

Frustrated growers set unsold jute on fire

Protest in front of BJMC purchasing centre

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

As jute prices continue to fall in local markets, growers yesterday staged a demonstration in front of BJMC purchasing centre at Mohimaganj in



Farmers burn raw jute in front of the government-run purchasing centre at Mohimaganj in Gobindaganj upazila under Gaibandha district yesterday protesting continued price fall of the cash crop.

Gobindaganj upazila and set fire to their unsold raw jute. Good yield of jute fails to make the growers in the district happy as the prices see a declining trend. Early this season jute sold for Tk

1400 to 1500 per maund but now it is selling for Tk 900 to 1050 in the local markets. As the number of buyers is poor in the markets, growers return home disappointed with their unsold jute.

Jute procurement by the government has remained stopped at Mohimaganj for the last few years. This year, Alim Jute Mills has opened a purchasing centre here as an agent of BJMC and started purchasing raw jute from farmers on August 6. The agency has so far procured jute worth Tk 1.13 crore on credit from growers and traders. It has paid up outstanding bills amounting to Tk 10 lakh till date. So, a good number of growers and traders are yet to get money.

Farmers said jute prices in the local markets are coming down gradually as traders and brokers don't have much money to purchase raw jute from them. The growers and traders of Mohimaganj yesterday demanded early payment of the outstanding bills. Otherwise, they threatened to launch a tougher agitation programme. "We have already sought a fund of Tk 1.3 crore from the mill authorities to clear dues," said Khairul Islam, in-charge of jute purchasing centre at Mohimaganj.



WHERE DOES THE HILSA GO?

Although the catches are still poor from the Padma and Meghna rivers, the wholesale hilsa markets in Chandpur have become flooded with the delicious fish from the coastal Barisal, Bhola, Barguna, Patuakhali and other districts. Traders say, in the last couple of days, at least two thousand maunds of hilsa worth about Tk 4 crore (at the rate of minimum Tk 20,000 a maund) came to Chandpur every day. However, nobody including the officials of the fisheries department here could say how or on what conditions the 35 wholesalers sell the fish to the exporters and their middlemen. Sources said, many exporters are either freezing the fish due to the on going ban on export or sending a portion to different cities in the country for better profit. Also, the allegation is rife that a huge quantity of the fish is regularly smuggled out, keeping the price, especially of the bigger ones, out of the reach of the local consumers.



SNIPPETS

Transport strike called off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The indefinite transport strike enforced by the district motor owners' association on Monday morning, was called off on Tuesday night. The association had called the strike to press their 8-point demand including banning the illegal vehicles on highways. After an hour-long meeting between the district administration and association leaders at the DC's conference room we have withdrawn the strike, said the joint secretary of the association Motiar Rahman at around at 8:00pm. "The Deputy Commissioner (DC) has assured us of taking necessary steps to implement our demands as soon as possible."

BSF picks up Bangladeshi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday picked up a Bangladeshi fisherman from near the Laurergar border in Tahirpur upazila of Sunamganj district. Border sources said Sentu Miah, 40, of village Laurergar on a boat was catching fish at Jadukata river at about 1:00pm. As his boat approached the zero line, some BSF men from Gomaghat camp picked him up from the point. Contacted, Md Hasan Ali, assistant director of the 8 BGB Battalion, Sunamganj said they protested the matter through an official letter immediately. BSF Laurergar camp in-charge Subedar Md Abdul Hai told BGB that a flag meeting would be held in this connection.

Four get life for killing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Additional District and Session Judge Mohammad Abdul Hamid yesterday sentenced four people to life term imprisonment and fined Tk 20 thousand each, for killing a man in 2001. The convicts are Mohammad Abdul Mazid, Mohammad Lalu Mia, Mohammad Dulu Chowdhury, and Abdur Rouf of Rupchandrapur village under Atpara upazila in the district. The case in brief is that, on November 30 in 2001, the four killed one Tuta Mia, 35, of same village with sharp weapons due to previous enmity. Kulsuma Akhter, younger sister of Tuta Mia, filed a killing case accusing the four with Atpara PS.

Fake dollar seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Police arrested an army man along with 80 pieces of fake US 100-dollar notes from a money exchange in Shatmatha area of the town on Tuesday evening. The arrestee was identified as Masud Khan, 30, son of late Mojid Khan of Rahimabad area under Sadar upazila of Bagerhat district. He serves at Majhira Cantonment in the district. An employee at the money exchange said when the man insisted on exchanging the dollars too quickly the salesman suspected fake dollars and tactfully informed the police. Later the arrestee was handed over to the military police at around 9.30pm.

Housewife strangled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A housewife was murdered at Afratpur village in Chatmohar upazila yesterday morning. She was strangled probably after gang rape, police said. The deceased was identified as Morzina Khatun, 40, wife of Saudi Arabia expatriate Abdul Hye of Afratpur. Officer in-charge of Chatmohar Asaduzzaman Munshi said locals informed the police as the woman did not open the door of her house in the morning. Later police recovered the body with the hands and legs tied with rope. Morzina's brother Abdur Razzak filed a case with Chatmohar PS.

Jamuna devours Chowhali upazila parishad bldgs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The Jamuna has devoured both the administrative buildings of Chowhali upazila Parishad in Sirajganj as erosion by the river has taken a serious turn in the area. Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md Abdulla said two buildings of the upazila parishad went into the riverbed on September 15. "I am now holding office at upazila health complex while other offices of the upazila administration have been shifted to Chowhali Degree College," the UNO said. Nasrin Akhter, vice chairman of the upazila parishad, said erosion by the river has made at least 1800 families of five unions homeless in the last two weeks. Khaspukuria union and Bagutia union are the worst affected areas, he added. The entire upazila headquarters faces onslaught of the Jamuna as a large portion of the river bank protection embankment raised by the Water Development Board have been damaged, Nasrin Akhter further said. Sources in Pabna Water Development Board said 39 thousand sand sandbags 5,192 CC blocks have been dumped in the damaged portion of the embankment to check further onslaught by the river. "Asian Development Bank (ADB) has taken up a Tk 3,000 crore project to build an embankment from Jamuna Bridge point to Aricha port," said Yunus Ali, assistant engineer of WDB Tangail division.



One of the buildings of Chowhali upazila parishad complex in Pabna district being devoured by the Jamuna on September 12.

Poor navigability disrupts Mawa ferry services

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Ferry services on the Mawa-Kawrakandi route yesterday disrupted again, this time due to navigability problems in the Padma River. At least 300 vehicles, including many goods-laden trucks, remain stuck on each sides of the route a day due to partial ferry service. Manager of Mawa-based ghat of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) Sirajul Haque said, out of the total 16, only six ferries were running on the route for poor navigability at Lauhajang point of the river. Strong currents in the river has added to the situation. A dredging work has been planned to resolve the present problem by removing silt from Lauhajang and other points, he said. A survey is going on to examine the feasibility, he added. While hundreds of passengers continue to suffer, traders from the southern districts are counting heavy losses as a large number of goods-laden vehicles remain stranded for days at the ferry points.

PATUAKHALI SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY Probe into alleged illegal appointments starts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A committee has started to probe the alleged illegal appointments of staff at Patuakhali Science and Technology University during the tenure of immediate past vice chancellor Syed Shakhawat Hossain. The three-member body, headed by UGC member Prof Mohabbat Khan, on Sunday and Monday examined various records and quizzed a number of staff including the incumbent VC Shamsuddin, registrar Nawab Ali Khan, deans and heads of different departments. On December 27 last year, the University Grants Commission (UGC) formed a probe committee to investigate the alleged irregularities in appointments of a large number of staff from 2008 to 2012, said Mohabbat Khan. During the last three working days from December 17 to 19 last year, the former VC appointed 119 officials and employees against 14 posts mentioned in the newspaper advertisement, said university sources. The posts include one each of deputy registrar, assistant registrar, assistant librarian, accountant, assistant engineer (electrical), deputy assistant engineer (civil), senior assistant for the office of the registrar, senior assistant for budget section, and six section officers. However, the authorities appointed 33 against those posts, said the sources. Eighty-six other people including seasonal, part time and master roll employees were also appointed during December 17-19 although there were no such posts, it added. Besides, a good number of teachers, officials and employees were appointed at the university allegedly through dubious means during the last four years.

Testimony

FROM PAGE 16 crimes tribunals. Seeking a two-day adjournment yesterday, prosecutor Mohammad Ali, the conducting lawyer of the case, told the tribunal he would not produce any more factual witness. In the adjournment petition, Ali said the 23rd witness, Syeda Salma Mahmud, who gave deposition on September 16, fell sick and therefore could not come to the tribunal. "The 23rd prosecution witness was the last witness. I'll produce two seizure list witnesses and after that the IO [investigation officer] will give his deposition," said Ali in a bid to convince the tribunal for adjournment. The tribunal adjourned the proceeding until Sunday. The defence will cross-examine Salma Mahmud on that day. The prosecution produced their first witness in Nizami's case on August 26, 2012, and in the last one year and 22 days, they had managed to produce 22 other witnesses. Jamaat-e-Islami Ameer Nizami was shown arrested on August 2, 2010, in connection with war crimes along with his party colleagues Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed, M u h a m m a d Kamaruzzaman and Abdul Quader Mollah. International Crimes Tribunal-2 has already convicted and sentenced M o j a h e e d , Kamaruzzaman and Mollah for crimes against humanity and genocide committed during the Liberation War. The war crimes case against Mollah had been disposed of by the appellate division on Tuesday by awarding him death penalty. The appeals of M o j a h e e d , Kamaruzzaman are now pending for hearing before the Supreme Court. The war crimes case against Nizami has bogged down largely due to him being an accused in the 10-truck arms haul case of 2004 and prosecution failures. As the proceedings of the case were moving at a snail's pace, the tribunal on September 2 passed an order in which it said from September 8 onwards it would hear the trial of Nizami every working day. It also directed the prosecution and the defence to remain prepared as the proceedings would advance continuously. On that day, the tribunal also ordered the jail authorities not to produce Nizami in any case other than the war crimes case without their permission. Since then, the prosecution examined four witnesses. Contacted, Ali told The Daily Star over the phone that four out of 16 war crimes charges brought against Nizami were based on documentary evidence. "There remain only 12 charges. I think I've been able to prove 10 out of the 12 charges beyond any reasonable doubt," he said. The tribunal, as per relevant laws, will fix defence witness for Nizami. In the last stage, both the prosecution and defence will place their closing arguments for and against the evidence. To draw a conclusion on the closing arguments, the three-member tribunal either will set a date for delivering the judgement or keep the case waiting for verdict. Tribunal-1 yesterday adjourned until Monday the hearing on charge framing in the war crimes case against ATM Azharul Islam following an adjournment petition filed by the defence.