

'Truthful declaration' not enough to give the true facts

Boro farmers remain vulnerable to cheating by seed traders

EAM ASADUZZAMAN,
Nilphamari

Boro farmers in eight northern districts remain highly vulnerable to cheating by seed suppliers as authorities accept the traders' 'truthful declaration', regardless of whether the seeds undergo field and laboratory tests.

The government authorities rely on such declaration due to shortage of manpower and logistics for proper monitoring of seed markets across the country.

Around 50 per cent boro seeds of different varieties in open markets are 'truthfully labelled seeds' (TLS) while almost all the hybrid varieties imported from abroad are marketed under the TLS category, said Md Moniruzzaman, regional field officer (RFO) of the government's seed certification department in Bogra.

"TLS seeds are allowed for sale in markets as authorities depend on traders' morality due to lack of sufficient manpower and laboratories to monitor the seed markets across the country," he said.

Under the provision, seed company concerned, NGO or individual trader having government's seed marketing license 'truthfully' declare or write on seed packets that their seeds are of required standard having proper germination, purity, moisture etc, without undergoing field and laboratory tests by the authorities.

"Sometimes dishonest seed companies or traders



PHOTO: STAR

Imported hybrid boro seeds as well as locally produced ones are marketed with 'truthful declaration', often mentioning fictitious percentage of purity, germination and moisture on the packets, due to awfully scanty arrangement for laboratory testing. The photo was taken from 'Sakhmachha seed market' in Nilphamari a couple of days ago.

misuse the rule and market below standard seeds in the name of TLS seeds to cheat farmers although we take action if allegations are found," the RFO added.

Perfect seed certification rule says, before marketing, boro seeds must undergo field and laboratory test conducted by seed certification department to get recommendation tags as 'foundation' seeds and 'certified' seeds.

For perfect foundation and certified seeds, they must have 96 per cent purity and 80 per cent germination having maximum highest 12 pc moisture, 10 pc weed seeds and other crop seeds in 1kg seed etc.

"But a section of dishonest seed companies or traders do not undergo testing by the government for fear of being rejected. They directly market low quality seeds as TLS seeds inscribing false percentage of purity, germination etc," Satyen Roy, owner of 'Ovi Enterprise', a big seed company in Nilphamari alleged.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) set a target to cultivate boro paddy in 7.61 lakh hectares to produce about 30.52 lakh tonnes of rice in northern districts -- Rangpur, Dinajpur, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, Kurigram, Lalmonirhat, Thakurgaon

and Panchagarh this year, said the regional office of DAE in Rangpur.

Demand of boro seeds as estimated by DAE is 15,207 tonnes. BADC supplies only 3,870 tonnes or only 25.5 per cent of the demand. The rest is supplied by seed companies, NGOs and individuals.

Visiting different seed markets like Sakhmachha Bandar of Nilphamari, Panchpeer Haat of Panchagarh, Mohishkocha Haat of Lalmonirhat, it was found that Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI) invented high yielding BRRI Dhan-28 and BRRI Dhan-29, and hybrid paddy imported from abroad are of high

demand, despite their high prices. Two kg packet of BRRI Dhan-28 and BRRI Dhan-29 are selling for Tk 90-Tk 115 and one kg packet of hybrid variety for Tk 240-Tk 280.

Atiqur Rahman, a farmer of Angarpara village in Sadar upazila alleged that last year he cultivated hybrid boro paddy imported from China after collecting it from Paker Hat in Dinajpur district but he did not get expected yield although it was TLS seed.

"I could not claim compensation, as the seed traders usually do not give receipt," he added.

Monju Alam Sarkar, field seed certification officer in Nilphamari, said he conducted mobile court with executive magistrate and fined 13 seed companies, ranging from Tk 500 to Tk 3000, for keeping low quality seeds in this boro season.

Farmers, however, said such 'soft punishment' was not enough to prevent traders from selling low quality seeds.

"Strict rules should be framed to prevent cheating in the name of TLS seeds. Increasing manpower and vehicles and setting up laboratories in each division is needed to ensure quality seeds. At present there is only one such laboratory in Gazipur," said Regional field seed certification officer Moniruzzaman.

"If perfect seeds were ensured to farmers, paddy yield would increase by 30 per cent-35 per cent," he added.

13 BAHRAIN FIRE VICTIMS

Sunk in gloom, they bury their near and dear ones

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Thirteen Bangladeshi workers, killed in a fire in Bahrain on January 11, were buried at their respective villages in Nabinagar upazila of Brahmanbaria, Patiya and Boalkhali upazilas of Chittagong, Kachua and Chandpur Sadar upazilas of Chandpur, Sonaimuri upazila of Noakhali and Sadar upazila of Comilla yesterday.

A pall of gloom descended on the areas on arrival of the bodies on Tuesday night and yesterday morning. A flight of Emirates Airlines EK 838, carrying the bodies from Bahrain, landed at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 6:35pm on Tuesday.

Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain handed the bodies over to the families at the airport.

Our Brahmanbaria correspondent reported that the bodies of the five fire victims-- Saawan Mia, 26, and Saiful Sujon Islam Sabuj, 22, sons of late Shahid Mia of Kaitala village, Shahjahan Mia alias Jasim, 40, son of late Abu Nasir Mia of Guali village under Kaitala union; Jarob Mia alias Jaru, 40, son of Chand Mia of Khariyal Bhairabnagar village under Bidyakut union; and Md Anwar Hossain, 25, son of Abul Bashar of Gurigram village under Bitghar union reached at Nabinagar at around 11:00pm on Tuesday.

Namaj-e-janaza of Anwar, Saawan and Saiful was held at Kaitala High School ground while Jaru and Jasim at their respective villages. Thousands of people from different areas of the upazila attended the janaza at Kaitala school ground. After janaza, the victims were laid to rest at the family graveyards.

The residents of all villages under the union will observe three-day mourning from today.

According to our Chittagong correspondent Arun Bikash Dey, the bodies of three fire victims--Md Jamal, 50, of Maliara village and Mahub Alam, 50, of East Bathua village of Patiya upazila, and Nazir Ahmed, 48, of Charkhijirpur village of Boalkhali upazila reached at their respective village yesterday morning.

Janazas for Jamal, Mahub and Nazir were held at their respective vil-



PHOTO: STAR

Bereaved mother and children of Bahrain fire victim Jaru Mia, holding framed photos of Jaru and his wife, stand on the premises of their house at Khariyal Bhairabnagar village in Nabinagar upazila of Brahmanbaria yesterday. Above, locals place wreaths on the coffins of Shahadat Hossain and Titu Ahmed in front of Nawpura mosque in Kachua upazila of Chandpur. Sons of Shah Alam of the village, the two brothers were among the 13 Bangladeshis killed in a fire in Bahrain on January 11.

lages. Hundreds of villagers attended the janazas of the three and offered special prayers, seeking salvation of the departed souls. Later, the victims were buried at their family graveyards.

In Chandpur, Janazas for three Bahrain fire victims Shahadat Hossain and Titu Ahmed, sons of Shah Alam of Nawpura village in Kachua upazila; and Shaheen Khan, son of late Sattar Khan of Dhonpotti village under Sadar upazila were held at their respective village after Zohr prayers yesterday, according to a correspondent.

Janaza for Shahadat and Titu was at Nawpara Masjid ground. Hundreds of people from Nawpara and its adjoining villages attended the janaza. Later, the two brothers were laid to rest at their family graveyard.

All shops at Nawpara Bazar will remain closed until 2:00pm today as the shop owners will mourn the death of the two sons of Shah Alam, also a trader of the market.

After namaj-e-janaza of Shaheen Khan at Dhonpotti

village at around 2:00pm, he was buried at their family graveyard.

Our Noakhali correspondent reports: Neighbours, relatives and family members of Osman Ghoni, 22, son of late Abdur Rahim of Kashipur village under Sonaimuri upazila, burst into tears when they saw the coffin of the fire victim on Tuesday night.

An ambulance, carrying the body of Osman, arrived at the village at around 9:00pm. A mourning procession was also brought out in the area yesterday morning. After janaza held at a field at the village at around 9:00am yesterday, Osman was buried at the family graveyard.

The remaining victim, Mofizul Islam, son of Joynal Abedin of Boro Banisha under Comilla Sadar upazila, was laid to rest at the family graveyard after janaza held at the village yesterday morning.

Locals attended the janaza and offered special prayer, seeking eternal peace of the departed soul.

SNIPPETS

House collapse kills 2

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Two people were killed and two others injured when an under construction mud house collapsed at Paharipur village in Sapahar upazila of Naogaon district on Tuesday evening. The deceased were identified as, Iliyas Ali, 50, son of Siddique Hossain of Paharipur village and Nuruzzaman, 32, son of Yusuf Ali of Beldanga village in the upazila. Obaidul Haque, OC of Sapahar police station, said Erfan Ali was building a two storied mud house. Suddenly the upper portion of the under construction mud house collapsed at around 6:30 pm on Iliyas, Nuruzzaman, Monzur Hossain and house owner Erfan Ali, leaving them seriously injured. Iliyas and Nuruzzaman succumbed to their injuries on their way to Sapahar upazila health complex.

BGB informer stabbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

A BGB informer was stabbed by a gang of alleged smugglers at Navaron of Sharsa upazila yesterday. Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) rescued him with serious stab injuries at night. Identified as Saiful Islam, 38, son of Abdul Jabbar of Pantapara village in the upazila, he was admitted to Jessore Medical College Hospital. Rafiqul Islam, commander of Benapole BGB Camp said, a group of armed smugglers picked up Saiful at gunpoint from Pantapara village on Benapole-Jessore road at night. They took him to Navaron and stabbed him indiscriminately.

Man jailed for stalking

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A mobile court yesterday sentenced a man to one year rigorous imprisonment (RI) for stalking in the town. The convict was Abdul Kaiyum, 45, son of late Abdul Karim of Tentulia village in Bagha upazila of Rajshahi district. Officer in-charge (OC) of Sadar PS Sayeed Shahid Alam said that the convict was stalking a student of Bogra Commercial College in Nandigram municipality area for long. While he was harassing the girl yesterday near her house, the relatives caught him red-handed and handed him over to police, added the OC.

Former UP member killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A gang of criminals swooped on a former union parishad member of Parbotipur union and killed him at Jagot village of Gomostapur upazila yesterday. The victim was identified as, Mohammad Shamsuddin alias Togor, 40, son of Khoda Bux of the village. Police and locals said, the gang stabbed Togor indiscriminately on Tuesday at around 8:45 pm when he was returning home from local Enayetpur market by a motorbike. Togor later died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital yesterday morning. The murder is a sequel to previous enmity between two local groups over a disputed pond, police said.



PHOTO: STAR

DEATHS SPARK PROTEST: Angry locals of Jamurki blocked Dhaka-Tangail highway in Mirzapur upazila of Tangail after a passenger bus rammed into a roadside shop, killing two people yesterday. The roadblock created a huge lailback that lasted for a couple of hours.

KHULNA VISIT TODAY

PM to address rally, open 12 projects

A CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to visit the district today.

During the visit, she is expected to address a public meeting at 2.00pm at Khulna Circuit House ground.

She will also inaugurate 12 development projects before the public meeting.

Prime Minister's Office (PMO) informed this to the district administration through a letter on Tuesday, said Mesbahuddin, deputy commissioner of Khulna.

The prime minister will arrive around 10:55am at Titumir helipad of Bangladesh Navy in Khalishpur area of the city. There on the Rupsha she will attend the commissioning of first locally build patrol craft "Padma" of the naval force.

The projects awaiting inauguration include reopening of Daulatpur Jute Mill, inauguration of newly built academic complex of Khulna University of Engineering and Technology



(Kuet), newly built Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman dormitory and new building of student welfare centre at Kuet, newly built cricket test venue at Sheikh Abu Naser Stadium, new building of student dormitory and monument "Adama Bangla", Khulna Divisional Women Sports Complex hostel, Khulna Water and Sewerage Authority (KWASA) residences, newly built female student dormitory -- Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam hall at Khulna Medical College and new residential building of Khulna Shishu Hospital.

Khoksa hartal passes off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A dawn-to-dusk hartal in Khoksa upazila of the district passed off peacefully yesterday.

Khoksa upazila BNP enforced the hartal to protest a lower court decision that rejected the bail petitions of 13 party leaders of Kushtia district unit.

Business establishments in the town remained closed since morning but vehicular movement was normal.

Pro-hartal activists brought out a procession in the town at around 10.00am chanting slogans in support of their demand.

The 13 leaders were arrested following a case filed on charge of assaulting police and obstructing them from performing duties.

Police filed the case against 500 BNP leaders and activists following a clash with the party men on December 10 last year.

The chief judicial magistrate's court of Kushtia on Monday sent the 13 district unit leaders to jail when they had surrendered before the court seeking permanent bail.

THAKURGAON, PANCHAGARH BORDERS

BSF picks up two more

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday picked up two Bangladeshis from Thakurgaon and Panchagarh border areas.

In Thakurgaon, they detained a Bangladeshi farmer near Dabri border under Haripur upazila.

The man was identified as Md. Khalil Mahmud, 40, son of late Saifuddin of Manikkhari village in the upazila.

Operation officer of 30, BGB Battalion Maj. Kazi Alamgir told this correspondent over cell phone that BSF members of Phulbari camp picked up Khalil while he was at work at his watermelon field near the border at about 10:00am.

Earlier, BSF personnel at Belgachhi camp detained another Bangladeshi citizen -- Md. Asraful Islam, 27, son of late Harun Mia of

Tarinzi village under the upazila on Tuesday on Mondumala border under Baliadangi upazila of the district while he was allegedly entering India illegally.

In Panchagarh, BSF detained a Bangladeshi cattle trader on Berubari border under Boda upazila yesterday morning.

The man was identified as Abul Hossain alias Sonauddin, 50, of Nawtari village under the upazila.

Commanding officer of 25, Panchagarh Bangladesh Border Guard (BGB) Lt. Colonel Zakir Hossain told this correspondent over cell phone that BSF members of Satkura Berubari camp caught Sonauddin inside Indian territory when he was returning home along with an Indian citizen at about 6:00pm.

BSF also detained the Indian, identified as Nazrul Islam.

Probe bodies seek more time

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two probe committees, formed to investigate Saturday's violence at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU) by yesterday have sought seven days more to submit reports.

The violence that took place between two factions of BAU Chhatra League on the campus left Rabbi, a 10-year-old madrasa student dead.

As the death news spread, angry mob of nearby villages vandalised five student dormitories. The authorities then shut down the university for an indefinite period.

The committees were scheduled to submit their reports yesterday, said Prof Mustafizur Rahman, head of a committee.

Time extension for submitting reports was sought as the students, who are the key part of the investigation, were not available due to the closure of the university. However, we have interviewed several people of nearby Boira village and eyewitnesses to the violence, said Rahman.

The head of the other committee also sought time on similar pleas.

Father of the slain boy filed a case with Kotwali police station accusing 150 people, including 25 BCL activists.