

TEN SOUTH-WESTERN DISTRICTS

Farmers eye bumper Irri-boro

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Farmers and agriculture officials are expecting bumper production of Irri-boro paddy in 10 south-western districts under Khulna division in the current season.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) has set production target of 34,34,506.5 tonnes of boro paddy in 10 districts under Khulna division this season, reports our correspondent from Kushtia.

This is 1,04,476.5 tonnes higher than last year's, said DAE officials, adding that this time farmers have cultivated boro on 6,07,470 hectares of land in the 10 districts while it was 5,84,497 hectares last year.

Of the 10 districts -- Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah, Magura, Jessore, Narail, Bagerhat, Satkhira and Khulna, Jessore sees the highest target of 1,56,920 hectares of land for boro cultivation.

Target areas in other districts are 86,325 hectares in Jhenidah, 44,480 hectares in Magura, 44,390 hectares in Narail, 50,025 hectares in Khulna, 47,385 hectares in Bagerhat, 73,985 hectares in Satkhira, 37,460 hectares in Kushtia and 40,550 hectares in Chuadanga, and the lowest 25,950 hectares in Meherpur.

Hybrid boro will be cultivated on 1,86,385 hectares, high yielding varieties on 4,15,630 hectares and local varieties on 5,455 hectares of land.

"Farmers are getting all kinds of support including

subsidised fertilisers and necessary electricity," Abdul Mannan, additional director of DAE, Khulna division in Jessore, told this correspondent over phone.

As this correspondent contacted DAE officials in other districts over phone, they shared similar views, saying that they got reports of good cultivation mainly because of favourable weather, proper irrigation facilities and supply of fertiliser.

The farmers have planted different types of paddy like Brri-28, 45, 33, 50, 26, 39, Hira, super hybrid, Madhumati, Aftab, Aloran, Tyia, Ratna, Kajal Lata IR-50, GS, Kargil, agriculture officials said.

This time 7 to 12 percent extra yields is expected if there is no natural calamity, said Md Lutfar Rahman, deputy director of DAE regional office in Kushtia.

During this correspondent's visit to some areas in Meherpur, Chuadanga and Kushtia, farmers said fertilisers are available this time.

According to DAE sources, the government fixed Tk 1000 per bag (50 kg) of urea, TSP at Tk 110 (which was Tk 600 in last year), DAP at Tk 1350 (which was Tk 1250 in last year) and MoP at Tk 750 (which was same in last year).

Farmers, however, expressed grave concern over power supply and high price for water supplied by pumpowners.

Besides they had to buy saplings for high prices.

"We have to wait even two or three days for supply water in the paddy



PHOTO: STAR

Nearly matured plants in a paddy field at Barkhada village of Kushtia Sadar upazila shows signs of good yield. Farmers and agriculture officials are expecting a bumper production of Irri-boro paddy in 10 districts of Khulna division due to favourable weather condition and timely supply of fertiliser.

fields," Asadur Rahman, a farmer of Gangni in Meherpur told this correspondent on Friday.

Several farmers said they are to pay one-fourth of reaped paddy for supplying water to one bigha of land from the time of starting cultivation process in the field. On an average, one-fourth of reaped paddy amounts to four maunds and its price is Tk 3000 to 3400.

Farmers termed the price too high while the pump owners showed plea of diesel price hike.

The additional director of DAE Khulna division, how-

ever, said around 18,000 more shallow pumps have been added to about 54,000 existing ones this season and it helped to bring about additional 15,000 hectares of land under cultivation.

"Stern action will be taken if there is specific allegation of price manipulation by the dealers. Monitoring committees in every district are looking after the matter," he said.

Our Satkhira Correspondent adds: Farmers are expecting a bumper yield from Irri-boro cultivation in flood affected Tala upazila under the district this season.

With hope to recoup the losses of aman paddy damage due to persisting water logging, farmers planted Irri-boro saplings with the help of sweet water from canals, ponds and other water bodies about a month ago.

Due to massive deposition of silt and consequent loss of depth, the Kabodak River lost its capacity to hold water and it resulted in serious flooding and water logging in vast areas of Tala upazila since 2005.

"As the soil fertility increased due to inundation by flood water from the Kabodak River, the land now requires less amount of urea fertiliser for Irri-boro cultivation," said Mafidul Islam of Amtalardanga village in Tala upazila.

Agriculture officials said they are providing cooperation to the farmers for the cultivation.



PHOTO: STAR

Set amid croplands and only a few metres from a school, this brick field at Rudragram village in Trishal upazila under Mymensingh district has been continuing illegal operation for over two years.

Brick kiln continues operation ignoring protest, DoE order

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Nothing could stop the operation of a brick kiln that has been flouting environmental laws, causing air pollution and affecting farmlands for over two years.

Despite protest by locals and order of Department of Environment (DoE) to shut down 'Rehan Bricks', the owner of the brick field continued to burn bricks at Rudragram village in Trishal upazila.

The kiln started its operation in 2010 without taking clearance certificate from the authorities, said Md Abdul Azim, assistant director at DoE in the district.

On March 14 this year, the authorities served a notice on owner Abu Rehan to stop the operation of the kiln as it is located within one kilometre of human habitation and educational institutions, he added.

As per the rule, brick kilns should not be set up within three kilometres of any human habitation, house, road and highway or crop field.

Earlier on January 2, the owner submitted an application to the department seeking certificate while the authorities received another application from locals on January 25 urging to shut the kiln, said Azim.

However, while visiting the spot in March, the DoE officer saw the kiln still burning bricks. He said the authorities would take necessary steps against people responsible for the offence.

Meanwhile, Rehan claimed that local administration gave him permission to run the brick field. However, he could not mention any specific body or official that issued it.

Terming the brick field environment friendly, he said it was causing less harm to people and farmland than any other kilns in the area.

Makbul Hossain, a farmer of Bhati Daspara village, said the kiln had been posing serious environmental threat to locals and affecting soil fertility and plantations since its inception.

Production of fruits and vegetables, including mango and jackfruit, has

sharply fallen in the areas due to burning of bricks at the kiln, he added.

Local social organisations, such as Pachlar Char Samaj Kalyan Samity, Swapnabaz Samity and Avijatrik lodged several complaints with the owners of the brick kiln, but it all went unheeded.

Golam Mustafa, director of Golapkuri Kindergarten, said that the brick field was posing serious health hazard to the students as the school is located only a few yards off the kiln.

"We informed the authorities including local lawmaker Reza Ali, UNO Md Mizanur Rahman and upazila agriculture officer about the matter, but to no effect," he added.

Contacted, the UNO said they would take punitive action against those responsible for the matter after visiting the spot.

According to the sources at DoE, more than 30 brick fields have been set up in the upazila. Of those, 20 are burning firewood, violating rules and polluting environment.

Libya returnee abducted for ransom freed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A Libya returnee, abducted for ransom in the town four days ago, was rescued early yesterday.

Police said, Azizur Rahman Ujjal, 35, son of Khorshed Alam of Pashchim Jhaogara village in Melandaha upazila of Jamalpur, was abducted from an auto-rickshaw stand on April 19.

The abductors took Ujjal to a remote char of the Jamuna River in Tangail Sadar upazila the same day.

Later, they talked to Ujjal's father Khorshed Alam over cellphone and demanded a ransom of Tk 5 lakh for release of his son. The abductors also threatened to kill Ujjal if the money was not paid.

Khorshed Alam informed the police of the

matter and filed a case with Tangail Model Police Station on Saturday.

Tracking the phone call, a police team went to the char in Hugra area under Tangail Sadar upazila at around 3:00am and rescued Ujjal from there.

Two of the abductors were arrested during the raid while the rest managed to flee, police said. The arrestees are Sajedul Islam, 40, of Paharpur village in Delduar upazila, and Hasan Mahmud, 35, of Hugra village in Sadar upazila.

Nazrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Tangail Model Police Station, said abductor Hasan Mahmud was wanted in several criminal cases including one for murder.

"We are trying to arrest the other members of the gang," he added.

SNAPS AND SNIPPETS

Student commits 'suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

A college student allegedly committed suicide by taking poison at Borengga village under Keshabpur upazila early yesterday. The deceased was identified as Hafizur Rahman Chhoto, 22, son of Nowsher Sarder of the village. Police said Hafizur took poison following a family feud. He was rushed to local hospital where doctors declared him dead. Hafizur was a second year student at Keshabpur College.

Youth beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

A young man was beaten to death in Satiantola area under Sadar upazila of the town on Sunday night. The victim, Ripon Hossain, 25, was son of Wazed Ali of the area. Abdul Jalil, officer in-charge of Sadar police station, said one Ibrahim called Ripon out at night to settle a family feud and locked in an altercation with him. At one stage, Ibrahim attacked Ripon with an iron rod leaving him seriously injured. Ripon was rushed to Sadar hospital where he died in the morning.

Two frauds arrested

UNB, Rajshahi

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members arrested two frauds along with seal-pads, stamps and ink for making fake legal documents from Mollapara area in the city on Saturday evening. The arrestees are Moslem Uddin Mondal and Kabirul Islam of Bujrukholra village of Bagmara upazila. Rab-5 sources said, on secret information, they raided the rented house of Mozammel Hossain in the area and arrested them along with the materials at about 5:30pm.

Press club executives

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

ETV, Daily Sangbad and Radio Bangladesh district correspondent Gokul Roy and Daily Ajkaler Khabar district correspondent Ashequr Rahman Defence were elected president and general secretary of Lalmonirhat Press Club on Saturday. Other members of the executive body are Jahid Hossain (Weekly Lalmonir Kantho), Altafur Rahman Altaf (Daily Khabar Patra), Lavlu Shaikh (Daily Sangram), Asadul Islam Sabuj (Daily Destiny), Zinnatul Islam Zinnah (News agency FNS), SR Sariful Islam Ratan (Daily Desh Janata), Raisul Islam Sena (Daily Khola Kagoj and Paribesh), Shahjahan Shazu (Daily Juger Alo and Mukto Sokal).



PHOTO: STAR

Locals form a human chain at Thakurbari of Ramchandrapur union in Sadar upazila of Gaibandha yesterday, demanding steps to stop gambling at the Baishakhi Mela (fair) being held in the area.

Two 'robbers' killed

UNB, Mymensingh

Two robbers were killed allegedly by their rivals at Moilakanda village in Gouripur upazila early Sunday. The deceased are Saiful, 25, and Anis, 30. Police said a gang of armed robbers stabbed Saiful and Anis with sharp weapons, leaving Saiful dead on the spot and Anis seriously injured in the village. Anis was admitted to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital where he died at 6:00am. Police recovered the two bodies and sent those to hospital for autopsys.

Auto-rickshaw driver killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Criminals took away an auto-rickshaw after killing its driver in Pirganj area of Sadar upazila Sunday night. Police recovered the body of Hafizul Islam, 22, son of Ashraf Ali of Dakkhin Barogachha in the district town yesterday morning. Police and family sources said, 5-6 passengers hired the CNG-run three-wheeler of Hafizul to go to Tomaltola in Bagatipara from the town on Sunday night. He did not return home at night. Later local people found his body from a sugarcane field in the morning and informed police.

Four children drown in ponds

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Four children, including twins, were drowned in ponds in Dinajpur, Mymensingh and Jessore yesterday.

In Dinajpur, two and a half years old twin sons of a man were drowned in a pond in Parbatipur upazila yesterday evening, reports our correspondent.

The victims were identified as Ratan and Manik, sons of Joynal Abedin, of Rampur village under the upazila.

According to the family members, the boys were playing near a pond in the evening. All of a sudden, one of them fell into the pond. The other boy jumped into water to save his brother. Hearing their screams, the

villagers rushed to the spot and rescued them. They took them to Lamb Hospital in Parbatipur upazila, where doctors declared them dead.

In Mymensingh, a three-year-old girl drowned in a pond at village Nayapara in Ishwarganj upazila yesterday morning, reports our correspondent.

Victim Nuzhat was daughter of Md Saiful Islam of village Char Gobindapur in Sadar upazila.

Police and family sources said, Lima Akhtar with her daughter Nuzhat went to visit her parents at Nayapara about two weeks ago.

Lima was at work when Nuzhat went out of the house at around 7:00

in the morning. After sometime Lima started to look for her daughter. Other members of the family also searched for Nuzhat but failed to find out the girl.

Finally they found the body floating in a pond near the house.

In Jessore, the body of a minor girl who drowned in a pond at Burihati village in Keshabpur upazila on Sunday was recovered yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Humaira Yasmin Toma, 2, daughter of Rezaul Islam of the village.

Family sources said Toma fell into a pond while playing on its bank on Sunday evening and drowned. They however located the body yesterday