



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer vainly trying to protect seedlings from harmful effects of cold and dense fog by spraying pesticides on his boro seedbeds at Omorpur village in Nandigram upazila of Bogra.

BORO CULTIVATION ACROSS COUNTRY

Damage of seedbeds, diesel price hike may cut target

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Massive damage of seedbeds due to persistent cold wave coupled with increased irrigation cost following price rise of diesel seems to affect boro cultivation in different districts across the country this season.

Severe cold accompanied by dense fog persisting for unusually long period is likely to hamper boro cultivation in Rangpur and Rajshahi divisions in the current season, reports our Rangpur correspondent.

Boro seedlings on large areas of land in all 16 districts under the two divisions are getting damaged under the impact of the adverse weather, much to the worry of farmers.

About 30 percent seedbeds have been already affected by the severe cold wave and dense fog, DAE sources said, adding that the production target may be hampered due to the situation.

"I cultivated boro seedlings on five decimals of land but the saplings on three decimal have already been damaged," said Shajahan Mian, 54, a farmer of Machari village of Kaunia upazila in Rangpur district.

Overall boro cultivation will be delayed as many farmers will have to prepare fresh seedbeds and around a month is required for maturity of the seedlings, farmers said.

Horkumar Mohanta, a farmer of Joyrampur-Anwar village under Mithapukur upazila in Rangpur district, said he had procured quality boro seeds at high prices for preparing seedbeds on 10 decimals of land but all his hopes are now nipped in the bud due to damage of the seedlings.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), there was target to bring 7,60,366 hectares of land in Rangpur division and 8,50,652 hectares in Rajshahi division under boro cultivation this year.

Accordingly, seedbeds were prepared on 38,706 hectares of land in Rangpur and 42,294 hectares in Rajshahi division.

"Usually the cold wave hits Rangpur and

Rajshahi divisions in mid January when the boro plants become mature but this year it hit earlier, causing damage to immature plants," said Md Golam Subhani, deputy director of DAE.

"BRRI Dhan-28 and Dhan-29 are most popular rice varieties among the boro farmers but these are not cold tolerant. So the seedbeds are being damaged," he added.

DAE officials are suggesting the farmers to irrigate the boro seedbeds properly and mix dung with the irrigated water so that the soil temperature remains high. They also suggested covering the seedbeds with polythene to save them from cold wave and dense fog.

Our Narail correspondent reports: Rise in irrigation cost due to the price hike of diesel has added to the worry of boro farmers, already affected by massive damage of seedbeds by the ongoing cold wave and dense fog during this cultivation season.

As the higher cost of irrigation by diesel-run pumps will rise the overall production cost, many farmers are now anxious about recovery of their investment, especially against the backdrop of low market price of paddy.

Several farmers said they have to sow seeds for the second time to cultivate boro as seedlings on many seedbeds have turned yellowish due to the cold and dense fog.

Razzak Mollah, a farmer at Boro village in Kalia upazila of Narail district, said 20-day-old seedlings on his 30 decimals of land got damaged due to the unfavourable weather.

Several traditional boro farmers said they are now thinking of cultivating vegetables and crops other than paddy on their lands due to the situation.

The DAE in Narail has set a target of cultivating boro on 43,471 hectares of land in three upazilas of the district.

Ashok Halder, district training officer of DAE in Narail, said 'cold injuries' in boro seedbeds and increase of diesel price will have some effect on boro cultivation this season.

Our Lalmonirhat correspondent adds: Irrigation dependent boro paddy cultivation may face obstacle in the district this season due to the recent price rise of diesel.

"I prepared seedbeds on 25 decimals of land to cultivate boro paddy on 20 bighas of land at my village Kulaghat in Lalmonirhat Sadar this season. But as diesel price increased, I have decided to cultivate boro on five bighas of land to meet family requirement. I will cultivate the remaining land for other crops that do not need much irrigation," said Abdul Gofur, general secretary of a farmers' association in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

"Like me, many farmers will be discouraged to cultivate paddy if the government does not withdraw the decision of diesel price rise," he added.

DAE in Lalmonirhat has set target of boro cultivation on 85,320 hectares of land in five upazilas of the district in the current season.

UNB adds from Netrakona: The district famous for rice cultivation may not achieve the target of boro yield this season due to damage of seedbeds by severe cold wave while higher production cost following rise in diesel price and shortage of labourers add to the situation.

DAE set a target to cultivate boro on about one lakh 71 thousand and 600 hectares of land in the district in the current season.

Farmers in some areas have started transplanting boro saplings on their land but seedbeds on vast areas have already been damaged by severe cold wave.

"Due to price hike of diesel, it now costs Tk 300 to irrigate a katha of land with a diesel-run machine, which was Tk 250 earlier. Besides, we often fail to get labourers although their daily wage per person is Tk 250 to Tk 300," said Dharendra, a farmer of Baldashi village in Dingiutha of Mohanganj upazila.

Our correspondents from Bogra and Kurigram have also reported the negative impact of cold wave and rise in irrigation cost on boro farming this season.

Ex-PCJSS activist, headman abducted in Matiranga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A former member of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) and a village chief were abducted by criminals in Matiranga upazila on Monday night.

The victims are former PCJSS member Chiranjit Tripura, 45, son of Indra Kumar Tripura of Baragram area under Toilafang mouza and headman Monulal Tripura, 35, son of late Mahanta Kumar Tripura of Bamagumoti mouza under the upazila in the district.

However, Santu Larma-led PCJSS blamed the armed cadres of their rival MN

Larma-led faction and United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) for the abduction.

PCJSS officials said that at least 5 to 6 armed men of UPDF picked up Chiranjit from his Baragram residence around 05:30pm of Monday.

Another group of armed cadres of MN Larma-led PCJSS faction picked up Monulal, the headman of Bamagumoti mouza at gunpoint from his residence around 09:00pm on the same day, they said.

Condemning the incident, they said that about 100 PCJSS men were killed and 300 others abducted by

the armed cadres of UPDF in different areas of CHT till today after signing of the peace accord.

Contacted, Commanding Officer of Palashpur BGB zone in Matiranga upazila Lt. Col Nuruzzaman said that a drive was on to rescue the abducted men.

However, UPDF and MN Larma faction refuted the allegation.

On Thursday last, a former member of PCJSS Sunandu Bikash Chakma Ranand, 55, was also abducted allegedly by the UPDF men from Khabangpudia area under Sadar upazila of the district.

JOURNO JAMAL UDDIN MURDER

Accused who tried to commit suicide, dies

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

An accused in journalist Jamal Uddin murder case, who tried to commit suicide at his relative's house at Pearatola village in Jibonnagar upazila of the district on Friday, died at the upazila health complex on Monday.

The accused, Bazlur Rahman, son of Amjad Mollah of Tangrali village under Sharsha upazila, had been absconding since the killing of Jamal in June last year.

Bazlur Rahman, overdosed on sedatives, was admitted to Jibonnagar Upazila Health Complex where he died on Monday evening, said Mujibur Rahman, one of his relatives.

Relatives got a chit in his pocket that reads, "I want to



Jamal Uddin

get rid of mental agony. No one is responsible for my death."

Jamal Uddin, 35, Kashipur correspondent of Jessore based daily Gramer Kagoj, was brutally murdered by a gang on the night of June 15.

The gang picked him up from a tea stall at Kashipur Bazar under Sharsha upazila

at around 11:00pm, took him to a nearby field and stabbed in the chest and abdomen.

The gang members also gouged out Bazlur's left eye and cut tendons of legs. He died instantly.

Abdul Alim, father of the slain journalist, filed a murder case with Sharsha Police Station the following day, accusing Tota Mallick, Raju Mallick and Ukil Mallick, sons of Shamsheer Mallick, Ramzan Member, son of late Akbar Ali Sheikh, Lata Begum, wife of Tota Mia of Kashipur village; and Bazlur Rahman and Jasim Uddin of Tengrali village under the upazila.

Of them, Bazlur died, Tota, Raju and Ukil are in jail while the rest are still a large.



PHOTO: STAR

As part of its countrywide programme, BNP-led 18-party alliance forms a four-kilometre-long human wall in Barisal city yesterday protesting the killing of Bishwajit Das and "forced disappearances" of its leaders and activists.

Electricity poles, PDB style!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Parbatipur unit of the Power Development Board (PDB) is using bamboo poles for supplying electricity to a house adjacent to the upazila headquarters, violating rules.

As many as 34 bamboo poles have been installed on January 10 to carry a 2,600 feet-long cable from a standard pole to the house of one Jewel Islam of Darampara village.

PDB men have set the poles on the farm land to carry the high voltage cable, posing a high risk to the farmers and other people of the area.

Dr Gouranga Sarker of the village said the PDB staff gave power connection to the house by installing the bamboo poles in a day.

Some residents of the village said PDB is not using meter to record how much electricity is consumed by the house owner. Moreover, bulbs have been fixed to



PHOTO: STAR

Electricity being supplied to a house, using bamboo poles at Darampara village in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur. Some unscrupulous PDB men have done the job, violating the rules of the board.

each of the bamboo poles to give light at night, causing a huge loss to the state-run organisation, they added.

Contacted, Engineer Mahabubul Alam of Parbatipur PDB said he is not aware of the new power connection. Supply of elec-

tricity by using bamboo poles is a clear violation of existing rules, he added.

The engineer further said he will investigate the matter and take necessary actions against the persons involved.

Villager Md Abdullah Azad alleged that some

unscrupulous officials and employees of PDB have done the job, violating the rules of the board.

He urged the authorities concerned to remove the bamboo poles that pose risk to the locals.

98 fall sick after taking meal at function

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

At least 98 people, including 25 women, fell sick after having meal at a *kulkhwani* (religious function) at Khuniyagachh village in Sadar upazila yesterday afternoon.

Of them, 42 were admitted to Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital while the rest given first aid.

Local UP chairman Khairuzzaman Mandol said the victims attended the *kulkhwani* arranged by one Nazrul Islam of the village at around 4:30apm and became sick half an hour after taking meal there.

Dr. Tapon Kumar Roy, residential medical officer (RMO) of the hospital, said they fell sick due to food poisoning.

Dr Jahangir Alam Sarker, district civil surgeon, said a three-member medical team has been formed to treat the patients of the village.

Robbers loot houses, filling station

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Robbers looted goods and cash from seven houses and a filling station in Sirajganj and Faridpur districts early Monday.

In Sirajganj, 25-30 robbers wearing masks looted goods and cash worth about Tk 10 lakh from six houses at Kandapara village in Belkuchi upazila, reports UNB.

Three people were also injured by the gang.

In Faridpur, a gang numbering 14-15, stormed into the house of Nuru Mia, a retired police inspector, at Noapara village in Bhanga upazila.

They looted 25 tolas of gold ornaments, Tk 3 lakh, eight mobile phone sets and a licensed gun, keeping the members of the house hostage at gunpoint.

In another incident, a gang of masked robbers, numbering 8-10, swooped on Parisha Filling Station at Majhkandi in Madhukhali upazila.

They tied up six employees, including the manager of the station, and looted Tk 1.50 lakh and six mobile phonesets.

In Bogra, a gang broke into eight departments of Govt Shah Sultan College last night and ransacked several rooms.

They ransacked papers, vandalised scientific apparatus and looted cash money, reports our correspondent.

Night Guard Shajahan Ali, 55, said that a gang of 20/25 masked men scaled the wall of the college at about 12:30am and forcibly locked them in a room and vandalised all the rooms of the college till 4:00am.

Locals who were going to say prayers rescued them after breaking the door of the room at dawn.

Associate professor of physics department Mahabubul Alam said they were surprised to see that the gang did not loot any valuables except for cash money.

THAKURGAON JCD, Jubo Dal call hartal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Jubo Dal and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) will enforce a daylong hartal in the district today protesting rejection of bail prayer of BNP acting secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court yesterday rejected the bail prayer in a case filed with Motijheel police station in the capital on charge of blasting cocktails and assaulting police on December 9 last year.

The hartal decision came from a joint meeting of district unit Jubo Dal and JCD at district party office in the town yesterday.

Earlier, the activists of the parties brought out a procession in the town protesting the court's order.

The speakers at the meeting also demanded immediate release of their leaders and withdrawal of all false cases against them.