

# Nine districts set to have bumper wheat harvest

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT and PONUEL S BOSE, from Thakurgaon and Narail

The current season shows all signs of good yield of wheat in different areas of the country.

Farmers and agriculturists are expecting bumper production of the winter crop in eight districts of Dinajpur and Rangpur regions as the plants have grown well due to favourable weather condition, reports our correspondent Quamrul Islam Rubaiyat.

Prolonged winter, timely irrigation and smooth supply of fertilisers have helped proper growth of wheat plants in the eight northern districts, said Dr Zahidul Islam Sarker, principal scientific officer of Wheat Research Centre (WRC) in Dinajpur.

Around 1.6-lakh hectares of land have been brought under wheat cultivation in the eight northern districts against the target of about 1.19-lakh hectares with the production target of 3 lakh 9,369 tonnes.

Of the cultivated land, 57,100 hectares are in Thakurgaon, 16,072 hectares in Dinajpur, 11,100 hectares in Panchagarh, 3,040 hectares in Rangpur, 2,020 hectares in Gaibandha, 11,230 hectares in Kurigram, 1,375 hectares in Lalmonirhat and 4,025 hectares in Nilphamari district, said sources of Rangpur Regional office of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

Although the wheat cultivation area is little short than the target, the production target is likely to exceed much as farmers are expecting to get 12 to 16 maunds (one maund = 37.32 kg) of wheat per bigha (0.3306 acre) of land, DAE officials and farmers said.

Harvesting will start in the last week of March, they said.

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 seeds.

Farmers overcame the situation by using locally preserved seeds and buying seeds from private companies at higher rates.

The farmers of Thakurgaon, the highest wheat producing district in the country, last year produced 1.94-lakh tonnes of wheat from 58,900 hectares of land (of the total crops on 4,000 hectares damaged by natural disaster) while the country's total production was 9.75 lakh tonnes from 3.75-lakh hectares of land, DAE sources said.

This season, the country's wheat cultivation area and total production target

have remained the same.

Increasing demand, good prices, easy cultivation process and lower production cost than that of Irri-boro make wheat cultivation attractive to farmers.

"I have decided to cultivate wheat considering its growing demand and high price in the market," said Rafiqul Islam, 45, of Shingpara village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Cultivation of wheat, requiring only three times irrigation, is much easier and less costly than paddy cultivation, said Md Islam of Moidandighi village in Boda upazila of Panchagarh.

Production cost of wheat on a bigha of land is Tk 4500 at the maximum while it needs around Tk 8500 to cultivate Irri-boro crops, he said.

"Now the farmers use high yielding varieties including BARI-25, BARI-26, Prodip, Bijoy and Shatabdi devel-

oped by WRC. These varieties are heat tolerant and can easily adapt to our environment," said WRC official Dr Zahidul Islam Sarker.

Cultivation of these varieties has helped the country's average wheat production increase to nearly three tonnes per hectare from earlier two tonnes, he said.

The research centre has developed two new high yielding and disease tolerant varieties BARI-27 and BARI-28 that will be introduced at the farmers' level in next season, he said.

The country produces 9 lakh to 10 lakh tonnes of wheat a year against the demand of about 30 to 35 lakh tonnes, WRC officials said, adding that favourable temperature, sandy-loamy soil and easy availability of water are needed for cultivation of the winter crop.

Ponuel S Bose adds from Narail: Encouraged by good

yield and good price of wheat during the last several years, farmers in three upazilas of the district are cultivating the crop on larger areas of land.

Favourable weather, sandy-loamy soil, timely irrigation and availability of organic fertiliser at fair price have helped wheat plants to grow well and fast, said agriculture officials and farmers.

The farmers in Narail district have cultivated wheat on 2,740 hectares of land and the production target is 7,121 tonnes, DAE officials said.

The cultivation areas include 1,070 hectares of land in Narail Sadar upazila, 1,060 hectares in Lohagara upazila and 610 hectares in Kalia upazila.

Harvesting has already started in the different areas and the target is likely to exceed much as farmers are getting 31 to 32 maunds of wheat per acre (100 decimals) of land, DAE officials said.

Cultivation of wheat is much easier and less costly than paddy cultivation, said local farmers.

"I was inspired to cultivate wheat because of its growing demand and high price in the market during the last few years," said Sukumer Dey, a farmer of Agdia village in Sadar upazila.

Kamrul Hasan Sagor, Organic fertiliser producer and analyser of RK Agro, said that farmers of the southern districts are getting positive results by using organic fertilisers instead of chemical ones.

The farmers of Narail district now use high yielding varieties of wheat seeds naming Shatabdi, Prodeep, Shourav, Gourab and Bijoy, said DAE Deputy Director Bonik Ram Krishno.



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer reaps wheat from his profusely yielding field at Agdia village in Narail Sadar upazila as fair prices coupled with irrigation facilities and smooth supply of organic fertilisers encouraged local farmers to cultivate the winter crop in more areas this season.

## 'Bring killers of journo couple to book by Mar 18 or face agitation'

Newsmen of Rangpur Division, Khulna hold rallies

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Journalists of Rangpur Division and Khulna held separate programmes in Dinajpur and Khulna city yesterday, demanding arrest and trial of the killers of the journalist couple.

Journalists of Rangpur Division at a joint meeting yesterday demanded resignation of home minister Sahara Khatun as she failed to make any headway in 30 days into the case for killing of Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

Dinajpur Journalists Union organised the programme at Dinajpur Shilpakala Academy complex in the morning, reports our Dinajpur and Dhakurgaon correspondents.

At least 500 working journalists of 56 upazilas under eight northern districts of Rangpur Division attended the meeting.

Presided by AHM Abdul Bari, a senior journalist and founder convener of Dinajpur Journalist Union, the speakers at the meeting expressed their concern at failure of the government to being the killers of any journalist to book in different areas of the country.

Journalists of the country and the family members of the murdered jour-

nalists had been seeking justice. Even their agitations went in vain, the speakers said.

More journalists of the country may have to die if the killers are not brought to book, they said.

They urged the government to set 'at least one example' of justice by completing the Sagar-Runi murder case.

The journalists also threatened to launch a greater movement under a new platform comprising journalists of eight northern districts of Rangpur Division if the killers are not arrested by March 18.

In Khulna city, Khulna Union of Journalists (KUJ) and Metropolitan Union of Journalist (MUJ) jointly organised a rally at Khulna Press Club yesterday, demanding punishment to killers of Runi and Sagor and fair trial of all journalist murder cases.

Presided by KUJ President Makbul Hossain Mintu, the rally was addressed among others by presidents of both factions of BFUJ Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury and Ruhul Amin Gazi, general secretaries Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan and Shawkat Mahmud and senior journalists of Khulna, reports our staff correspondent.

Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said that

there is no alternative to unity of journalists for realising their rights. Journalists of both factions of BFUJ are now demanding arrest and trial of the killers of all journalists through fair investigation.

Greater unity is needed to protect professional rights and dignity of journalists which we lost due to political reason since 1992, he said.

Ruhul Amin Gazi in his speech demanded arrest of the killers of Sagar and Runi before the grand rally of journalists to be held on March 18 in Dhaka.

Otherwise, a united BFUJ will throw a tougher programme to realise the demand, he said.

Abdul Jalil Bhuiyan strongly condemned the gruesome murder of Sagar and Runi and failure of the law enforcers to arrest their killers even after one month of the incident.

Our movement will continue till killers of the journalists are not arrested, he said.

Shawkat Mahmud said 26 journalists were killed in the country since independence including 14 in last three years.

He urged the government to bring the killers to book without fear or favour.

## Outlaw murdered in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

An outlawed operative was chopped to death at Alokchar village in Pabna Sadar upazila under the district early yesterday.

The deceased is Md Moksed Ali, 57, son of late Kutub Uddin of village Poshchim Ataikula in Sadar upazila. He was a member of a faction of outlawed Sarbahara party, police said.

Officer in charge of Ataikula police station Md Robiul Hassan Sarkar, said Moksed along with his accomplices were playing cards on Tuesday night at a shop at Alokchar village.

After the game, Moksed was returning home at about 1:00am. All on a sudden, a gang of criminals, numbering 8 to 10, attacked him near the shop and chopped him to death on the spot.

## Protesters detain train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Scores of people of Bonarapara in Saghata upazila besieged railway station yesterday and detained a Lalmonirhat bound intercity train for an hour, demanding resumption of service of two trains.

Earlier, they brought out a procession in favour of their demand.

Railway station source said, a Santaher bound college train from Bonarapara was cancelled recently on the plea of locomotive shortage.

On the same ground, a Ramshagor express train, destined for Dinajpur from Bonarapara station, was also stopped three months ago.



PHOTO: STAR

A small motorised boat carrying passengers on Buragouranga River on Galachipa-Charkazal route a few days ago. Thousands of people in the coastal islands of Patuakhali district depend on such unsafe transports even during the seven-month ban imposed by the government as authorities fail to arrange safer alternatives for their movement.

## 7-month ban on small water transports on 23 routes starts today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The seven-month ban on plying of small water transports on 23 routes in the 'Danger Zone' of the coastal areas comes into effect from today.

The ban, however, appears as an added worry to several lakh people, especially the inhabitants of over a hundred char areas in seven upazilas under the district, as authorities concerned have not arranged any alternative transport for them.

According to ban order imposed by the government, all water transports that are less than 65 feet long are not allowed to ply the coastal routes from March 15 to October 15 every year as frequent storms make journey on the routes risky.

BIWTA sources said five launches Khijir-7, Khijir-8, Shaheed Salam, Shaheed Sheikh Kamal and Shaheed Jabbar are scheduled to ply five routes -- Barisal to Majuchowdhuryhat via Elisha, Dowlatkhan to Char Alexander, Mirzakalu to Char Alexander, Bhola to Monpura and Char Alexander to Tajumuddin routes during the ban period. But Khijir-8 and Shaheed Sheikh

Kamal are waiting for repair at Narayanganj dockyard and Shaheed Jabbar is kept at Karnafuli dockyard in Chittagong.

"No alternative measures have been taken yet on these routes during the ban period. But it should be made soon considering interest of the local people," said Shahidullah Mia, deputy director of BIWTA.

In absence of any alternative safe transport on the routes during the ban period, local people, especially from char areas, often defy the ban when they need to communicate with upazila or district headquarters for urgent piece of works. But journey by small sized single-decker launches or country boats on these routes poses life risk for passengers.

On May 15 in 2005, over a hundred people including a good number of children and female were killed as over-loaded single-decker launch 'Prince of Patuakhali' capsized on Patuakhali-Char Montaz route during a rough weather.

Following a survey that identified over 3,000-kilometre waterways as 'Danger Zone' in the coastal areas of the country, the government imposed the ban for the seven months by a circular in 2000, sources said.



PHOTO: STAR

Criminals on Tuesday night cut down over 500 young mango, litchi and other trees of a farmer at Ashrafpur in Sadar upazila of Kushtia.

## Criminals fell 500 young trees

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Criminals felled at least 500 young mango and litchi trees on 4 bighas of land belonging to a man at Ashrafpur village in Sadar upazila on Tuesday night.

"I have never seen such a heinous act in my life. Those who have felled the trees should be brought to book,"

said victim Yusuf Ali, son of Abdur Rahim of the village.

"All my investment has gone in vain," added the 40-year-old hapless land owner. Yusuf also said he planted around 1000 saplings of mango, mahogany and litchi on the land four years ago.

He found the trees felled by criminals when he went to his land in the morning, added the victim.

Later, he went to file a case with Meherpur Sadar police station in this connection, but Jahangir Alam, officer in-charge of the PS, refused to record the case, said Yusuf.

Contacted, the OC said he suggested Yusuf to file the case with a magistrate's court and pledged to take action after a court directive.



PHOTO: STAR

Journalists of Rangpur Division and (right) Khulna Union of Journalists held separate programmes yesterday, demanding trial and punishment of killers of all the journalists including Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

**GLOBAL APPEAL**  
To end stigma and discrimination against people affected by leprosy

**2012**

**Endorsed by members of The World Medical Association**

There are many myths and misconceptions about leprosy. As members of the medical profession, we have the first responsibility to set the record straight. Leprosy is a mildly infectious disease. It is not spread by casual contact. It is curable with multidrug therapy that kills the bacteria and stops the disease from spreading. Early diagnosis and prompt treatment help prevent the onset of disability and deformity associated with leprosy. There are no medical grounds for isolating a person with the disease.

Yet people with leprosy continue to face social discrimination, even after they are cured. Whole families are marginalized, sometimes with devastating results. Drugs can cure leprosy, but only greater public awareness can end the stigma it attracts.

Without the social stigma, more people would come forward for treatment. New cases would be detected sooner and be less likely to result in disability. The burden of leprosy in the world would be reduced.

We affirm the right of people affected by leprosy to receive treatment at any hospital. We call for an end to discrimination against them and their families. We support their right to live in dignity as full members of the community with equal access to opportunities and enjoying all their human rights.

Launched in São Paulo, Brazil, on January 30, 2012, Global Appeal 2012 is an initiative of Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination, Japanese Government Goodwill **Chairman of The Nippon Foundation**  
Local partner: **The Leprosy Mission International-Bangladesh.**