



An artist draws a protest symbol on a street of Rajshahi University (RU) as Bangladesh Chhatra Union RU unit observes a programme on the campus yesterday demanding election to the university students union that has remained pending for years.

## Low boro price, high labour cost make farmers unhappy

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Good yield of boro paddy in the district has failed to bring smile to the farmers due to its low market prices.

Shortage of labourers and their high charges during the ongoing harvesting period has added to the situation.

The labourer crisis has arisen due to running of the government's 40-day programme meant for employment of the ultra-poor people during the harvesting period, said farmers and locals.

Farmers invested Tk 8,000 to Tk 9,000 for boro cultivation in one bigha of land and got on an average 15 maunds of paddy worth Tk 7,500 (as local market is Tk 500 per maund).

A total of 1,10,084 hectares of land has been brought under boro cultivation in nine upazilas of the district this year, said

sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension.

Of it, high yield variety was cultivated on 78,460 hectares of land, hybrid variety on 29,735 hectares and local variety on 1,869 hectares.

"I cultivated boro paddy of BRRI-28 variety on five bighas of land this year. For five-decimal of land I spent Tk 100 to prepare seedbed, Tk 400 to prepare the paddy field in four times, Tk 100 for fertilisers, Tk 130 as labour cost for planting, Tk 60 as labour cost for weeding, Tk 150 for irrigation, Tk 240 as labour cost for harvesting and Tk 30 for separating paddy. And so, my production cost per bigha (33 decimals) of land stood at about Tk 8,000," Abdul Khaleq, 75, of Kaley village under Belgachha union in Kurigram Sadar upazila said on Thursday.

If the price of paddy is not increased, farmers will be discouraged to cultivate it in coming seasons, he said.

Another farmer Majibur Rahman, 54, of Belgachha union under Kurigram Sadar said, "I have started boro harvesting but I am facing problem due to shortage of labourers and their high charges. The labourers are forming teams to work for harvesting on contact basis for Tk 280 to Tk 300 per head a day. However, female labourers are working for Tk 140 a day."

"The crisis has arisen for running the 40-day programme in the harvesting period here. Now I cannot expect profit from the

boro cultivation," he said.

Chairman of Belgachha union Md Mahabubur Rahman said, "To provide job for the ultra poor people in the district the government started a 40-day job programme 20 days ago. Under the programme, each labourer is receiving Tk 175 per day. Meanwhile, harvesting of boro paddy started here two weeks ago. Only the labourers who are out of the 40-day programme are working for harvesting. And so, an acute crisis of labourers has arisen here."

Chairman of Phulbari Sadar union under Phulbari upazila Md Mainul Haque and Chairman of Hatai union under Ulipur upazila Md Abul Hossen also said that running of the 40-day job programme at the time of boro harvesting is responsible for the labourer crisis in their areas.

## Two killed as villagers clash

50 injured, 20 houses vandalised in Narail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narail

Two people were killed and at least 50 others injured as two groups of villagers clashed over establishing supremacy at Kumri Madhyapara village in Lohagora upazila of the district yesterday morning.

The dead were identified as Badsha Sheikh, 40, and Tota Khan, 55. At least 20 houses were vandalised during the clash that lasted for three hours from 8:00am.

Police said two rival groups--one led by Akram Member and the other by Sahed Khan--had a conflict over estab-

lishing supremacy at the village.

On Friday evening, Miku Sheikh, a supporter of Akram member, was allegedly beaten up by Foshiar Mollah of Saheed group while returning home from Digholia Bazar.

As a sequel to the incident, the villagers belonging to the two rival groups locked in a fierce clash, leaving at least 50 people from both sides injured.

Of them, Badsha, a supporter of Akram group, and Tota of Sahed group, sustained severe injuries. Locals rushed the duo to Lohagora Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared them dead. The

bodies were sent to Narail Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The rest of the injured were admitted to Lohagora Upazila Health Complex, Narail Sadar Hospital and Gopalganj Sadar Hospital. Lohagora health complex referred two injured - Sahed Khan and Iqbal Khan to Khulna Medical College Hospital in the afternoon as their condition deteriorated.

Sardar Rakibul Islam, superintendent of police, told this correspondent that at least 20 houses were looted and vandalised during the clash.

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