



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers plant BRRI-Dhan-64, a zinc-enriched paddy invented by Bangladesh Rice Research Institute, at a field in Jhenidah Sadar upazila.

# Zinc-enriched rice sees successful farming

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Zinc-enriched boro paddy BRRI-Dhan-64 invented by Bangladesh Rice Research Institute sees successful cultivation in the district, following approval of its commercial cultivation by National Seed Board last year.

The short duration rice can be harvested within 100 days of planting and may yield up to 31 maunds per bigha if nurtured properly, researchers said.

On January 15, Md Saiful Islam, area co-ordinator of Agricultural Advisory Society (AAS), organised training on the

cultivation of BRRI-Dhan-64 for 55 farmers of Jhenidah.

AAS Director Harun-or-Rashid, Jhenidah Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer and agriculturist Dr Khan Moniruzzaman and Mozibur Rahman of Havest Plus Bangladesh were present as trainer.

"BRRI-64 has been invented through cross pollination with local variety. Seventy-five acres of land have been brought under its cultivation in Jhenidah, Magura and Jessore districts," said Nasir Uddin Khan, additional director of the Department of Agricultural Extension in

Jessore region.

District-wise, the areas are 50 acres in Jhenidah, 15 acres in Magura, and 10 acres in Jessore.

The researchers claimed that the newly invented paddy will play a vital role in fighting zinc and protein deficiency in human body, especially for children and women.

As rice is the staple food of Bangladesh, the newly invented variety could provide useful food value for zinc enrichment for people and it will be especially helpful to prevent and cure diarrhoea and pneumonia in children, they said.

"The local varieties contain 9-12 miligrams of zinc per kg while the newly invented zinc enriched variety contains around 24 miligrams. It will prevent zinc deficiency in human body and help physical growth and mental development of the children," said Dr Alamgir Hossain, post doctorate fellow, Harvest Plus Bangladesh.

"I took training on the cultivation of BRRI-64 Dhan on January 15 and I am cultivating it on one bigha of land this season," said Abdul Jabbar, a teacher of Narikelbaria ZA High School.

# Dinajpur potato growers hit hard by blockade

*They are not getting fair prices of their produce due to absence of buyers*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The countrywide non-stop blockade enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance that began on January 6 has added to the woes of the potato growers of Dinajpur and Joypurhat districts. They had incurred huge losses due to similar situations last year.

"We are not getting fair prices as buyers from different districts cannot enter the area due to the blockade," said Azizul Islam of Chehelgazi village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

According to the source at Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Dinajpur and Joypurhat districts, at least 83000 hectares of land have been brought under potato cultivation with a production target of 17 lakh tonnes in this season.

During a recent visit to different upazilas in Dinajpur, this correspondent found many farmers leaving their potatoes on the field for spiralling costs of transportation by road due to the blockade.

Mizanur Rahman of

Paltapur village in Birganj upazila said like previous year, he sold potato at Tk 6 per kilo-gram at this time.

Despite high demand, the vegetable cannot be sent to other places just for high transport cost due to the blockade, said Rafiqul Islam, a wholesaler of Bahadurbazar in Dinajpur, adding that at least 11 potato-laden trucks came under petrol bomb attacks since January 6.

Azahar Ali, a farmer of Kalai upazila in Joypurhat, who cultivated

potato on his four acres of land, said, "I am now selling the vegetable at Tk 160 per maund while it was sold at Tk 480 before the blockade."

Abdul Hannan and AZM Sabbir Ibne Jahan, deputy directors of DAE in Dinajpur and Joypurhat, said farmers are losing interest in potato cultivation for not getting fair prices.

Considering the current volatile political situation, they suggested the growers to preserve potatoes in cold storages.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers leave their harvested potatoes on a field at Paltapur village in Birganj upazila of Dinajpur district as the prices have drastically fallen due to transport problem amid the weeks-long countrywide blockade enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance.



PHOTO: STAR

Rangpur Sugar Mills in Gaibandha district is on production during the ongoing crushing season but the supply of sugarcane is too scanty to meet the production target.

# Rangpur Sugar Mills to miss production target this season

*Sugarcane supply falls short as blockade scares truckers*

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Rangpur Sugar Mills in Gaibandha district is not likely to attain the production target this season as supply of sugarcane has been badly hampered due to the weeks-long countrywide blockade enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance.

Amid fear of attack by blockaders, the drivers of trucks and tractors are refraining from carrying sugarcane from

growers and purchase centres.

Despite the burden of last two years' unsold 5,342 tonnes of sugar worth about Tk 20 crore, the mill authorities started the current production season on December 19 last year with a target to produce 3,900 tonnes of sugar in 45 days by crushing 60 thousand tonnes of sugarcane.

But they produced only 2,202 tonnes of sugar from 41,000 tonnes of sugarcane so far as the supply fell

short due to continuous transport problem, said Abdul Khaleque, managing director of Rangpur Sugar Mills.

"We failed to hire private trucks for carrying sugarcane, as the owners and drivers declined to take the risk amid the blockade. We had earlier provided loan to sugarcane growers in a few stipulated areas to supply the item to the mill in the current crushing season but most of them failed due to the situation," he said.

# Deer skins seized in Barguna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-8) members in a drive seized three deer skins from a garden at Gyanpara village in Pathorghata upazila of Barguna district yesterday.

On secret information, a team of the law enforcers raided the house of Abul Bashar, son of Nurul Islam of the village, and recovered three deer hides from an adjacent garden owned by Bashar, said Asaduzzaman, assistant superintendent of police of Rab-8.

However, none was arrested in this connection, the Rab official said, adding that they are trying to arrest the culprits involved.

Later, the seized skins were handed over to Pathorghata Police Station and a case was filed in this connection.

# Madrassa boy abducted 4 days ago yet to be rescued

*Mymensingh schoolboy traceless for 39 days*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police are yet to rescue a madrasa student, who was abducted by an unidentified gang from Gurabhui village in Kulaura upazila of the district on January 24.

Police quoted victim's family members as saying that a gang picked up Abbas Ali, 13, a Class VII student at Hingazia Senior Madrasa, while he was going to school in the morning.

Nurul Islam, father of the victim, filed an abduction case with Kulaura Police

Station the same night.

"We don't know the whereabouts of our son as none has contacted us or demanded ransom for his release," Nurul Islam said.

Contacted, Atiqur Rahman, officer in-charge (investigation) of Kulaura Police Station, said they are conducting drives to rescue the boy.

Away in Mymensingh, schoolboy Sabbir Hossain, abducted on December 20 from Dhitpur village in Bhaluka upazila, still

remains traceless, reports our correspondent.

On December 29, Mustafa, father of the victim, also a small fish trader, lodged a general diary (GD) with Bhaluka Police Station, accusing neighbours Moslem Uddin, 55, his son Jewel, 21, Rumon, 23, and Khodeja Khatun, 45.

At an arbitration on January 3, Moslem told the arbitrators that he was not involved in the abduction but knew the whereabouts of the boy. He also assured the arbitrators of

returning the boy the next day and since then he went into hiding.

Mustafa filed a case with a Mymensingh court on January 19. He alleged that police were showing reluctance to rescue the boy, a Class IV student of Sun Bright Kindergarten.

Refuting the allegation, Golam Sarwar, officer in-charge of Bhaluka Police Station, said they had received the court order 2/3 days ago and were conducting drives to rescue the boy.

# Woman killed over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

An elderly woman was hacked to death allegedly by her grandson at Sabajpur village in Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Alekjan Bibi, 65, mother of late Mortuja Miah of the village.

Police and locals said there was a longstanding conflict between Alekjan and her grandson Yousuf Miah, 29, over a piece of land.

They locked in an altercation over the issue around 11:00am and at one stage, Yousuf hit Alekjan with a sharp weapon, leaving her seriously injured.

She was rushed to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where the on duty doctors declared her dead.



PHOTO: STAR

A large number of people take part in a mass signature campaign on the premises of Central Shaheed Minar in Tangail town yesterday as part of their movement to press for the demand to keep the district under the jurisdiction of Dhaka division. Citizens in the district have expressed serious concern over the possibility to bring the district under proposed Mymensingh district.