

Good aman yield fails to make growers happy due to low price

50 percent harvest complete in 8 northern districts

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,
Nilphamari

Farmers in eight northern districts see bumper yield of aman during the ongoing harvesting season but low market price of the paddy makes them disappointed.

This year the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rangpur set a target to cultivate 'amon' paddy on about 10.25 lakh hectares of land with target to produce 27.20 lakh tonnes of paddy, said sources at the regional office of DAE.

But farmers cultivated the paddy on about 10.53 lakh hectares and 50% of the crop has been harvested since start of the reaping around a month ago.

The harvest will continue unto the middle of December.

Farmers in different areas of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Nilphamari, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh said in spite of getting satisfactory aman production, they are incurring loss as prices are low.

They had to bear additional cost to arrange irrigation due to unavailability of timely rainfall while scarcity of day labourers and their high wage, enhanced price of fuel and electricity, agricultural tools, pesticide and fertiliser also added to their cost, farmers said.

DAE sources said farmers had to spend additional Tk 3000 in an acre (1 acre= 30 decimal) of land to arrange irrigation by using diesel-run shallow machines and power pumps in their fields, as weather was adverse. Usually, aman cultivation depends on rainwater and does not need irrigation.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers carry huge stacks of harvested aman paddy from a field at Itakhola village in Nilphamari district that sees bumper yield of the crop during the ongoing reaping season.

Visiting well-known paddy markets like Taraganj of Rangpur, Paker Haat of Dinajpur, Sakoa of Panchagarh, and Dhelapeer of Nilphamari it was found that a maund (40 kg) of widely cultivated 'guti swarna' paddy is selling there from Tk 500 to 550. Prices of other varieties are also similar.

"I spent Tk 28 thousand to cultivate aman paddy on one acre of land and got 42 maunds as yield. But I shall get Tk 21,000-23,000 only by selling the produce as a maund of paddy is selling in the markets for only Tk 500-550," said Atowar Rahman, a

farmer of Angarpara village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila. According to government estimation, production cost for a kg of paddy this year is about Tk 14.00-15.00 compared to last year's Tk 12.50-13.00.

This season farmers are incurring loss as they have to sell paddy at Tk 12.50-13.75 a kg. "The price may fall further as more paddy is expected to come to market within a week," said Tarun Kumar Sinha Roy, a renowned rice trader in the region.

Farmer Hazrat Ali of Baura village in Lalmonirhat district, Mozibor Rahman of

Pathanpara village in Panchagarh, Abdus Samad of Golapganj village in Dinajpur said in last crops season they could not recover production cost from cultivation of potato, maize, and boro paddy.

To make up the losses, they put much efforts to cultivation of aman paddy. To manage the production cost, many of them sold cattle, trees, even utensils while a good number of farmers borrowed from moneylenders for high interest.

The hard-pressed farmers are selling paddy although the price is far from

satisfactory.

"Taking advantage of this situation middlemen and hoarders purchase paddy at low prices to sell at high prices in future," said Sreedam Das, president of district unit of Krisok Samity (farmers association).

He demanded that the government declare purchase rates of paddy and rice and launch food procuring drive without delay.

Farmers will lose interest in paddy cultivation in future if they do not get fair price, said Mesbahul Islam, chief horticulture specialist in Rangpur region.

One killed, 11 hurt as BCL factions clash in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Barisal

An activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was killed and 11 others were injured as two factions of the ruling Awami League-backed student body clashed at Gournadi upazila town under Barisal district on Monday night.

The dead is Rumman Fakir, 22, an activist of BCL Gournadi Government College unit.

Police and locals said the two factions--one led by BCL Gournadi college unit President Lutfar Rahman Dwip and the other by General Secretary Jobayerul Islam Santu--had earlier clashed several times over sand lifting and control of the campus.

At around 9:30pm on Monday, Rumman, Hira and Ferdous of Luthfar faction came under attack by Santu group near local bus stand when they were going to meet AL leader and municipality Mayor Harisur

Rahman Haris.

Hearing the news, BCL men belonging to Lutfar group rushed to the spot and locked in a clash with their rival party men. The two groups used firearms and exploded bombs during the clash, leaving at least 12 people from both sides injured.

The injured are Rumman Fakir, Ferdous Talukdar, Hira Bepari, Summon Mia, Bellal Mia, Rabiul Khan, Imran Hossain, Motaleb Kazi of Lutfar group and Taslim Kabiraj, Russel Howladar, Russel Bepari and Asaduzzaman Babu of Santu group.

Of them, Rumman, Ferdous and Hira were admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in a critical condition while the rest to the upazila health complex and private clinics.

Police from Gournadi Police Station rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control at midnight.

Critically injured Rumman was sent to Dhaka Medical College Hospital at 3:00am yesterday as his condition deteriorated. He succumbed to his injuries at the hospital at 9:30am.

Hearing the death news, BCL activists of Lutfar faction brought out a procession in the town. They ransacked vehicles and blocked Dhaka-Barisal highway at Kasba-Torki point at around 11:30am. Police dispersed the agitating BCL men and removed barricades from the road at 12:30pm.

Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Gournadi Police Station, said Shamima Begum, mother of Rumman Fakir, lodged a case against 18 BCL men, including Jubayerul Islam Santu. After filing of the case, police arrested Santu. Law enforcers are looking for the other accused in the case, the OC said.

Additional police have been deployed at the upazila headquarters to avert any further incident.

Brick kiln owner abducted in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Jhenidah

A brick kiln owner was kidnapped by a gang of criminals in Ganna Bazaar area under Jhenidah Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The victim is Kumar Paul, 50, owner of KCTB brickfield.

Police quoting Indrajit Pal, son of Kumar Pal, said a gang of seven to eight criminals came to the brickfield at around 2:30am and abducted his father at gunpoint.

Kalpna Rani Pal, wife of



Kumar Pal

Kumar Pal, said her husband was asleep in a shed at the brickfield when the gang came. She

urged the law enforcers to rescue her husband.

Kalpna further said that a gang of criminals threatened her husband and took toll from him a few days ago. She filed a case with Sadar Police Station.

Police said they have already launched a drive to rescue Kumar Pal and arrest the culprits involved. They (police) could not unearth the clues to kidnapping the brick kiln owner as of filing of this report at 5:00pm yesterday.

CHT peace accord not fully executed for lack of political goodwill

Santu Larma tells media in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Rangamati

Chairman of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Regional Council (CHTRC) Jyotirindra Bodhipriya Larma yesterday said the CHT peace accord does not see full implementation due to lack of political goodwill among the policy makers in the government.

"Fifteen years into inking of the agreement, it could not be executed fully, and so, many problems have arisen in hills," Jyotirindra, who is popularly known as Santu Larma, told a press conference, on the eve of the 15th anniversary of the peace treaty, at the conference room of CHT Regional Council in Rangamati yesterday.

"CHT Regional Council cannot function well as rele-

vant rules of business have not been fixed yet. Transferring matters like police, parjatan, secondary education under the three hill district councils (HDCs), as per the gazette published in 1998, cannot be done due to the reason. Elections in the HDCs and the Regional Council have remained held up too.

"The accord recognises CHT as a special region for indigenous people. But in reality, the culture of 14 indigenous communities living in hills since time immemorial is being destroyed gradually.

"Instead of recognising the indigenous people as such, the government created confusion about the identity of the jumma people through the 15th amendment of the constitution that termed us as small ethnic

minorities," Santu said.

"We sent recommendations to the government to amend the contradictory provisions of CHT Land Dispute Resolution Commission Act 2001 but the government did nothing in this regard till date," he added.

Replying to a query, Larma said armed members of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) are engaged in different crimes including murder, extortion, and abduction for ransom in the hills but the government is

yet to respond to the call for banning it.

The CHT peace accord signed between the then AL government and the PCJS on December 2 in 1997 put an end to two decades long insurgency in CHT region.



PHOTO: STAR

Lt Col (retd) Abu Osman Chowdhury, a sector commander of the freedom fighters during the Liberation War, inaugurates a month-long Victory at the pourasava ground in Faridganj upazila of Chandpur district yesterday.

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