

Farmers count loss as paddy prices fall over blockades

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Paddy farmers and traders in different districts are being deprived of fair prices due to transportation problem amid political agitation like countrywide blockades and hartals for weeks.

Huge quantity of paddy in thousands of sacks is now kept under the open sky at places on Patuakhali-Kuakata road as farmers and traders cannot send the item to wholesale market, reports our Patuakhali correspondent.

"We could not send

paddy loaded trucks to wholesale markets in different areas including Khulna, Dinajpur, Natore and Kushtia due to continued countrywide blockade programme sponsored by the opposition," Md Masun Khan, a paddy trader of Banda Bazar in Kalapara upazila, told this correspondent on Monday.

"About 6,000 maunds (a maund = 40 kg) of aman paddy that I bought from local markets has been kept under the open sky for three weeks," he added.

Jamal Hossain, another

trader of Bablatala Bazar in the same upazila, said he bought about 10,000 maunds of paddy but could not sell even a maund as trucks find it hard to come to the area from other places due to the blockade.

Usual rent of a truck from there to Natore is maximum Tk 20,000 but now truckers are charging up to Tk 35,000, he added.

Due to the situation, local farmers are being deprived of proper price of aman paddy as traders are not so interested to buy.

Now a maund of aman

paddy is selling for Tk 650 to 680 while the price was over Tk 700 only three weeks ago, said Md Sultan Mia, a farmer of Rojopara village in Kalapara upazila.

"Many local traders send paddy to Dinajpur, Natore, Khulna and other places for husking and then they bring the rice to the area for sale round the year. Many businessmen of those areas also come here to buy paddy. But the business is badly suffering now due to countrywide blockade," said Masum Khan, a paddy trader.

Our Lalmonirhat

Correspondent reports: Bumper production of aman paddy this season fails to bring smile on the faces of growers in the district.

Farmers said they are counting losses due to fall in aman prices amid the blockades being enforced by the 18-party opposition combine.

Many farmers are selling aman for low prices in the local markets, as they need money for preparing their lands for ongoing IRRRI-boro season.

Aman paddy sold in the local market for Tk 800-850 per maund last month but the price has now fallen to Tk 650-700, farmers said.

"I have got Tk 35,000 from my paddy sale but my production cost was about Tk 33,000 and I had to pay additional Tk 2,500 as transport cost to take my paddy to market due to blockade. Thus I had to count loss," said Hasibul Islam, 50, at Karnapur village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Pappu Islam, a paddy trader at Puran Bazar in Lalmonirhat town, said traders are not interested to purchase paddy as they cannot send it outside due to lack of transport facility amid the blockades.

A total of 81,085 hectares of land were brought under aman cultivation in the district this year and the yield reached 3,65,750 tonnes, said sources at the Department of Agriculture Extension in Lalmonirhat.



PHOTO: STAR

Locals form a human chain on the premises of Shaheed Minar in Parbatipur town yesterday demanding punishment for the killers of newly-wed housewife Afia Zaman

Battling for life for 16 days, Mita finally gives in

Death of the newly-wed girl triggers protest in Parbatipur town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Aggrieved locals of Parbatipur upazila town yesterday demanded arrest and punishment of the culprits who burnt to death a newly wed housewife.

The protesters formed a human chain and staged demonstration with the body of Afia Zaman Mita, 22, in front of the Shaheed Minar in Parbatipur town.

Mita was daughter of Syed Bodiuzzaman, a worker of Parbatipur locomotive workshop and resident of Dakkhinpara in the town.

She was a final year student at Rangpur Agriculture Institute.

Family members said, Mita suffered burn injuries on December 17 and died on Tuesday, after battling for life for 16 days.

She was married off two months ago to Wasibur Rahman Shuvo, another staff of the Parbatipur

locomotive workshop.

Parents of Mita said that their daughter was not happy with Shuvo and was trying her best to cope



Afia Zaman Mita

with her in-laws.

At a stage her in-laws blamed Mita of adultery and on December 17 early morning Mita's parents came to know that their daughter received serious burn injuries.

The family members of her husband claimed that Mita set fire to her body. But I do not believe that, Bodiuzzaman told this

correspondent.

After the incident Mita was rushed to Parbatipur Lamb Hospital. Later, she was shifted to Rangpur Medical College and Hospital where the doctors referred her to Dhaka as around 70 percent of her body was burnt.

After battling for 16 days, she finally gave in and died at the burnt unit of Dhaka Medical College, said the family members.

When the body arrived at her home yesterday morning, a pall of gloom descended on the area and friends and family members and locals, also the students of Rangpur Agriculture Institute, burst into agitation.

Tofazzal Hossain, an uncle of Mita, filed a case accusing four people with Parbatipur police station. Police arrested two of the accused, said Arzu Mohammad Sazzad, investigation officer (IO) of the case.

Jamaat-Shibir men swoop on election campaign

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Jamaat-Shibir men swooped on the campaigners of rebel Awami League candidate Saiful Karim from Satkhira-2 parliamentary constituency and set three motorbikes afire in Padmashakra area under Sadar upazila yesterday.

Though Saiful Karim remained unhurt, three of the campaigners sustained injuries during the attack. The injured are Kabir Hossain, 25, Abdul aziz, 45, and Azizul Islam, 35. They were given first aid at a local clinic.

District Sramik League Vice President Sheikh Harun-ur-Rashid said Saiful Karim along with 30 to 40 people went to different areas of the constituency for electioneering.

When they reached in Padmashakra area at around 3:00pm, Jamaat-Shibir men equipped with lethal weapons attacked some campaigners, who were in the motorbikes, he added.

Saiful said his supporters face attacks by Jamaat-Shibir men in different areas of the constituency. He demanded immediate arrest of the attackers.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Enamul Haque of Sadar Police Station said police arrested a man named Jahangir Hossain, 25, of Padmashakra village for his alleged involvement in the attack.

Our Noakhali correspondent reported that at least 15 people were injured in a clash between the supporters of AL candidate Ayesha Ferdous and independent candidate Amirul Islam Amir at Nijumdwp in Hatiya upazila yesterday.

Locals said the campaigners of Amirul Islam Amir were wooing voters in Bandartila area in Nijumdwp. When they reached near Bandartila Bazar, the supporters of Ayesha Ferdous attacked them. At least 15 people from both sides were injured during the clash, they added.

Lean time for mighty Teesta

Drastic fall in water level in only a few years threatens agriculture, ecology in northern region

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The mighty Teesta sees drastic fall of water level in the ongoing dry season, badly affecting agriculture, communication, employment and ecology in the region.

Now one can easily walk across the Teesta at Parulia, which was unthinkable only a few years ago, said Nabir Hossain, 75, a farmer at Char Parulia village in Hatibandha upazila.

The situation followed construction of a barrage and unilateral withdrawal of water by India over the river at Gazaldoba, around

100km upstream of Teesta Barrage Irrigation project at Dalia of Hatibandha upazila in Lalmonirhat district, said several locals including Salamot Bapary, 56, Ashraful Islam, 60, and Idris Miah, 65, of Char Goddimari village in Hatibandha.

Now movement of water vessels has remained suspended on all the routes of the river, causing communication problem for over 35 thousand people living at 65 char (landmass emerged from riverbed) villages in Sadar, Aditmari, Kaliganj, Hatibandha and Patgram upazilas in Lalmonirhat,

said activists of different NGOs working in the areas.

Over 250 boatmen of 23 boat routes connecting five upazilas under the district have become jobless due to the situation, said boatmen Harun Majhi, 42, Jabbar Majhi, 52, Taherul Islam, 38, of Char Gobordhan village in Aditmari upazila.

"Thousands of people living in the chars and riverbank areas on the Teesta basin have become jobless due to drying up of the river. They are now moving to capital Dhaka and other areas in search of work. Some of them are compelled to take loans on

high interest from the local moneylenders," said Mofazzal Hossain Mofa, chairman of Rajpur union parishad in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Locals have urged the government to take necessary measures to keep the river navigable round the year.

Shahjahan Ali Talukder, executive engineer of Bangladesh Water Development Board in Lalmonirhat, said the water level started falling sharply in September and now most of the river has dried up, leading to emergence of a number of chars on the



PHOTO: STAR

The Teesta Rail Bridge area of the River Teesta in Gokunda union under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila gives a pitiable look as large chars emerging in the riverbed during the ongoing dry season cause the once mighty water flow to virtually lose its navigability.

Three AL men jailed for smuggling

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Three ruling party men were jailed yesterday by a mobile court for smuggling Indian contraband drugs through Mogholhat border in Sadar upazila.

Executive magistrate of the mobile court Sanaul Haque handed down the verdict in his office in presence of joint forces, BGB, police and local people.

Joint forces arrested the three drug smugglers from the border on Tuesday night, along with some bottles of phensidyl and hemp, BGB sources said.

The convicts are Abu Sufiyan, 48, president of Mogholhat union's 2 No. ward unit AL, his son 2 No. ward unit Jubo League's joint secretary Habibur Rahman and 2 No. ward unit Jubo League's member Rabiul Islam, all residents of Chawratari village near

Mogholhat border.

15 BGB battalion's Mogholhat company camp commander Subedar Abdul Hamid said, the three convicts had been doing their illegal trade using their political power on the border since long. Joint forces raided the border taking help of the BGB men at Mogholhat camp, he said.

OC Jamir Uddin of Sadar PS said, the three drug smugglers were sent to jail yesterday noon.

No clue yet to triple murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Panchbibi police in Joypurhat have picked up two people in connection with Monday's triple murder in the upazila.

The two were identified as Md. Mahbub Alam and Nazrul Islam. However, police declined of provide further details about them.

Meanwhile, police got the identities of the slain youths. They were Bipul Khandakar, 27, son of Ramzan Ali and Saikat Hossain, 27, son of Abdur Rakib of of Garidah village in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj and Asadul Islam, 25, son of Shafiqul Islam Bhuiyan of Uttar Para in Bogra town.

Abdur Razzak, uncle of slain Saikat, filed a case with Panchbibi police station on Tuesday, accusing unidentified people. But he did not mention any number, police said.

"After the filing of the case, we picked up two people on Tuesday," said Nur Hossain, officer in-charge of Panchbibi police station adding that they were still clueless to the incident.

Police, quoting family members, said that the three youths were friends. They came out of home with motorbike on Saturday and visited their relatives in Hakimpur upazila of Dinajpur. Since Saturday afternoon, they were not available on their phones, they said.

At around 2.40pm Monday, locals of the area noticed the three slit-throat bodies on the paddy field.

Later Hobibur Rahman, chairman of Mohammadpur union informed it to police and police recovered the bodies.

The bodies were handed over to the family members on Tuesday morning.

SNIPPETS

Man killed over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

A man was killed and 10 people were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over a piece of disputed land at Ram Shankarpur village under Bhairab upazila yesterday. The deceased was identified as Sajib Ahmed, 40, son of Motaieb Miah of Pultakanda village. Quoting locals, police said Saddam and Bachchu Mia of the village had a longstanding conflict over the ownership of the land. The two groups joined an arbitration yesterday morning to settle the matter. An altercation took place between the rival groups during the arbitration and at a stage it triggered a clash. The groups attacked each other with lethal weapons that left 11 people, including Sajib, an arbitrator, injured. Later, Sajib succumbed to his injuries.

2 schoolboys 'missing'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Two schoolboys 'went missing' from Bishoykhali village under Jhenidah Sadar upazila on Saturday. Parents yesterday held a press conference at Jhenidah Press Club, urging law enforcers to trace their missing boys. Raju, a class eight student, and Shakil, a class ten student, of Bishoykhali High School came out of their houses on Saturday afternoon, saying that they were going to local market. But they didn't return until 8:00pm on the day. Raju's father Sajjad Ali and Shakil's father Ahad Ali said they also informed the Jhenidah Rab office of the matter and filed separate G.Ds.

Jamaat hartal in Meherpur

UNB, Meherpur

The daylong hartal, called by the local unit of Jamaat-e-Islami, protesting the killing of party leader Abdul Jabbar in a gunfight with joint force members, passed off without any incident of violence yesterday. District unit Jamaat assistant secretary Tarique Mohammad Saiful Islam announced the shutdown on Tuesday noon. Presence of vehicles on the district town roads was less than normal. All roadside shops and educational institutions remained open during the hartal hours. A large number of law enforcers, including Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) members, remained on guard on the district streets to avert any trouble.

Criminals fell fruit trees

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Criminals felled at least 45 fruit trees at an orchard at Bejar village under Adamdighi upazila of the district early yesterday. Morium Akhter Momi, owner of the orchard, said she purchased 14 decimals of land from a villager and planted the trees. She alleged that one Aminul Islam of the village and his hired men had cut down the trees. Following a case filed by Morium with Adamdighi police station in the morning, a team of law enforcers visited the spot. Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not talk to Aminul as his cellphone was switched off. Contacted, Sub-inspector (SI) Monirul Islam of the police station said they will take legal action against the culprits after proper investigation into the incident.