



A wheat field under agriculture ministry's Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project at Mollabari in Uzirpur upazila under Barisal district.

PHOTO: STAR

# Wheat farming in Barisal division triples in 4 years

Many farmers opting to the high yielding, salinity-resistant varieties developed by Bari

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barisal

Cultivation area and production of wheat in four districts of Barisal division saw about three-fold increase in last four years, thanks to the initiative of Integrated Agricultural Productivity Project (IAPP) of agriculture ministry.

In fiscal year (FY) 2013-14, 10,997 tonnes of wheat was produced on 3,672 hectares of land in four

districts of the division, the amount being 10,265 tonnes on 3,259 hectares in Barisal district alone, according to the statistics of IAPP in Barisal division.

The amount was only 2,889 tonnes on 1,213 hectares in 2010-11 FY under this project, said IAPP sources.

Lower production cost of wheat, its less dependence on irrigation, and less volatile prices compared to irrigation-dependent, salin-

ity sensitive boro paddy might have encouraged growers to sow the grain on more areas of lands, said Dr AKM Mizanur Rahman, regional project manager of IAPP in Barisal.

Purchase of wheat by the government authorities acted as incentive to farmers while supply of quality seeds contributed to higher yield per hectare, farmers said.

"In recent years, breeders

at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) developed six high-yielding and salinity resistant wheat seed varieties like BARI GOM-20, 22, 24, 25, 26 and 27, to rejuvenate farmers' interest in the crop. The varieties also contain high amounts of protein," Dr Mizanur said.

"We are interested in wheat farming as it brings more profit than boro," said Mannan, a wheat farmer.



The district administration destroys this structure along with another one at Dholbhangra Bazar in Palashbari upazila under Gaibandha district yesterday as the spots were being used for holding obscene dance and gambling in the name of jatra (open stage drama).

PHOTO: STAR

# 25 girls fall victim of mass hysteria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

At least 25 girl students of Pabna Collectorate School and College in the town yesterday fell sick in their classroom due to 'mysterious reasons.'

Dr Shafiqul Hassan, medicine consultant at Pabna Medical College Hospital, said such illness is usually seen among girls. It is known as mass psycho-

genic illness (MPI) or mass hysteria.

Of the victims, 18, all aged between 13 and 14, were admitted to Pabna Medical College Hospital, while the rest were treated locally.

Mahmudul Hasan, a teacher of the school quoted the victims as saying that the students of class IX felt a bad headache and had respiratory prob-

lems after a bottle of liquid substance broke with a high sound beside their classroom.

Ajmal Hossain, additional deputy commissioner, said a three-member committee has been formed to probe the matter.

The committee was asked to submit its report within three working days, he added.



A few students of Pabna Collectorate School and College undergoing treatment at Pabna Medical College Hospital. At least 25 female students of the institution fell sick in their classroom due to a 'mass hysteria' yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Schoolgirl violated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

An eleven-year-old schoolgirl was raped allegedly by her neighbour in Sadar upazila of the district on Saturday.

Ayesha Begum, mother of the victim, filed a case with Sadar Police Station yesterday, accusing Ershad Ali, 28, of Prodhaneer Bazar village in the upazila.

According to the case, Ershad violated the girl, a Class V student of Anandalok Primary School, by entering her room forcibly when none of her family members were present at the house on Saturday afternoon.

Hearing screams, villagers rushed to the spot, rescued the girl and took her to Gaibandha Sadar Hospital. Ershad, however, managed to flee the scene.

Contacted, Raziur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the PS, said police are raiding different areas to arrest the accused.

# 215 bottles of phensidyl seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized 215 bottles of phensidyl from Molani border point in Haripur upazila yesterday morning.

Acting on a tip-off, a patrol team of BGB raided the border area at around 9:30am and seized the phensidyl.

However, the drug peddlers managed to flee the scene, sensing the presence of the border guards, said BGB sources.

# Two held with truckload of govt textbooks

Illegal marketing alleged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Police arrested two people at a godown in Kasaltola area of Aditmari upazila on Saturday on charge of illegally marketing and selling school textbooks meant for free distribution.

They also sealed the godown, owned by Shahidul Islam, 33, son of Shariful Islam of Dakkhin Batrish Hazari village in the upazila.

The arrestees are Shahidul Islam and Abdul

Mannan, 41, son of Shamsuddin Miah under Dakkhin Khan area in Dhaka.

On secret information, a police team raided the godown of Shahidul at night and seized a truck while it was being loading with the textbooks of Class IX and X of this current year.

They also arrested the duo from the spot, said Shaheen Akhter, sub-inspector of Aditmari Police Station.

Shahidul sold the books to trader Mannan after

purchasing those from different schools, said locals.

Shahidul has been conducting this illegal trade for the last few years, they alleged.

Refuting the allegation, Shahidul said "I purchased the textbooks as rejected books from hawkers and sold those to the traders from the capital."

Police are investigating to trace out those school authorities involved in selling the textbooks, said the SI.



A policeman sees school textbooks that were seized from a godown at Kasaltola in Aditmari upazila under Gaibandha district yesterday on charge of selling the items meant for free distribution in the black market.

PHOTO: STAR

# 1751 Dinajpur Jamaat, BNP men sued since early Jan

166 of them arrested on charge of violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least 1751 activists of BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir have been made accused in 15 cases connected with political violence in eight of the 13 upazilas under the district since January 5 this year.

Of the accused, 345 people are identified while the others unnamed ones, police said, adding that police so far arrested 166 people in connection with the 15 cases.

Six cases were filed in Dinajpur Sadar upazila, two cases each in Kaharol and Chirirbandar upazila, one each in Nawabganj, Biral, Ghoraghat, Bochaganj and Birganj upazilas of Dinajpur.

Nine cases were filed under Special Powers Act of 1974, three cases under Anti Terrorism Act, two cases with criminal charges while one case was filed under Explosive Substance Act.

All the cases are now under investigation, said Ruhul Amin, superintendent of police of Dinajpur.

In Dinajpur Sadar, 1146 people allegedly belonging to Jamaat-Shibir, BNP and its associate bodies were accused in six cases. Of them, 146 names were mentioned in these cases

while the remaining ones were unidentified. Police arrested 72 of the accused.

In Chirirbandar upazila, 117 Jamaat-Shibir and BNP men, including 42 named ones, were accused in two cases. Police arrested 45 people.

In Kaharol upazila, 265 people were sued in two cases. Of them, 55 were identified while remaining 210 unnamed. Twenty accused in these cases are now in jail.

In Nawabganj upazila, 30 people including five named ones were sued in a case and police arrested eight people.

In Bochaganj, one person accused in a case remains at large.

In Ghoraghat upazila, 55 people including 30 named ones were accused in a case while the number of arrestees is 10, police said.

Sixty-nine people including 39 named ones were accused in a case in Biral upazila. Police arrested four.

In Birganj, 68 people were sued in a case. Of them, 28 are identified and others are unidentified. The number of arrestees is 7.

In connection with the incidents of violence centring the January 5 national elections last year, 24,000 Jamaat-Shibir and BNP men were made accused in at least 124 violence cases filed in the district, police said.

# Woman held with 8920 coins of TK 1

Smuggling attempt alleged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested a woman along with 8920 coins of Tk one in Putkhali border area under Benapole Port Police Station on Saturday.

The arrestee is Shirina Akhter, 32, daughter of Muntaz of Jessore rail station area in Sadar upazila.

Acting on a tip-off, the border guards raided the area at night and arrested Shirina while she was smuggling the coins to India, said Shamsur Rahman, in-charge of Putkhali BGB Camp. They later seized the coins from her possession.

The arrestee was handed over to the police station, said Shamsur.

# Land dispute kills one, 4 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A man was killed in a clash between two rival groups over a piece of disputed land at Lakkhanpur village in Begumganj upazila on Saturday.

Police arrested a man and three women in this connection, said locals.

The deceased is Md Mohiuddin, 40, son of Md Abdul Gafur of the village.

Ainul Haque, officer-in-charge of Begumganj Model Police Station, said there was a longstanding conflict between Mohiuddin and one Milon of the village over the land.

On Saturday morning, Milon tried to build a building on the disputed land but he was resisted by Mohiuddin.

At one stage, Milon and his three associates—Palash, Mohammad Ali and Mona Mia—beat Mohiuddin mercilessly, leaving him dead on the spot.

On information, police rushed to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Noakhali Abdul Malek Ukil Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Deceased's father Abdul Gafur filed a case with the police station against Milon, Palash, Mohammad Ali and Mona Mia in connection with the incident, said the OC.

# 10 shops gutted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

At least 10 shops were gutted in a fire at Nayarhat Bazar in Mithapukur upazila of the district early yesterday.

Mithapukur Fire Service and Civil Defense Station sources said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at a grocery shop at around 1:00am and soon engulfed the nine other adjacent shops. Firefighters doused the blaze with the help of locals.



Students of Samospur School and College block Dhaka-Mawa road at Sreenagar in Munshiganj district yesterday demanding a speed breaker at the spot for prevention of accidents there.

PHOTO: STAR