

IMPOSITION OF TAX ON RICE IMPORT FROM INDIA

# Boro prices see gradual rise in markets

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Following imposition of 10% tax by the government on imported Indian rice on May 10, price of newly harvested boro paddy sees gradual rise in the markets of Rangpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts, much to the relief of the farmers in the northern region.

Paddy prices showed downward trend at the beginning of boro harvesting season but in last couple of days it has risen up to Tk 150-Tk 175 per maund (40kg), according to quality.

At different markets including Taraganj Haat in

Rangpur, Paker Haat in Dinajpur and Sakhamachha Haat in Nilphamari, a maund of BR-28 variety of boro paddy was selling for Tk 575-Tk 650 yesterday, which was Tk 400-Tk 500 four days ago.

Similarly a maund of hybrid coarse boro paddy is now selling for Tk 450-Tk 475, which was Tk 350-Tk 375 a few days ago.

"I sold 10 maunds of BR-28 variety paddy for Tk 6,000 although I sold the same amount for Tk 4,500 only a week ago," said farmer Basudev Roy, 50, who came to sell paddy at Taraganj yesterday.

Appreciating the government's pragmatic step of imposing tax on Indian rice,

several farmers said it would be even better rice import from India is stopped.

Taking the opportunity of tax-free facility, importers in the five districts brought thousands of tonnes of Indian rice daily through Hili, Burimari and Banglabandha land ports, causing drastic fall in rice production in about 100 automatic rice mills and 2500 husking mills in this region, said Rakibul Alam, president of Nilphamari district unit of rice mill owners association.

"After imposition of tax on Indian rice, production in our mills has increased and buyers are giving purchase orders as before," he said.

The food department will launch a rice procurement drive on May 30, setting Tk 32 per kg as buying price that would increase paddy price further, said Abdullah Al Mamun, regional controller of food in Rangpur division.

Julfikar Haider, additional director of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rangpur region, said reasonable prices should be ensured to encourage farmers to cultivate paddy for the country's food security.

This year boro was cultivated on 4.92 lakh hectares of land in five northern districts to produce about 20 lakh tonnes of rice, DAE sources said.

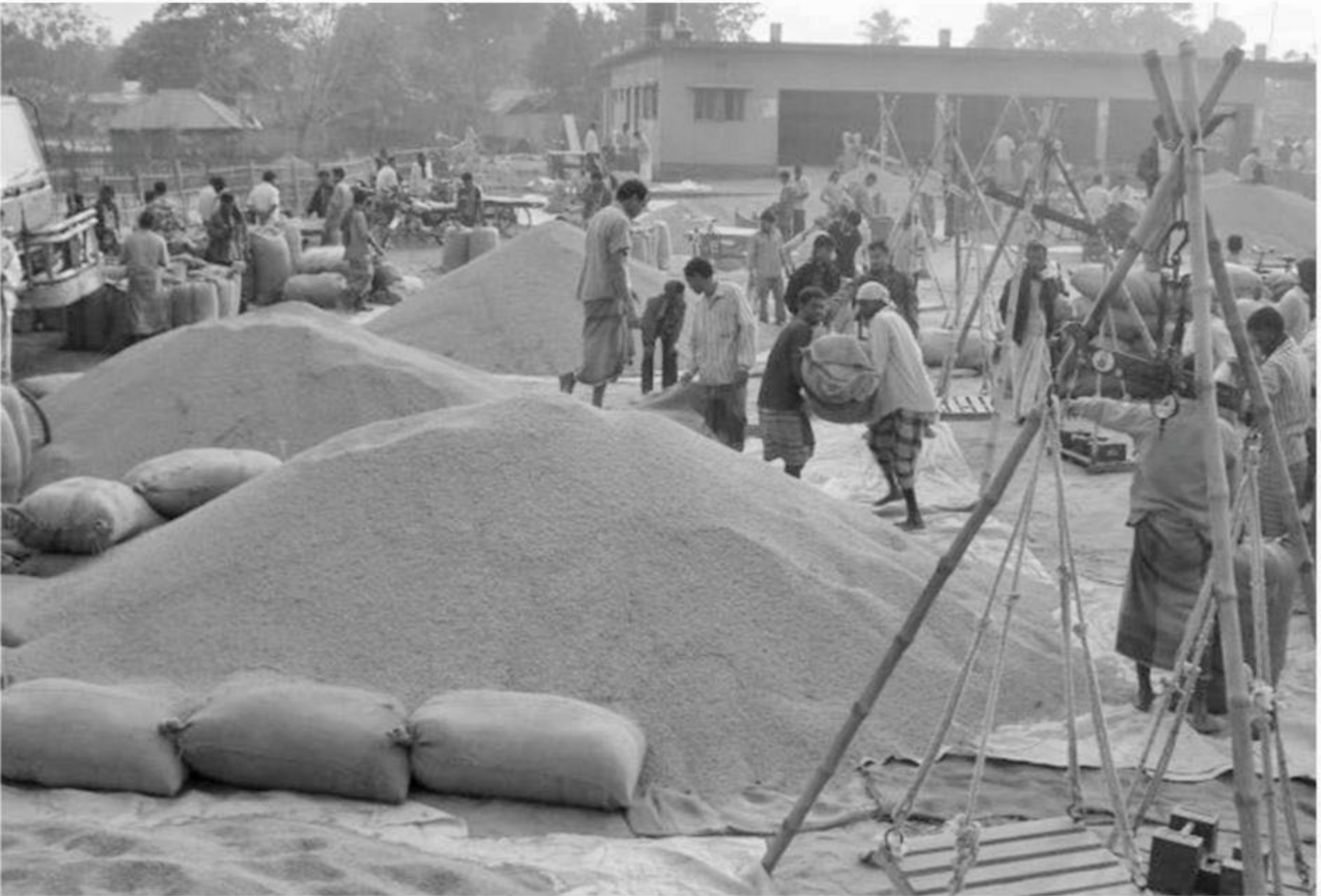


PHOTO: STAR

Local farmers bring huge quantity of boro paddy to Mirganj Haat in Nilphamari district as the prices see rise due to imposition of tax on rice import from India.

## 2 teenagers drown in Padma

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Two teenage boys drowned while they were taking a bath in the Padma river near Baramokam Bazar under Louhajang upazila of the district yesterday afternoon.

A group of devotees from Armanitola in Dhaka went to visit the Amjad Shah Darber Sharif at Haridia village in the upazila on Wednesday.

The two boys, who were with the devotees, went to take a bath in the river and went missing.

The victims were identified as Dipu, 14, a student of Class VIII in Karatitola High School and Sumon, 17, a clerk at Dhaka Judge's Court.

Receiving information, local fishermen and Fire Service personnel started searching for them, but strong current hampered their operation.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Louhajang Police Station, Mafizur Rahman, said police are also trying to locate the two boys.

Meanwhile, a mother jumped with her child into the river from Meghna Bridge at Jamaldi area in Gazaria upazila of the district yesterday afternoon.

The three-year-old boy was rescued alive while the mother remained missing till filing of this report in the evening.

## At 100, Moglu still waits for elderly allowance

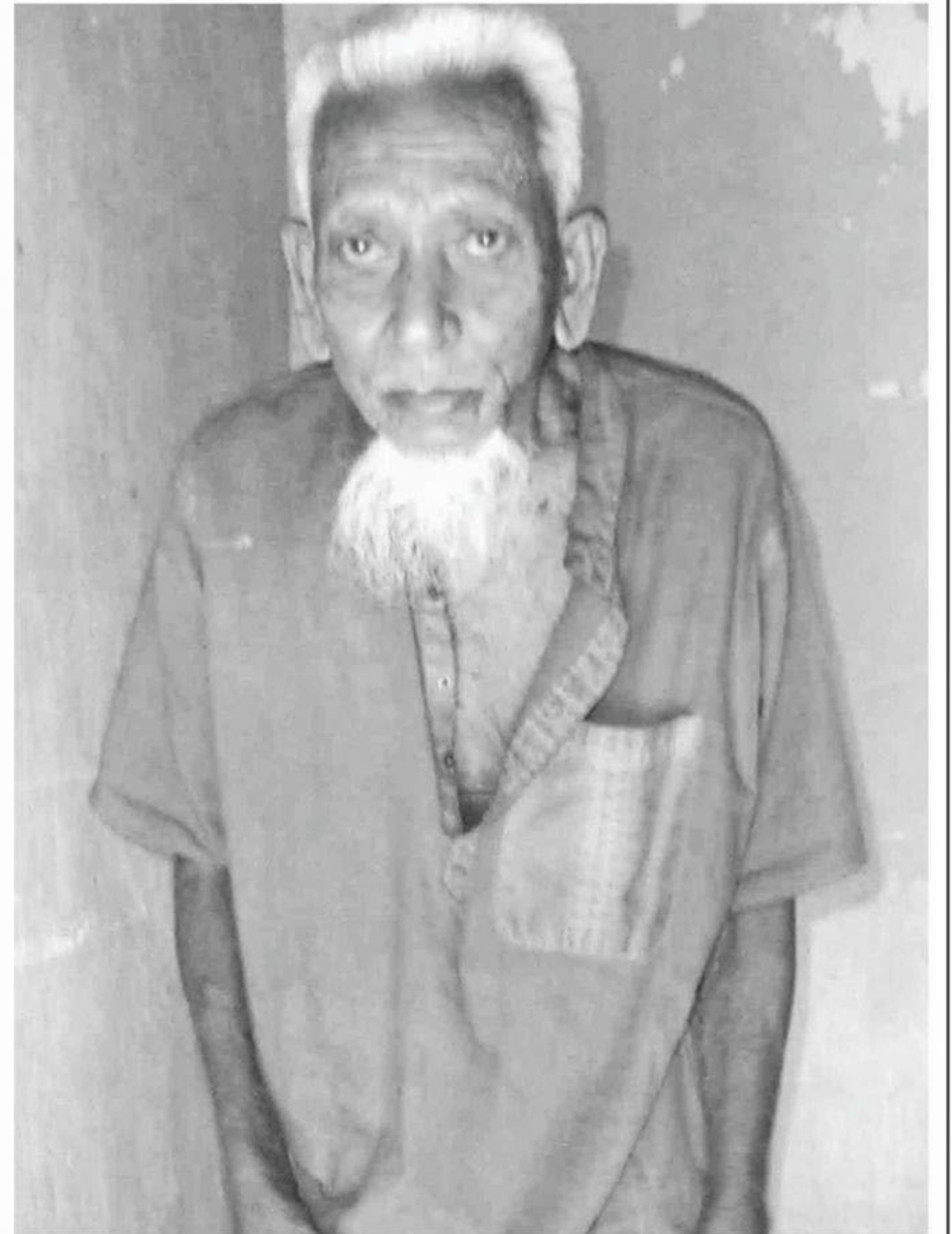


PHOTO: STAR

### Centenarian Moglu Pramanik

MAMUN-UR-RASHID, Bogra

Hundred-year-old Moglu Pramanik of Shhipur village in Dikdair union of Sonatola upazila under the district is yet to get the allowance meant for the elderly people.

"I am still waiting to get elderly allowance as local public representatives did not keep their promise given during the vote time," said Moglu who served for decades as a gariyal, owner and driver of traditional bullock cart.

The noted rural song "Oki gariyal bhai, hakao gari tui chilmarir

bondore..." would often come out melodiously from his lips as he did the job, especially during his youthful days.

Now he has to depend on the mercy of others for survival.

"Many people waited beside the road to hear the charming song from him. Now it is painful to see his condition," said his neighbour Omar Ali, 91.

Moglu Pramanik, who has three sons and a daughter, said, "After the death of my first wife, I married another woman. Now I am staying with my second son Nabab Ali amid hardship."

Alek Uddin, chairman (acting) of Dikdair union parishad, said the members of the respective wards under the union are asked to give list of deserving people for the elderly allowance.

"We have to see how the name of Moglu Pramanik was left out," he said.

Samiul Islam, social welfare officer of Sonatola upazila, said, "I am not aware about the case of Moglu Pramanik. The list of the elderly allowance holders was made according to the proposal of the local representatives. I will see the matter."

## Five die of diarrhoea in Rangamati

UNB, Rangamati

Five people, including a woman, died of diarrhoea at Sajek in Baghaichhari upazila in the last two days.

The deceased are Baturam Tripura, Bhadrapati Tripura, Kuhlya Tripura, Bidya Mohan Tripura and Laxmi Rani Tripura.

Acting Civil Surgeon Sushovon Dewan said two medical teams of the upazila health department went to the area and started treating the affected people.

# Once was a bird hunter

BY ANDREW EAGLE

Nowadays, 33-year-old Muslim Miah of Cox's Bazar's Moheshkhali earns his living as proprietor of a tailor shop in Ghotibanga Bazar of Kutubjom Union. When business is good the retired fisherman's son earns 5,000z - 10,000 taka per month from this shop - a modest income but enough to keep the bachelor on his feet financially.

For Miah it's a career change. He used to be a bird hunter.

The shoals of southern Moheshkhali and Sonadia are rich habitat for shorebirds. The area attracts numerous species including the nordmann's greenshank and spoonbill sandpiper, endangered migrant species from the Siberian Arctic that arrive each winter after a long journey south. Worldwide there remain as few as 1,000 mature individuals of the former species and 200 of the latter.

Prior to October 2011, Miah, together with more

than 20 other hunters, would head for the shoals at low tide and set up expansive nets along the shoreline. The only other income generating activity they had was collecting wood from the forest.

"It was dirty, difficult work," says Miah, who had the opportunity to study to Class V.

The hunters would wait for shorebirds to entangle themselves as they landed, knowing the wild flapping of any caught bird would attract yet more.

Eurasian curlew, black-tailed godwit, common kingfisher, Indian pond heron and black-headed ibis: these species were common fare at Ghotibanga dining tables. "Shorebirds were a usual food item in the market," says school teacher Morshedul Hoque, "We never thought about it."

The northern shoveller, a common duck species, was particularly sought after for being tasty.

As a bird hunter Miah's income was significantly

higher than today. A single Eurasian curlew, locally known as 'totlarku' and considered to be "better than chicken" would fetch 150 taka in the market. By selling 7 - 10 birds per day Miah could make up to 1500 taka.

But in 2011 the Bangladesh Spoonbill Sandpiper Conservation Project (BSCP) which was founded two years earlier with the goal of protecting the local habitat for spoonbill sandpipers, signed conservation agreements with 25 identified active hunters including Miah.

Resources were provided for alternative livelihoods, with Miah receiving 12,000 taka to buy a sewing machine and cloth stock. Through loans he was able to reach the 70,000 taka needed to establish his shop.

"Some of the hunters are now fishermen," he says. Yet others took to watermelon cultivation, livestock rearing or grocery stores.

As important as providing alternate livelihoods,

was to change the mentality of both hunters and the local community towards eating wild birds. This was attempted through ongoing awareness raising activities including lectures, film screenings, photographic displays, folk songs and staged drama events.

According to conservationist Mohammed Foysal, 29, of South Keraniganj, involved with the BSCP project since 2010, villagers were presented with two main conservation arguments. "One is the scientific argument," he says, "about the value of healthy ecosystems while the other is philosophical, that all creatures have a right to exist."

He believes the latter approach proved the more persuasive, as it was explained that if they continued to hunt there would come a day when there simply weren't any spoonbill sandpipers left in the world.

To date, awareness-raising efforts have met with some success. Miah is apologetic for his past profession. "We did it out of need," he says.

Ironically, Miah believes he has never seen a spoonbill sandpiper, the signature species of local conservation efforts, since hunters focused on the more lucrative larger species and paid little attention to a by-catch bird barely 16 centimetres in length.

The tailoring business has not proved easy for Miah. In a small market like Ghotibanga, cloth is often acquired after an order is placed and this year with the dual challenges of political shutdown and a low fish catch, which means for many customers a shortage of taka to spend on clothes, business has been particularly tough. Weeks have passed without Miah receiving a single order.

Nonetheless he attends his shop daily and believes in the future of his newfound, more eco-friendly profession. "Business will be good when the fish bite," he says.



PHOTO: STAR

Once a bird hunter, Muslim Miah left the callous act in 2011 and started working as a tailor for earning. The photo was taken at his tailoring shop at Ghotibanga Bazar in Moheshkhali under Cox's Bazar district a few days ago.



PHOTO: STAR

Second Mohananda Bridge at Saheber Ghat in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila awaits inauguration by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Saturday. The 546.60-metre-long bridge will ease communication of around five lakh people of seven unions mostly comprising char areas.

## Couple held with Yaba

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a drug peddler and his wife with 4,065 Yaba tablets from Baro Mirzapur village under Mithapukur upazila of the district on Tuesday night.

The arrestees are Kamal Hossain, 45, and his wife Ratika Chowdhury, 30, of Purbapara area in Khulna city.

Acting on a tip off, a team of Rab-13 Rangpur camp raided the house of Khalek Mahmud Sujon, 32, of Baro Mirzapur village and arrested Kamal and Ratika with 4,065 Yaba tablets from there.

## Woman takes own life after killing daughter

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A woman committed suicide after poisoning her six-year-old daughter to death over a family feud in Dinajpur town yesterday, police said.

They are Kohinoor Begum, 34, and her daughter Tisha 6, wife and daughter of Harun Ur Rashid of Paschim Baluadanga under Dinajpur Municipality. He is a BGB Jawan posted in Thakurgaon, said the family members.

After a quarrel with her mother-in-law Refnu Begum, Kohinoor went to her room with her youngest daughter Tisha. She locked the door from inside after her eldest daughter Rifa went out of the house for tuition.

When Rifa returned home, she found the door locked and started shouting for help. Neighbours rushed in, broke open the door and found Kohinoor and Tisha lying on the floor. They rushed the two to Dinajpur

Medical College Hospital where the duty doctors declared them dead.

Police said Kohinoor poisoned Tisha and then committed suicide the same way. Tisha was a nursery student of Central Kindergarten in Dinajpur town.

The bodies were sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

ATM Khalequzzaman, OC of Dinajpur, said a general diary has been filed in this connection.