

Discouraged by aman losses, boro farmers opt for other crops

STAR NATIONAL DESK

A large number of boro farmers in several northern districts are opting for other crops due to low market prices of paddy and its higher production cost.

Boro farming in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts is likely to decline as the cultivation target of wheat and potato have already exceeded in the current robi season, reports our Thakurgaon correspondent.

The situation has arisen as farmers incurred losses despite good yield of paddy during the recent aman season, said officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

During a recent visit to different villages in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts, this correspondent saw that many farmers have cultivated wheat and potato on the lands where they usually cultivated irri-boro paddy.

"I incurred loss of Tk 7,500 by cultivating boro on three bighas of leased land as I had to sell paddy only at Tk 325 per maund (each maund is equal to 37.3242 kilogram) in the last boro harvesting period. This year I have cultivated wheat on the lands to recover my losses," said Md Shamsuzzoha, 50, a farmer of Sahapara village under Boda upazila in Panchagarh.

Wheat farming, requiring only three times irrigation, is easy to cultivate and it has lower production cost than that of IRR-Boro, he added.

This season the DAE has fixed a target of boro cultivation on 60,802 hectares with the production target of 2

lakh 35,426 tonnes of rice in Thakurgaon and 34,322 hectares of land with the production target of 1 lakh 34,463 tonnes of rice in Panchagarh.

The target, however, does not seem to be fulfilled as preparation of boro saplings on seed-beds remain much below the expectation.

The seed-beds might be increased a little area as the time of preparing seed-bed is till first week of January, DAE officials said.

In last season, 2 lakh 74,434 tonnes of boro rice was produced by cultivating 66,449 hectares of land in Thakurgaon while 1 lakh 66,898 tonnes was produced by cultivating 41,170 hectares of land in Panchagarh district.

Boro farmers are now leaning towards wheat and potato cultivation due to lower market price of paddy, said Md Belayet Hossain, deputy director of the DAE.

Our Lalmonirhat Correspondent reports: Farmers in the district have to sell paddy at prices lower than the production cost as they need the cash to cultivate boro paddy in this current season.

Now one maund of paddy (one maund equal 40 kg) is selling between Tk 460 to 520 in the local market, but the production cost stood between Tk 600 to 630, said Shomser Ali, 48, Manik Chandro Barmon, 55, Motiar Rahman, 58, Ariful Islam, 48, Gopinath Pal, 45, who came to Bhelabari Haat in Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat to sell their paddy.

"I have sold 20 maunds of paddy at Tk 490 per maund as I need the money for

farming boro paddy in the current season," said farmer Taher Ullah, 65, of Durakuti village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Visiting different markets in Lalmonirhat district, this correspondent saw farmers waiting for hours with paddy for sale as only a small number of buyers are available and the price is too low.

Nazrul Islam, paddy buyers at Kalibari in Lalmonirhat town, said, "I cannot give much price to the growers as big merchants do not purchase paddy for fair prices from me."

Asadul Islam, a big merchant at Uttora Cinema Hall Road in the town said, "There is huge stock of paddy in my godowns. Despite fall of rice price in the market traders from capital Dhaka and other parts of the country are not contacting us for taking paddy at the moment. And so, we the paddy merchants in Lalmonirhat can't purchase paddy from the retailers and growers."

Farmers of five upazilas under Lalmonirhat district cultivated aman paddy on 97,650 hectares of land against the target 83,560 hectares in the recent season, Lalmonirhat DAE sources said.

"Due to favourable weather Lalmonirhat farmers got bumper production of aman paddy this season but they are frustrated due to its low price. It is highly necessary to create marketing facilities for agriculture productions," Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Mohammad Nuruzzaman said.



Aman farmers coming to sell their produce at Bhelabari Haat in Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat district often wait for hours as the market sees only a few customers while the prices are also too scanty to even realise the production cost.

PHOTO: STAR

Bogra Jamaat leader jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Bogra district assistant secretary of Jamaat-e-Islami was jailed yesterday for violence and arson during hartal hours.

The convict was identified as Riaz Ahmed of Dakkhin Rahman Nagar in the town.

Additional chief judicial magistrate Abdul Hamid handed down the verdict for vandalising and torching truck during the hartal called by 18-party alliance on Thursday in the district.

Earlier, a bail petition was rejected by the court.

23 bomb-like objects found

A CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered 23 bomb-like objects in Pipramari area in Dumuria upazila yesterday morning.

Rab-6 sources said, on secret information, a team raided the area and recovered the bomb-like objects in an abandon condition.

They were later handed over to Dumuria police station. Moshir Rahman, officer in-charge of the PS, said they informed the bomb experts to examine the objects.

HUMAN CHAIN IN C'NAWABGANJ

'Punish culprits for whom Sheuli committed suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Members of local indigenous community in the district town formed a human chain in front of press club yesterday, demanding punishment to a few stalkers who allegedly instigated suicide by a teenage girl.

Under the banner of Jatiya Adibasi Parishad of Chapainawabganj district

unit, they also held a protest rally to press home their demand.

At the rally, the speakers said Sheuli Rani, 14, daughter of Indrajit Roy of Amarak village in Sadar upazila, went to a field near their home for collecting straw on December 8.

At that time, Sheuli was sexually harassed by one Khairul Islam of the village. Later, she returned home

and took her life by taking poison.

The speakers also alleged the indigenous girl might have committed suicide fearing social disgrace.

A case was filed against five people, including Khairul, said Sadar police.

The law enforcers recently arrested Khairul's father Hussain Ali and one Fatik Ali at the village in this connection.



PHOTO: STAR

Chapainawabganj unit of Jatiya Adivasi Parishad forms a human chain in front of the local press club yesterday, demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the stalkers who instigated indigenous girl Sheuli Rani, 14, to commit suicide at Amarak village in Sadar upazila on December 8.



PHOTO: STAR

General students of Islamic University (IU) yesterday block Kushtia-Khulna highway, demanding resumption of their classes and examinations. Academic activities at the university came to a halt on September 8 due to a deadlock that followed controversy over appointment of 132 teachers and officials on the previous day.

IU students block highway for resumption of classes

Fresh agitation by teachers from today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The general students of Islamic University (IU) yesterday blocked Kushtia-Khulna highway, demanding immediate resumption of their classes and examinations.

Around 500 students of different departments took out a procession on the campus and then put up barricades on the road in front of the university, disrupting traffic for around one and a half hours from 11:00am. They also formed a human chain on the road.

After withdrawing the road blockade, the agitating students held a rally at the main entrance to the university. They blamed the authorities concerned for not taking any steps to end the three and a half month-long dead-

lock at the university.

The deadlock situation began on September 8 after the university authorities recruited 132 teachers and officials at the university on September 7.

Islamic University Teachers Association (IUTA) began agitation on the day (September 8) demanding removal of the vice chancellor, pro-vice chancellor and treasurer for their alleged involvement in irregularities in the recruitment of the teachers and officials.

They have been continuing agitation for the last three and a half months to press for their demand. Yesterday, they held a rally in front of the administrative building with IUTA President, Prof Yakub Ali in the chair.

At the rally, the association announced fresh agitation

programme, including token hunger strike, from today to mount pressure on the authorities concerned to meet their demand.

The rally was addressed, among others by, IUTA General Secretary Prof ASM Tariqul Islam, Bangabandhu Parishad IU unit President Prof Abul Ahsan Chowdhury, General Secretary Prof Ruhul Kuddus Saleh, Prof Mahbubur Rahman, law faculty dean Prof Shahjahan Mondol, business faculty dean Prof Mizanur Rahman, former IUTA president prof Matinur Rahman and Prof Alinur Rahman.

The speakers urged the government to break the deadlock by appointing honest and competent persons as new vice chancellor, pro-vice chancellor and treasurer, removing the present ones.

TENDON CUTTING

Hartal in Sariakandi today

A CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

People of Sariakandi have called a day-long hartal in the upazila town today to protest cutting of tendons of Jubo League leader Abdus Salam on Saturday.

Demanding exemplary punishment of the culprits, upazila Awami League president Principal Monzur Ali said that cohorts of local lawmaker Abdul Mannan's personal secretary (PS) attacked Salam to foil today's party council as the victim was a secretary candidate.

The lawmaker also sacked PS Alamgir Shahi Sumon as he had a hand in the attack, because he is also a secretary candidate, Monzur said.

Contacted, Sumon refuted the allegation against him and demanded punishment to those who attacked Salam.

Criminals severed tendons of Salam in Naruli area of the town on Saturday.

Salam, 38, was son of late Abdus Sattar Futu of Partiporol village in the upazila district and former upazila vice president of Jubo League.

Upazila Awami League office secretary Motiur Rahman Moti said when Salam was returning from Dhaka, a gang of 10/12 attacked him near post office staff quarters in Naruli area. They assaulted him and later severed tendons of legs and hands, leaving him seriously injured at about 5:00am.

Local people rescued him and took to Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College and Hospital (SZMCH). He was later shifted to Dhaka as his condition deteriorated.

Family members alleged that the opponents in the council election attempted on his life.

Salam is now being treated at a private hospital in Dhaka city.



PHOTO: STAR

The Catholic church at Mothurapur in Chatmohar upazila of Pabna district gets adorned with a symbolic birthplace of Jesus Christ as local Christians are preparing to celebrate Mary Christmas tomorrow. Authorities of 12 other churches in the district have also made good arrangements for the biggest religious festival of the community.

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