for carrying imported fertilisers and terms and condition of the agreement obliges them to reach fertilisers to destinations within 15 days from the date of unloading from ships, said BADC sources.

The convenor of Mongla port Users' Coordination Committee Syed Zahid Hossain admitted that C & F agents are reluctant to carry fertilisers by trucks as their profit will come down due to price hike of fuel.

"If fertilisers lying in open space are damaged by rain the country will suffer huge

financial losses and farmers will be worst affected," he said.

Mobarak Hossain, a dealer of Jessore town, said fertilisers lying in open places for months will ultimately lose its utility.

BADC imported 1,32,000 tonnes of TSP, DAP and MoP fertilisers in last three months keeping in view the current boro season.

But huge fertiliser imported by BADC and BCIC has remained stockpiled in open spaces of Roosevelt Jetty in Khalishpur, Skidghat in Khulna Sadar and Shiromoni under Khanjahan Ali police station of Khulna city as C & F agents refused to transport it to different destinations.

C & F agent Akbar Ali, also proprietor of Messers Akbar Ali, on the other hand, said huge quantities of fertilisers are lying in open spaces as BADC could not accommodate it in its warehouses.

BADC Joint Director (Fertiliser) Ali Asgar said, "Of course, we have to keep the fertiliser in open spaces due to lack of accommodation in our warehouses. Besides, sale of fertilisers has declined this year."

He, however, said fertilisers kept in open spaces are safe as they are covered.

"C&F agents never informed me about rise in carrying cost. So, they are bound to transport fertilisers to destinations under terms and conditions of agreement," he added.

Md Shajahan, store officer of Khulna office of BCIC, said fertilisers kept in open spaces would be shifted to warehouses shortly.



PHOTO: STAR

A profusely budding mango tree in Chapainawabganj offers an eye-soothing sight. Bumper yield is expected in the district famous for high quality tasty varieties of the popular summer fruit as orchards see huge flowering during this 'on year' of mango.

SNIPPETS

Gecko poachers jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khagrachhari*

A mobile court here on Monday sentenced two poachers to six months' imprisonment for smuggling gecko, a kind of reptile locally known as 'takkhok'. The court also fined each convict Tk 1000. They are Abul Kalam, 30, son of Abdul Aziz of Lakhipur area in Chaudagram upazila of Comilla and Mohammad Balal Uddin, 25, son of late Nurul Haque of the district. Mostafizur Rahman, officer in-charge of Khagrachhari Sadar Police Station said, on secret information, they raided Arambagh area in the district town and arrested the poachers along with a caged gecko.

Statue recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Police recovered a precious statue of Hindu god Visnu from Hossain Fakirer Bari at Jahapur village in Babuganj upazila yesterday afternoon and arrested two people in this connection. On secret information, an eight-member team of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, led by assistant commissioner Abu Saleh Ahmed, raided the area and arrested Humayan Fakir and his accomplice Nanna Howladar along with the statue weighing 122 kilogram.

Three shops gutted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Three shops were gutted in a fire at Patkelghata Bazar in Tala upazila on Monday night. Locals said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a grocery shop at the bazar at around 11:00pm and soon spread to one medicine shop and a stationery shop. On information, a fire fighting unit from Satkhira rushed in and doused the blaze after one hour of frantic efforts. One of the affected shop owners, Dilip Ghosh, claimed that the loss caused by the fire could go up to Tk 50 lakh.

Roadblock in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Khagrachhari*

The blockade programme on Khagrachhari-Panchhari road enforced by Panchhari upazila unit of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) yesterday passed off peacefully. The day-long road blockade was announced protesting 'falsely implicating' the name of Supan Chakma Sagor, general secretary of the upazila unit of PCJSS, in the case filed for burning a rice laden truck on Friday. All kinds of vehicular movement on Khagrachhari-Panchhari road remained suspended during the blockade, much to the sufferings of the passengers. Demanding the withdrawal of Sagor's name from the case within seven days, Vice-president of Panchhari upazila unit of PCJSS Ayotan Chakma said they will opt for greater movement if the demand is not met.

Two held with arms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested two young men along with a 9mm pistol and three bullets at Ramchandrapur village in Sadar upazila early yesterday. The arrestees are Shimul Hossain, 32, son of Shahadat Mondal of the village and Toukir Ahmed Jony, 30, son of Moznu Pramanik of Shibrampur village. Tanvir Anwar, commander of Rab-12, said acting on a tip-off, they raided the residence of one Abdul Mannan at about 3:00am and arrested the duo along with the arms and ammunition.

Farmer hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Lalmonirhat*

A farmer was hacked to death by his rivals over a disputed land at Bonga Tari village in Gorol union under Kaliganj upazila yesterday morning. The victim is Gunodhar Chandra Roy, 35, son of Raj Narayan of the village. Victim's father filed a case with Kaliganj police station accusing 15 people including Mahmudul Islam alias Maidul, chairman of Gorol union. Raj Narayan owns a 10 decimal land at the village. As the father and the son were working at their land, Kanok Chandra Roy, a supporter of the UP chairman, along with some village policemen swooped on Raj Narayan and Gunodhar and hacked the victim on Saturday. He was rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital in critical condition where he died, said locals.

Extortionists kill brick kiln owner for toll

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushtia*

Criminals murdered an Awami League (AL) leader at Dehati village in Jibonnagar upazila in Chuadanga district on Monday night.

The victim was identified as Nasir Ali Sarkar, 55, vice-president of Andulbaria union unit AL. He is also owner of Sarkar Brick Kiln.

Police said local extortionists killed him for refusing to pay toll.

Neyamat Ali, a labourer of the brick kiln and eyewitness to the incident,

told journalists that an armed gang, numbering around 15, entered the office of the brick kiln at Dehati village at about 8:30pm and demanded Tk 2 lakh illegal toll.

At one stage, the criminals closed the office door from inside, said Neyamat.

Sensing danger, Neyamat and other labourers of the brick kiln cried for help.

At this, the criminals fled the scene hurriedly.

The labourers rushed to Nasir's office and found him in a pool of blood. They took him to Jibonnagar upazila

health complex.

He was shifted to Jessore General Hospital as his condition deteriorated. But Nasir died at about 10:30pm on the way to Jessore.

Officer in-charge (OC) of Jibonnagar police station GG Biswas said that the criminals stabbed Nasir with sharp knives.

Police, later arrested one Belal Hossain, 28, of Dehati in the upazila.

"We are investigating the matter. Drive is on to nab the other criminals," the OC said.

Kuet recalls Katka tragedy

Sea washed away 12 students on Mar 13, 2004

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Students, teachers, officials and employees of Khulna University yesterday observed eighth 'Katka tragedy day' through different programmes.

Nine students of architecture discipline of Khulna University and two students of mechanical department of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet) met tragic death as cross current of the sea washed them away near Katka in the Sundarbans while they were taking bath there on March 13 in 2004.

The eleven students are Arnaj Rifat Rupa, Mahmudur Rahman Russel, Maksumul Aziz Mostaji Nipun, Abdullahel Baki, Kazi Abdul Mueed, Kauser Ahmed Khan, Munadil Raihan bin Walid, Ashrafuzzaman Toha, Touhidul Enam Apu of Khulna University and Shamsul Arefin Shakil and Samiul Hasan Khan of Buet, Dhaka.

All the bodies were recovered from the sea.

The daylong programmes yesterday included wearing of black badges at 10:00am, mourning rally at 10:30am, laying of floral wreaths at Katka tragedy memorial at 11:00am, milad mehil at the university mosque after Zohr prayers, mass feeding at 2:00pm, condolence meeting at 4:30pm and lighting of candles at 6:30pm.

On midnight of March 12 in 2004, a group of 78 students of architecture department of Khulna University along with 20 guests left

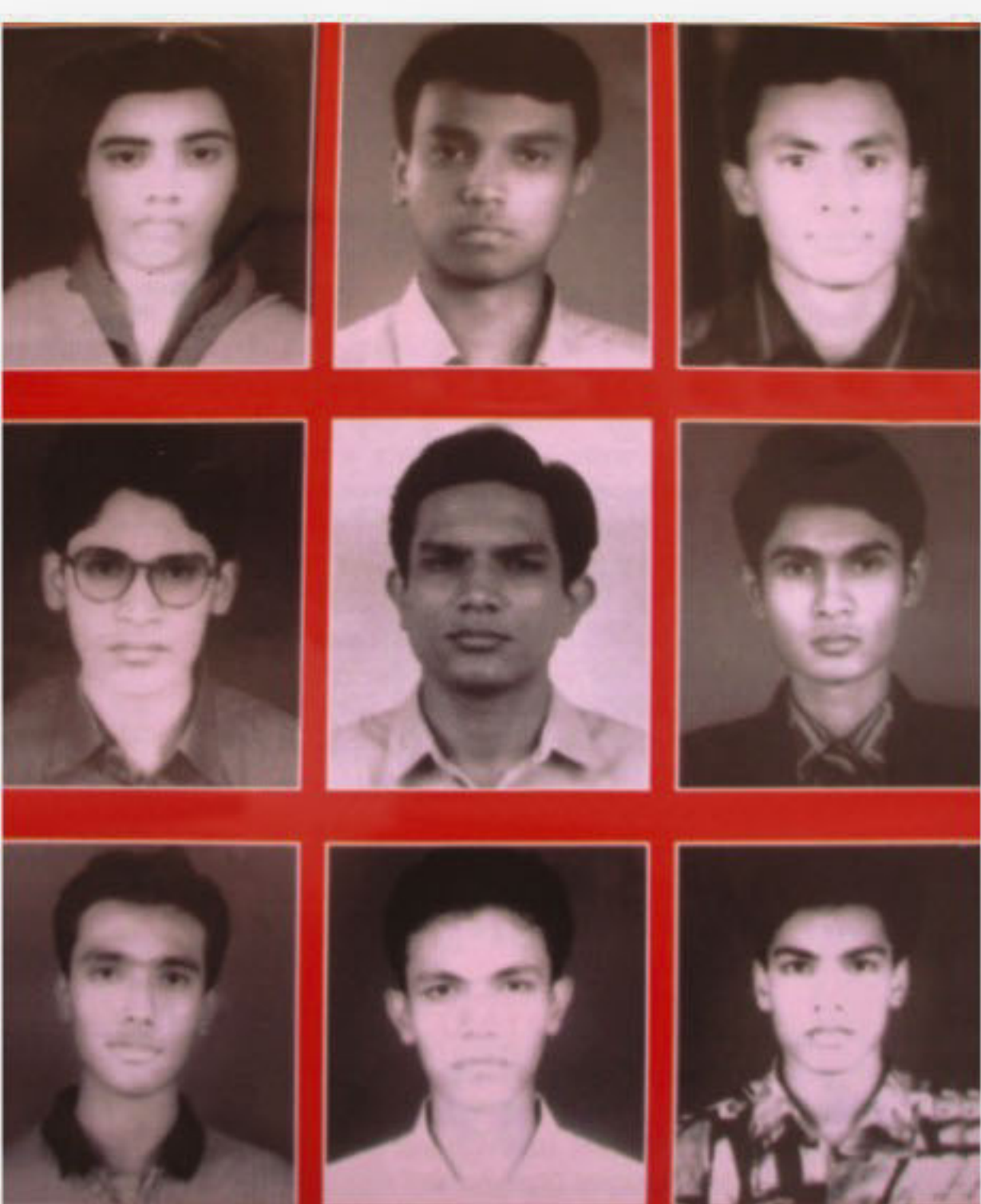


PHOTO: STAR

NINE OF THE 11 VICTIMS OF KATKA TRAGEDY

Top row: Arnaj Rifat Rupa, Mahmudur Rahman Russel, Maksumul Aziz Mostaji, Middle row: Abdullahel Baki, Kazi Abdul Mueed, Kauser Ahmed Khan, Bottom row: Munadil Raihan bin Walid, Ashrafuzzaman Toha, Touhidul Enam Apu -- all studying in architecture department of Khulna University during the tragedy eight years ago.

Khulna by a reserved motor launch towards the Sundarbans for a picnic. They reached the sea beach at 1:30pm on March 13.

Suddenly, furious current washed away eleven

students while they were taking bath in the sea, said Shibu Prasad Bose, one of the survivors of the tragedy, and now serving as a lecturer of architecture at Khulna University.

কম্পিউটারাইজ সিনিভার রি-টেস্ট
 বিস্ফোরণ থেকে বিরত থাকুন
 আজই সিনিভার রি-টেস্ট করুন

01975006128, 01975006081