

PHOTO: STAR

Kalaiya Bazar in Baufal upazila under Patuakhali district sees arrival of huge quantities of recently harvested aman paddy but unusually low market prices frustrate the growers.

# Low aman price frustrates Patuakhali farmers

Paddy selling for Tk 450 to 520 per maund against production cost of Tk 700

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Good yield of aman paddy fails to bring smile to the farmers in the district as the present market prices are too low to recover even their production cost.

"I came to Patuakhali Pura Bazar to sell four maunds of aman paddy but got very frustrated to see it selling for Tk 450 to 520 per maund," said Abdul Mannan, 50, a marginal farmer of Jaiakathi village under Sadar upazila.

"The production cost per maund had crossed Tk 700 as the price of fertiliser, rent

of power tiller, and labour cost are very high. I had to borrow some money for cultivation of the main crop. How will I repay the loan?" he said.

Md Jakir Hossain of Lohalia village under the same upazila said he cultivated aman on four acres of land this season and was happy to get 30 maunds of yield per acre on an average but now he is facing loss due to price fall.

"I had borrowed money from my relatives for the cultivation and planned to repay it after selling the produce. I had to use insecti-

cide to control pest as 'leaf folding' disease found in aman paddy land this year at a large scale and the cost increased," he said.

The government should take steps to ensure fair prices of paddy to save the farmers, he added.

During a visit to Badura Bazar in Galachipa upazila, this correspondent saw tepushail variety of aman paddy selling for Tk 450 to 500 per maund, kazolshail for Tk 460 to 510, and rajashail for Tk 400 to 500.

"Wholesale buyers from northern districts includ-

ing Natore and Dinajpur usually come to this area every year to buy aman paddy for good prices but this season they have not come. It is the main reason for low price of aman," said Masudur Rahman, a wholesale buyer of Baufal upazila's Kalaiya Bazar, the largest paddy market in the district.

Around 4.50 lakh tonnes of aman paddy was produced from 2 lakh 269 hectares of land in Patuakhali district this season, said sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension.

## BNP candidate elected Singair mayor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

BNP nominated candidate advocate Khorshed Alam Bhuyan Joy was yesterday elected mayor of Singair municipality bagging 6,876 votes.

AL rebel candidate Mir Mohammad Shahjahan got 4,828 votes while AL nominated candidate Abu Naim Bashargot 3,377 votes.

Six candidates contested for the post of mayor, 31 candidates for the posts of councillor and seven candidates for three reserved women councillor posts.

The election was scheduled to be held on December 30, 2015, but was postponed by the High Court following a writ petition concerning correction of voter list and demarcation of the boundary of the municipality.

Following the death of Md Jamal Uddin, a councillor candidate of ward No 1, the returning officer postponed the election for the councillor post of that ward, said Md Munier Hossain, district election officer and also returning officer.

## Mentally challenged son kills mother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A woman was killed allegedly by her mentally challenged son at Barera village in Sadar upazila of the district on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Parvin Akhter, 50, of the village.

Quoting family members, Md Kamrul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said mentally challenged Anis, 22, locked in an altercation with his mother Parvin over having meal around 4:00pm.

At one stage of altercation, Anis strangled his mother, said the OC.

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

They also arrested Anis from the spot.

The arrestee was produced in a court that sent him to jail yesterday.

A case was filed in this connection.

## Criminals beat up intern

A CORRESPONDENT, Comilla

Masked criminals beat up an intern at Comilla Medical College Hospital early yesterday.

The intern, Sajibul Haque, 31, is undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Abdul Awal Sohel, resident surgeon of the hospital, said six to seven masked men entered the hospital around 12:45am after exploding several crude bombs. They were looking for Based Ahmed, president of the college unit of intern doctors' association.

At one stage, the criminals, all aged between 20 and 25, broke open the door of a room for intern doctors on the fourth floor and dragged out Sajibul. They hit him with sticks and iron rods and left the scene, Sohel added.

Protesting the attack, the doctors of the hospital demanded arrest of the attackers by Saturday. Otherwise, they threatened non-stop work abstention from Sunday.

Earlier on January 1, four interns came under attack by a patient and his relatives at the hospital.

ABM Khurshid Alam, director of the hospital, said yesterday's attack might be a sequel to the January 1 attack.

Following the incident, the hospital authorities wrote to the district police to set up a police outpost in the hospital compound.

## BOGRA'S DHUNAT UPAZILA

# Poverty, child marriage cause school dropouts

MAMUN-UR-RASHID with ANDREW EAGLE

In Bogra's Dhunat upazila, extreme poverty and child marriage are the root causes of students discontinuing their education, according to local school authorities. In the last three years around 2,500 students dropped out from the area's schools.

While 5,578 students of 5,667 Primary School Certificate (PSC) candidates from the upazila passed the examination last year and should have duly become candidates for this year's Junior School Certificate (JSC) which began in November, the number of students actually appearing for the subsequent JSC exam

was only 3,136. Assistant upazila education officer in Dhunat, Zakir Hossain, told The Daily Star that a field survey and talking with guardians, teachers and students revealed extreme poverty and early marriage as the most common reasons students discontinued study.

While most ultra-poor parents are aware of both the importance of education and the ill-effects of early marriage, practical circumstances can appear an unbeatable influence on the decision not to continue their child's education, explains Hossain.

Many families simply cannot provide study materials for their children and at

the same time, often rely on their children to either work for the family or seek a basic salary elsewhere.

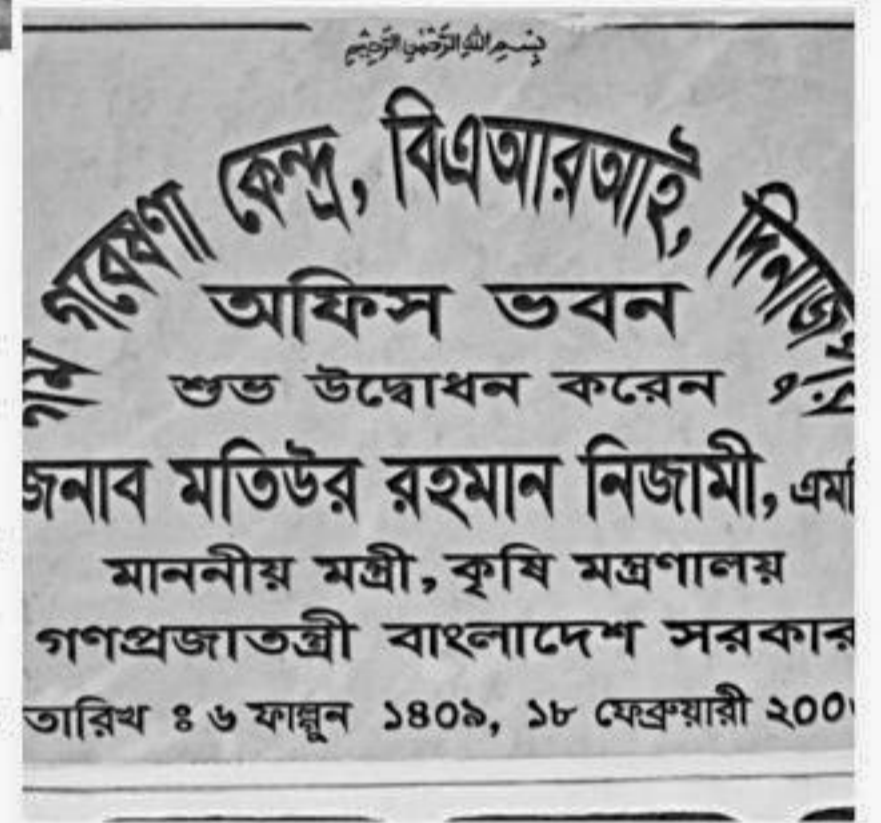
Moreover, Dhunat upazila is among the worst in Bogra to suffer from land erosion caused by the Jamuna River, which, at the least, will exacerbate the tenuousness of a family's income and can indeed cause financial ruin.

Bogra's primary education officer Md. Hossain Ali says a project for flood and erosion victims across the district is underway, with one of its aims to ensure the poverty stricken students of erosion-affected families can continue to study. "Day by day, the situation is improving," he says.



PHOTO: STAR

**REMOVE WAR CRIMINAL'S NAME:** The building of Wheat Research Centre at Nashipur village in Dinajpur Sadar upazila bears the name (inset) of Jamaat-e-Islami chief Motiur Rahman Nizami, whose death penalty for crimes against humanity during the 1971 Liberation War remained upheld in the latest verdict by the Supreme Court on Wednesday. Locals have demanded removal of the infamous war criminal's name from the plaque of the important set-up.



## LALMONIRHAT-BURIMARI HIGHWAY

# Weighbridge goes inoperative 2 weeks after installation

Overloaded trucks ply the important road, affecting longevity

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The weighbridge under the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) for controlling load in Mirzar Court area of Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway in Patgram upazila under the district went inoperative two weeks after its installation

in November 2014, leaving the road vulnerable to damage under the pressure of overloaded vehicles.

The apparatus, set up for checking load of vehicles on the highway, was removed from the spot in early January last year but no initiative was taken to repair it or install a new one.

As per declaration, a two-axle truck weighing 15

tonnes with goods and a four-axle truck weighing 30 tonnes with goods can move on the highway.

But in absence of monitoring, trucks carrying goods with double or more than the stipulated weight regularly move there.

Locals alleged that a section of RHD officials deliberately made the weigh bridge inoperative to give undue facility of running overloaded trucks on the highway in exchange of 'illegal benefits' from a syndicate of traders and truck owners at Burimari land port in Patgram upazila.

"It is necessity to keep the RHD weighbridge operative to check overload for lon-

gevity of the important highway," said Manjural Islam, 50, a resident of Mirzar Court village in Patgram upazila.

Mobarak Ali, a truck driver at Burimari land port, said they had to face 'trouble' for transporting overloaded goods when the RHD weigh bridge was operative for two weeks in November 2014.

Now 400 to 450 trucks loaded with import and export goods daily move on the road, and most of the vehicles are overloaded, he said.

Over a year ago, the RHD took a central programme for installing weighbridges on different highways of the country, official sources said.

Denying the allegation of RHD officials' involvement in making the weighbridge inoperative, RHD Section Officer in Lalmonirhat Rasheduzzaman said, "The weighbridge went inoperative due to mechanical fault. Other machines installed for weighbridge operation on different highways also went inoperative as the contractor concerned delivered faulty machines."

RHD Executive Engineer in Lalmonirhat Abdul Halim admitted that running of overloaded vehicles affects the important road.

"I sent a letter to the higher authorities concerned regarding the matter a month ago. But we are still waiting for their response," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

The weight control station at Mirzar Court in Patgram upazila under Lalmonirhat district remains virtually useless as the weighbridge installed beside it to check movement of overloaded vehicles on Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway was removed early January last year, after the apparatus went inoperative hardly two weeks after installation.

# 10 hurt as rival Jubo League men clash in Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

At least 10 people were injured, two of them by bullets, as rival Jubo League men clashed over establishing supremacy in Mondal Para at the district headquarters on Wednesday evening.

Witnesses said there has been a longstanding dispute between local Jubo League men Habban, alias Habu, and Moazzem Hossain of the area over controlling the area.

Jubo League activist Bidyut

Hossain of Moazzem group received bullet injury when rivals attacked him two days ago. In retaliation, Moazzem's group attacked Habbann's group on Wednesday evening, triggering the clash.

At least 10 people from both sides were injured during the half-hour long gunfight between the two rival factions.

Of them, Ujjal, 44, Mahbub, 30, Hamidul, 28, Monowara Khatun, 36, Nasim, 25, Kanchan, 31, Hanif, 32 and Parvin Akhter,

40, were critically injured. They were admitted to Pabna Medical College Hospital.

On information, law enforcers rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, said Abdullah Al Hasan, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station.

Both groups filed cases against each other in this connection, the OC added.

Additional police have been deployed in the area to prevent any further untoward incident.

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