

NORTHERN DISTRICTS

Farmers expect bumper mustard production

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Farmers and agriculture officials in several northern districts are expecting a bumper production of mustard this season.

Mustard cultivation is gaining more popularity among the farmers in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts as they got good yield as well as good price of the winter crop during last couple of years, reports our Thakurgaon correspondent.

The farmers have cultivated mustard on 10,470 hectares of land this season against the target of 9,300 hectares with the production target of 11,160 tonnes (1.20 tonnes per hectare) in Thakurgaon district, said officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

In Panchagarh, 1225 hectares of land have been brought under mustard cultivation against the target of 425 hectares with the production target of 510 tonnes, DAE sources said.

The farmers have cultivated mainly six varieties of mustard -- BARI Sharisha 9, BARI Sharisha 11, BARI Sharisha 14, BARI Sharisha 15, Tori 7 (local improved variety) and Bashori (Indian).

"Most of the mustard plants have already passed the pod formation stage.

They are now growing well and a bumper production is expected this season," said Zaherul Islam, crop production specialist of Thakurgaon DAE office.

Farmers have been suggested to spray 3/4 ML Melathion mixed with 1 litre water on the fields if there is aphid attacks the crops due to dense fog and severe cold, he said.

During this correspondent's recent visit to different areas of Sadar upazila in Thakurgaon and Boda upazila in Panchagarh, farmers said that they will start harvesting the crop in the second or third week on January.

Azizul Islam, 45, a farmer of Gobindapur village in Sadar upazila, said he cultivated mustard on one bigha (0.3306 acre) of land and made a profit of Tk 6,600 last year. He cultivated mustard on two bighas of land this season and expects a bumper production.

"Mustard cultivation, requiring only two times light irrigation, is easier and less costly than cultivation of other crops but returns much profit. It is done between the gap period of aman and boro paddy farming," said Sirazul Islam, 58, a sharecropper of Sahapara village under Boda upazila, who cultivated mustard on 1.5 bighas of land.

October to mid-November is the suitable time for mustard cultivation

and it takes 65/70 days to get the yield, said farmers and officials.

Our Pabna Correspondent adds: Farmers of the district are expecting bumper production of mustard this season as many of them have opted for mustard cultivation to recover losses of boro and amon paddy farming during the last two seasons.

Thirty thousand 347 hectares of land in Pabna district has been brought under mustard cultivation this year, DAE officials said.

"We expect production of 36 thousand 4 hundred 16 tonnes of mustard this season. Production will be even better if the weather remains favourable," Mostafizur Rahman, deputy director of AED, Pabna said.

But many farmers are now worried about the production due to the ongoing cold wave.

"To recover earlier losses in paddy farming I have cultivated mustard on five bighas of land this year and expected bumper production. But now I am worried due to dense fog and continuous cold wave," said Rumi Khandaker, a farmer of Dashuria village.

AI Shahin, a development officer of DAE, however, said, "Dense fog and cold wave will not threaten production as it will be gone within a few days."



PHOTO: STAR

A mustard field in bloom at Salondar village in Thakurgaon. Farmers in several northern districts hope to have a bumper yield of the winter crop this season due to a favourable weather condition.

Nabinagar health complex upgraded in name only

Lacks manpower, furniture and equipment

UNB, Brahmanbaria

Although the 30-bed Nabinagar upazila health complex was upgraded to 50-bed one about one and a half years ago, it could not be operational due to lack of manpower, furniture and equipment.

As a result, about five lakh residents of the upazila are being deprived of getting proper health services.

The new building was handed over to the health complex authorities after the health engineering department constructed it at a cost of Tk 6.80 crore last year.

After upgradation of the health complex, 10 consultant physicians, 19 medical officers, 15 nurses and eight office staff along with adequate operation equipment were supposed to work at the health centre.

But till date the necessary facilities for the 50-bed health complex were not increased, said local sources.

Two ambulances at the health complex also remained inoperative. Of them, one did not run in the last 16 years while the other out of order for last one month.

In the upazila, there are also eight sub-health centres

and 12 health and family planning welfare centres. At those health centres, there are only two doctors although they have 21 posts of physicians.

Upazila family planning officer Dr Mohammad Sadeq Mia told the news agency that their repeated appeals to the authorities concerned to solve the problems went unheeded.



PHOTO: STAR

BLANKET OF FOG POSES RISK: One of the five ferries that remained stranded on Paturia-Daulatdia route due to poor visibility caused by dense fog on Friday night, right, a vegetable-laden truck heading towards Dhaka from Singair in Manikganj, keeping headlights on amid dense fog yesterday morning.



PHOTO: STAR

Kids in their paintings yesterday depict earth filling and structures erected by unscrupulous people, encroaching upon the six-kilometre-long Rayer Khal in Barisal city. Non-governmental organisations--Prantajon Trust, Campaign for Sustainable Rural Livelihood and Uttaran--arranged the programme on the bank of the canal.

Top outlaw held with firearms

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A top operative of an outlawed party was held with firearms in Santhia upazila under the district on Friday night.

Police identified the arrestee, Md Jamin Uddin, 40, son of Mofiz Uddin of village Alokdiar in the upazila, as the regional commander of outlawed Purba Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajudhha faction).

Officer in-charge of Santhia police station Md Ekramul Haque said, acting on a tip off, a team of Pabna

police raided Dhulauri Bazar area at about 10 pm on Friday when Jamin along with this accomplices were moving suspiciously around the village.

During the drive, police caught Jamin while his accomplices managed to flee, the OC said.

Police recovered a light gun and four bullets from his possession, he said.

"Jamin is accused in a dozen of cases including three for murders. He was one of the most wanted criminals in the district, the OC added.

Two siblings get life for murder

A CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A court here on Wednesday sentenced two siblings to life term imprisonment for killing a man at Molladanga village in Dhigalia upazila in 2001.

Md. Akhter Hossain, judge of Khulna Speedy Trial Tribunal pronounced the verdict against Idris Sheikh and Akbor Sheikh, sons of Bakker Sheikh of the village in the Piku Sheikh killing case.

The court acquitted Bakker Sheikh and his two other sons. The two other sons are Kabir Sheikh and Kashem Sheikh.

Assistant public prosecutor (APP) of the tribunal

Afroza Rosy said that Piku Sheikh was kidnapped by the convicts on December 13 in 2001 from his residence.

On December 18, police recovered his dead body from Kola Beel (water body) in Dhigalia upazila.

Elder brother of the deceased Ashraf Ali Sheikh filed a case with Dhigalia police station in this connection on the following day, naming five as accused.

Investigation officer of the police station submitted charge sheet against the four brothers on April 10 in 2001 and excluded Bakker Sheikh as he died during the trial.

AL leader hurt in attack

UNB, Satkhira

A local leader of ruling Awami League was injured in an attack by criminals at Baruihati village in Tala upazila on Friday night.

The injured was identified as Advocate Abdur Rahman Gazi, 53, advocate and presi-

dent of Tala Sadar union unit AL and resident of Shahpur village of the upazila.

Locals said Gazi was returning to his house from Atarai village of the upazila by a bicycle when some criminals intercepted and hit him with sharp weapons, leaving him injured.

SNIPPETS

Death anniversary observed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Journalists in the city yesterday observed the 17th death anniversary of Monajat Uddin through various programmes. Rangpur Press Club organised a doa mahfil and a discussion meeting in the morning. Earlier, newsmen and cultural activists placed wreaths at the grave of the veteran journalist Monajat at Munshipara. Monajat Uddin died in 1995 while on professional duty on a ferry boat in the River Padma in Gaibandha district. Born in June 18 of 1945 at Morneya village in Rangpur, he received a number of awards, including Ekushey Padak in 1997.

Two held with firearms

UNB, Benapole, Jessore

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Detective Branch of police in separate drives arrested two alleged criminals and recovered two firearms and three bullets from their possession in Abhoynagar upazila and district town on Tuesday night. Police said, a team of Rab raided the town's bus stand area at 10:00pm and arrested a man along with a revolver and two bullets. The arrestee was identified as Shafiqul Islam Babu alias 'Polythene' Babu, son of Zihad Ali of the area. In Abhoynagar, detective police in a drive arrested an alleged criminal along with one shooter gun and one bullet from Ali Bazar area of the upazila on the same night. The arrestee was identified as Rony, son of Farhad Hossain of Kapashati village in the upazila.

Man killed in Habiganj

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police recovered the body of an unidentified man, aged about 40, from near Olipur rail crossing on Dhaka-Sylhet highway in Habiganj Sadar upazila yesterday. The body was tied up with ropes and it bore marks of injuries on chest and other parts. Police recovered the body and sent it to the Habiganj Sadar Hospital morgue for postmortem. Officer in-charge of Shaistaganj police station Nizam Uddin Chowdhury said, a general diary on unnatural death was registered. Criminals killed him and dumped the body at Olipur, since it is close to deep forest of Raghunandan hills, he said.

Six gamblers held

A CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

DB police arrested six people including a UP member for gambling at Khayerhat village in Kasiani upazila on Friday night. The arrestees are Farhad Hossain, 30, UP member of Kasiani and Alimuzzaman Sikder, 40, Golam Rasul Sheikh, 20, Abul Kalam Sheikh, 40, Sahat Fakir, 28, and Tayeb Sikder, 25, of Khayerhat village in the upazila. Sub Inspector of Gopalganj DB police Dalil Uddin said, a team of DB police raided the house of Farhad and caught all red-handed.

Shoe store gutted

A CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Shoes and sandals of a shoe store was gutted at Samir Uddin Market in the town at around 8pm on Friday night. Shopkeepers said the fire originated from a short circuit at the godown of "Sheikh Shoes" on the second floor of the market. On information, firefighters rushed to the spot and doused the fire after about one hour. Owner of Sheikh Shoes, Md. Abdul Alim, claimed that the fire damaged shoes worth Tk 12 lakh.

Drug peddler jailed

UNB, Jhalakati

A mobile court here on Thursday sentenced a drug peddler to six months imprisonment for possessing hemp. Police said they arrested Mizanur Rahman, 38, son of late Saidur Rahman of Krishnakathi area of the district town, along with a small packet of hemp from Kheyaghat area of the town in the afternoon.

Warm clothes distributed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Chapainawabganj Samity in Dhaka distributed warm clothes among the cold-hit ultra poor people in different places of Sadar and Shibganj upazilas yesterday. Engineer Mahtabuddin, president of Chapainawabganj Samity in Dhaka, its general secretary Engineer Nurul Islam, were present at the programmes. The Samity distributed 1000 blankets among the cold victim people at Nawabganj Club, Dariapur in the town, Laxmipur of Sadar upazila and Panka village in Shibganj upazila of the district.