

A different day for 74 teachers

First festival bonus in years of service as local lawmaker, UP chairman take initiative

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Pabna

For the first time during years of service, 74 teachers and 17 employees of eight educational institutions outside the government's monthly payment order (MPO) have got festival bonus as Bhangura upazila parishad under Pabna district made the arrangement with the help of local lawmaker.

Each teacher and employee got Tk 5 thousand

and Tk 2.5 thousand as Md Baki Billah, chairman of Bhangura upazila parishad, distributed Tk 4.3 lakh as bonus for them on the occasion of upcoming Eid ul Azha and ongoing Durga Puja at a programme held at Bhangura upazila parishad auditorium on Monday afternoon.

"Md Mokbul Hossain, lawmaker from Pabna-3 constituency, gave Tk 1.5 lakh from his personal fund while I arranged the rest amount from the affluent

people of the upazila," said the upazila chairman.

"Non-MPO teachers do not get any salary from the government. As they urged the local administration to give festival bonus on the occasion of Eid and puja, we made the arrangement. We hope it will inspire them to pay more attention to their service," Baki Billah, also coordinator of the upazila education committee, said.

"We have been in teach-

ing service for years but we do not get any salary from the government, let of bonus. Now we are happy to get the festival bonus for the first time," Md Kabir Hossain, superintendent of Nurnagar Dakhil Madrasa in the upazila, said.

There are nine non-MPO schools and madrasas in Bhangura upazila, upazila parishad sources said, adding that teachers and employees of another institution will get the special bonus tomorrow.



SUNIL MEMORABILIA IN MADARIPUR

Prior to his departure for India, poet and novelist Sunil Gangopadhyay studied at Bir Mohan High School near his birthplace at Majipara village in Kalkini upazila of Madaripur district. Below, Sunil Akash Goveshana Kendra, set up at the ancestral home of one of the doyens of modern Bangla literature, serves as a centre for study and research on his works as well as a charitable dispensary.



PHOTO: STAR

Frustration grips growers as jute prices remain low

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Low prices of jute in the local markets in the districts have come as a big frustration for the farmers this year.

As the prices of jute fell abnormally, the growers are now worried whether they would be able to recoup the production cost.

In Lalmonirhat, one maund of jute is now being sold at Tk 800 to 900 in the wholesale market, reports our correspondent.

Farmers who come to sell jute at different *haats* (weekly markets) return home frustrated because of low prices of jute.

Farmer Gokul Roy of Borua village in Sadar upazila said that on an average a farmer produced 5-6 maunds of jute from each bigha of land at a cost of Tk 4200 to 4500 this year.

"I cultivated jute on four bighas spending Tk 17,500 this year and I got 22 maunds of jute. So far, I have sold eight maunds of jute at the rate of Tk 815 a maund till last week.

I'm now waiting for fair price of my rest 14 maunds of jute. I don't know what would happen to me," he said.

Atiar Rahman, 45, who went to Nobaber *Haat* from Karnapur village in Sadar upazila, said "I took ten maunds of jute to sale at the market last Thursday. But I sold those at Tk 830 a maund which is far below my production cost."

"I was compelled to sale jute at low price as I badly needed money to continue aman cultivation and meet up family expenses," said

Mozahar Ali, 55, a farmer at Phulgachh village in Sadar upazila.

Farmers are not getting the govt ernment fixed rate as the middlemen are purchasing jute at low prices from the growers, he alleged.

Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila Agriculture Officer Mohammad Nuruzzaman admitted that the farmers were not getting fair prices of jute in the district.

If the growers don't get fair price from jute this year, many of them will lose interest in farming jute in the next season, he said.

In Pabna, jute was selling at Tk 900-1200 a maund this year, which was over Tk 1100 to Tk 1800 last year, reports our correspondent.

Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) sources said that

around 31,340 hectares of land were brought under jute cultivation in the district this year.

More than 80,000 tonnes of jute have been produced in the district this year, they said.

Around 1.5 lakh farmers of Pabna district face a huge loss of Tk 200 crore due to low price of jute this season, they added.

Visiting different jute markets in several upazilas, this correspondent last week found that most of the farmers could not sell their jute due to low prices while many others were compelled to sell their produce despite low prices out of family hardship.

Market sources alleged that the jute growers are being badly affected as the local traders formed syndi-

cate and arbitrarily reduced the jute prices.

Minaz Ali, a farmer at Kalikapur village under Ishwardi upazila of the district said, "I got 126 maunds of jute this year cultivating 14 bighas of land. I had to sell those at Tk 1 lakh 13 thousand although the production cost was more than Tk 1 lakh 46 thousand.

Another farmer Alek Ali of the same village alleged that the production cost of jute shot up this year, but the prices declined abnormally.

Farmers at the village said they were facing difficulties with their produce and incurring a huge loss.

We are forced to sell our jute to the wholesalers on credit under the pressure of middlemen and we don't know when the payment will be made, said a poor farmer.



A farmer who brought six maunds of jute to Nobaber Haat, a weekly village market, in Sadar upazila of Lalmonirhat for sale on Thursday last, anxiously waits for a 'good' customer.

PHOTO: STAR

MONDAY'S GUNFIGHT

Two more arrested in Rangamati; arms, ammo seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Rangamati

Army personnel yesterday arrested two more people in the district in connection with Monday's gunfight allegedly between the activists of PCJSS and UPDF that killed a man.

They also recovered two rifles, a single barrel gun, one sub-machine gun, 139 bullets, eight cell phone sets and Tk 5,000 from their possession.

The arrestees are Jun Chakma and Sushil Jibon Chakma, said Lt Col Md. Nazmul Haque, commander of Rangamati Sadar Zone.

He did not disclose further details of the arrestees for the sake of investigation.

Sukhra Kumar Chakma was killed in the gunfight on Monday allegedly between the activists of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) at a remote village in Sadar upazila.

Police said the gunfight

began at about 6:00pm at Ulchhari in the upazila following a conflict over establishing supremacy in the area.

The clashing groups fled the scene, as army men rushed to the spot and opened fire to disperse them.

They recovered the bullet hit body of Sukhra and a rifle from the spot.

Later, the law enforcers conducted a drive in the area and arrested five people in connection with the incident.

The arrestees were identified as Dalal Chakma, Subhas Chakma, Anik Chakma, Dipto Marma and Gopal Tripura.

Muhammad Saiful Islam Chowdhury, officer in-charge of Kotwali police station, said the pro and anti peace treaty groups locked into the clash.

Major Rajib told The Daily Star that after hearing the gunfight army rushed to the spot and opened fire to quell the warring groups.

VGF rice for 2000 uncertain

UP chairman, members at loggerheads over list

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Pabna

Distribution of rice meant for vulnerable group feeding (VGF) among 1953 people in Lokhmikunda union under Ishwardi upazila has become uncertain as the union parishad is yet to prepare a fair list.

Card holders who gathered at the union parishad complex for the special allotment before the Eid-ul-Azha, returned empty handed for the second day on Monday.

"We came here from far off areas to collect just 10 kg rice. But we are afraid if at all we get it before Eid," Ahsraf Fakir of Dadapur village said.

Lokhmikunda union parishad chairman Anisur Rahman Mollah said, so far 1953 people from nine wards were selected for the special VGF allotment.

"We had set Sunday for distributing the rice but we could not do it because of a directive from the upazila administration," Anis Mollah said.

Ishwardi Upazila Nirbahi

Officer (UNO) Naznin Hossain, however, alleged that the UP chairman failed to prepare a list acceptable to the members of the union.

The chairman made the list himself without considering the opinion of the union's members, the UNO claimed.

"UP member Sofura Khatun alleged that he dropped the names suggested by the members in the final list. So we asked the chairman to prepare a fresh list taking opinion of all the members," the UNO said.

"The chairman prepared the final list unilaterally. We have lodged a complaint in this regard with the upazila administration and local lawmaker," Sofura told this correspondent.

Brushing aside her allegation, the UP chairman said that the VGF list was prepared as per the final resolution of the union parishad meeting.

All the names were verified before making the final list, the chairman said, adding that they had given priority to the poor and vulnerable people like in the past.

COLD RELATED DISEASES

20 kids killed in Noakhali in last 2 weeks

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Noakhali

Pneumonia and respiratory tract infections claimed lives of at least 20 children at Noakhali Medical College Hospital (NMCH) in the last two weeks.

Hospital sources said around 180 children with pneumonia and bronchitis have been admitted to the 32-bed children's ward of the hospital until yesterday.

As the hospital cannot provide beds for the growing number of child patients, most of them along with their mothers are staying on the floor of the ward or in the corridor, the sources added.

Dr Lutfunnessa, head of the paediatric department, said children under two years of age and newborns, affected by pneumonia and respiratory problems, are coming to the hospital

everyday.

Two to three children died of pneumonia or respiratory tract infections at the hospital each day in the last two weeks, she said.

Doctors and senior nurses said ventolin solution and saline are not available at NMCH. Scarcity of ventolin solution and saline are hampering treatment of child patients, they added.

A senior nurse said, "Only two to three nurses are on duty at the children's ward. It is not possible for them to provide proper health services for over 180 patients," she said.

Dr Karnajit Majumder, paediatric consultant at NMCH, said the number of child patients with respiratory diseases has also increased in the private chambers of child specialists.



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