

LALMONIRHAT

Good yield, fair prices bring cheer to potato growers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Potato growers in the district are happy to get good yield and fair prices of the item this season.

Now a kg of potato is selling at Tk 9-10 in the field while the production cost was Tk 6-7, farmers said, adding that they got expected yield this year due to favourable weather and good seeds.

"I got 830 maunds (a maund=40 kg) of potato after cultivating it on eight bighas of land spending Tk 1 lakh 50 thousand this season. I have already earned Tk 2 lakh from selling 500 maunds of potato last week," said Jamal Uddin, 50, a farmer of Ambari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar.

But in last year, he lost Tk one lakh from potato farming as he had to sell it for as low as Tk 5-6.

"Unlike last year, our potato plants didn't face late blight disease as there was not any persistent fog and cold this season. And so, we didn't have to spend huge amount of money for buying pesticides," said Nazrul Islam, 48, at Mahendranagar village in Lalmonirhat Sadar.

Sirazul Islam, a potato



PHOTO: STAR

Workers harvest potato at a field of Ambari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. The area sees good yield of the popular vegetable this season.

trader in Lalmonirhat town, said he buys potato from the growers in the fields and sends it to different areas of the country after processing.

"Potato growers are happy to get fair prices. We are also earning good profit from selling it across the country," he said.

Bakul Maih, 40, a potato

retailer at Goshala Bazar vegetable market in the town, said they purchase potatoes at Tk 11-12 per kg from the wholesaler and sell it between Tk 13-15 to the customer.

A total of 5,250 hectares of land were used for potato farming against the target of 4,950 hectares this year while the last year's cultiva-

tion area was 4,940 hectares of land, said sources at the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat.

Farmers will be encouraged to grow potato on more areas of land if fair prices can be ensured, said Safayet Hossain, deputy director of Lalmonirhat DAE.

Deer skins seized, two arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized deer skins from Taltala bus stand area in Pathorghata upazila of Barguna district on Saturday evening.

They arrested two people in this connection while another fled the scene. Rab did not disclose their identities.

"We will disclose everything in a press conference at Patuakhali Rab camp later," said a message over cellphone from Rab camp.

Md Faruque, company commander of Rab-8 of Patuakhali camp, said, members of the elite force, acting on a tip-off, raided a house owned by Md Siddiqur Rahman, former member of Charduan Union Parishad, and seized 10 deer skins from there.

Missing youth's body found in septic tank

UNB, Bagerhat

Police recovered the body of a young man from a septic tank of a school building at Chowddoghor village in Morelganj upazila on Saturday night.

Officer-in-Charge Rashedul Alam of Morelganj Police Station said Mizan Shikder, 32, son of Abdul Malek Sikdar of the village, went missing on Friday afternoon.

Police arrested Ilias Shikdar, 24, younger brother of the deceased, suspecting his link to his brother's disappearance.

During preliminary interrogation, Ilias confessed to killing his elder brother Mizan over a land-related dispute on Friday night and dumped the body in the septic tank of Chowddoghor Government Primary School.

Three of a family killed in Meghna launch collision

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Three members of a family were killed and four others injured in a collision between two launches in the Meghna River under the district early yesterday.

The deceased are Tasnima Begum, 45, her daughter Jannat, 7, and son Hiron, 22. Tasnima and Jannat died on the spot while Hiron died on the way to Dhaka.

They hailed from Bainsamerito village under

Baliatali union of Barguna Sadar upazila and were going to their village home from Dhaka aboard the 'MV Samrat-3'.

The injured were immediately sent to Chandpur launch terminal. Of them, Nasrin, who sustained serious injuries in the accident, was admitted to National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation, Dhaka, Md Jakir Hossain, an employee of 'MV Samrat-3'said,

ing that the remaining three were given first aid at the terminal.

The incident occurred around 1:00am when the Patuakhali-bound launch 'MV Jahid-4' hit Barguna-bound 'MV Samrat-3' in Mirerchar area of the river, Jakir said.

Abul Bashar Majumder, deputy director (river safety) of BIWTA in Barisal, said a committee would be formed soon to probe the incident.

SAUDI ROAD ACCIDENT

Families mourn death of dear ones

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangai

An air of gloom is prevailing at the houses of Nurul Islam, 45, and Abul Hossain, 35, in Kalihati upazila of Tangail.

They are among the five Bangladeshi workers who were killed when a trailer hit a bus on a road in Riyadh of Saudi Arabia on Saturday.

The accident took place around 5:30am (local time) when they were going to work.

Visiting Abul's house at Rampur Mominpur village yesterday morning, this correspondent found his parents wailing over the death of their elder son.

Holding a three-year-old son on the lap, Abul's wife, also a six-month pregnant, burst into tears as she tried to say something about her husband.

"I sent Abul to Saudi Arabia in 2003 after selling a piece of cropland due to poverty. Our poor family was running with the money sent by Abul that he earned through hard labour," said Abul's father

Lal Mahmud.

"Abul got married when he returned home in 2008. Now what will happen to his wife, a minor son and another child who is yet to come to the earth?" said a wailing Mahmud.

At the house of Nurul at Bagda Uttarpara village, his wife Asma Begum was seen lying senseless at the yard while relatives were pouring

water on her head.

Deceased Nurul's son Asadul, 22, reads in Class XI at a local college and daughter Aklima was married to another expatriate in Saudi Arabia a few years ago, family members said.

The Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh will arrange the return of the bodies in a week after completing formalities, sources said.



PHOTO: STAR

Asma Begum wails as her husband Nurul Islam, a Bangladeshi worker in Saudi Arabia, met a tragic death in a road accident while going to his workplace on Saturday. The photo was taken at their house at Bagda Uttarpara village in Kalihati upazila of Tangail district yesterday.

Robbers loot church in Meherpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Robbers looted cash and valuables from a church at Bhoberpara under Mujibnagar upazila of Meherpur district early yesterday.

Police arrested two robbers and picked up two night guards of the church in this connection.

Police and locals said a gang of 7/8 armed robbers, wearing masks, entered the local Catholic Church at about 1:30am and tied up the hands and legs of Mamata Mardy, a sister of the church.

Then they entered the rooms of the father by breaking open the door and looted Tk 1 lakh and other valuables, including five mobile phones.

Informed that a robbery was taking place at the church, a team from Mujibnagar Police Station rushed to the spot and caught two of the robbers when they were fleeing, said Kazi Kamal Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Mujibnagar Police Station.

The arrestees are Bikash Ali and Faruk Hossain.

Police also picked up Barno Mondol and Haru Mondol, night guards of the church.

Contacted, the OC said the two night guards might have been involved in the robbery. Police were trying to arrest the other criminals, he added.

Farmer commits suicide

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A farmer committed suicide at Polsha village in Muktagachha upazila of the district Saturday.

The victim was identified as Ayub Ali, 52. Locals found the body of Ayub, hanging from a jackfruit tree near his house in the morning and informed the police, who went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Ayub might have committed suicide due to a family feud, said Mahubul Haque, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Muktagachha Police Station.

Withdraw cases against Star editor

Demand journalists, HR activists at Lalmonirhat human chain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Journalists and human rights activists formed a human chain in the district town yesterday demanding withdrawal of all the cases filed against the Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam.

Local journalists and district unit of Human Rights Defenders Forum (HRDF) of Ain O Salih Kendra jointly organised the programme at Mission Intersection in Lalmonirhat town.

A total of 79 cases including 17 pleading to bring charges of treason have been filed against Mahfuz Anam in 53 districts between February 9 and 22.

The barrage of cases began days after the Star editor at a talk show on February 3 made an introspective com-

ment about a lapse in his editorial judgement in publishing some reports, based on information given by the Task Force Interrogation Cell during the 2007-08 caretaker government's tenure, without being able to verify those independently.

The filing of cases has drawn condemnation from local and international journalists and journalist unions and human rights bodies.

In the human chain, journalists and human rights activists said some leaders and activists of the ruling party and its front organisations filed these cases to harass the editor, even not knowing the real facts.

They said the government should take necessary steps to withdraw all cases against Mahfuz Anam to establish

true press freedom.

Journalists Gokul Roy (Ekushey TV and Dainik Sangbad), Abdur Rob Suzon (Prothom Alo and ABC Radio), Ahmedur Rahman Mukul (Dipto TV), Abu Hasnath Rana (Daily Independent), Hasan Ul Aziz (RIV), S Dilip Roy (The Daily Star), Touhidul Islam Liton (Boishakhi TV and Jai Jai Din), Moazzem Hossain (Daily Banik Barta and Dhaka Tribune), Mahfuz Sazu (MY TV and Daily Observer), Uttam Roy (Ekattor TV), Khorshed Alam Sagar (Bangla News24), Sultan Ahmed (Daily Ittefaq), Farhad Alam Sumon (Dainik Samakal), Maniruzzaman Manir (Dainik Uttarkon), Rafiqul Haque and Shahed Ahmed of HRDF, among other, jointed the programme.



PHOTO: STAR

Newsmen and human rights activists form a human chain at Mission Intersection in Lalmonirhat town yesterday demanding withdrawal of all the cases recently filed against The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam.

2 labourers die inhaling toxic gas in septic tank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two day labourers died and another fell sick after inhaling toxic gas in a septic tank of a house at Jagati, on the outskirts of Kushtia district town yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Shahinoor Rahman, 27, and Ashik Hossain, 30, of Parkula village in Alamdanga upazila of Chuadanga district.

Labourer Mithu Malitha, 34, who fell sick after inhaling toxic gas, hails from the same village. He was admitted to Kushtia Medical College hospital (KMCH).

Sub-Inspector Shahidul Islam of Kushtia Model Police Station, quoting the house owner Anis Mollah, said Shahinoor, Ashik and Mithu went into the septic tank of the house to clean it at around 12:30pm.

After a few minutes, they started shouting. Hearing the shouts, locals and the house owner informed Kushtia Fire Service Station.

Fire fighters rushed to the spot and rescued unconscious Shahinoor, Ashik and Mithu. They were rushed to KMCH where on duty doctor Asharaful Hasan Anjan declared Shahinoor and Ashik dead.

Mithu is undergoing treatment at the hospital.

Another JMB man confesses to killing Hindu priest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Another member of banned Islamist outfit Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) confessed to his involvement in the killing of the Hindu priest in Debiganj upazila of Panchagarh on February 21, police said.

He was arrested on February 25 along with two others.

The arrestee, Hares Ali, 35, son of Late Mozammel Huque of Kalirdanga Shothapara village of the upazila, gave confessional statement before the Cognisance Court-2 of Panchagarh, Babul Akhter, officer-in-charge of Debiganj

Police Station, said.

Judge of the court and also Senior Judicial Magistrate Marzia Khatun recorded the statement.

After completion of giving statement around 5:30pm, the judge sent Hares to jail.

Till yesterday, police sent five out of the six arrestees to jail. They were on remand for different terms in the priest killing case.

Hares confessed to being a member of JMB. After killing the priest, two other JMB men, Rahul and an unidentified person, who are yet to be arrested, gave arms, machete and explosives to him, police said.

CLASH OVER TEASING GIRL IN SYLHET

Six arrested on charge of killing UP member

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Six people have been arrested on charge of killing a union parishad (UP) member during a clash between two groups of people over teasing a girl in Kanaighat upazila of Sylhet on Friday.

The arrestees are Ahsan, Riaz Uddin, Kutu Miah, Gias Uddin, Kawser Ahmed and Selim Uddin. Police arrested them yesterday and the day before.

The arrestees were later produced in a Sylhet court that sent them to jail.

Dudu Mia, 40, a union parishad member, was killed and at least 24 others were injured as an altercation between two groups of villagers over punishing a man for teasing a girl turned violent in Kanaighat upazila on Friday. Dudu Mia was a member of Lakkhiprasad Union Parishad.

The clash broke out after

a mobile court led by Kanaighat Upazila Nirbahi Officer Tarek Mohammad Zakaria sentenced one Sabab Uddin to three months in prison for teasing a local schoolgirl at Kuar Gori village on Thursday, the OC said.

After Friday's Juma prayers, Rakib Hasan, elder brother of Sabab, met Dudu Mia near the local mosque. They had an altercation when Rakib claimed that his brother was innocent and was punished due to a conspiracy by Dudu Mia, said police, quoting witnesses.

At one stage of the altercation, the supporters of the two swooped on each other with sticks and bamboos, leaving 25 people from both sides injured.

Dudu Mia, who was hit on the head, was rushed to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

SNIPPETS

Father arrested for killing son

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Detectives arrested a man for killing his son in Nandail upazila of the district early yesterday. The arrestee is Rafiqul Islam, 40. Police recovered the body of an unidentified boy from a brick field at Dhangri village on February 29, said Md Ataur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Nandail Police Station. The boy was strangled and there were injury marks on his neck, the OC said. Later, police identified the boy as Md Robin, 10, son of Rafiqul Islam, a rickshaw-puller of Bhati Savar village in the upazila. Robin was a Class IV student of Jhalua Government Primary School, police said. Rafiqul was in an abnormal state since the killing, and had tried to commit suicide several times, police said, quoting locals and the boy's family members. On suspicious, a team of Detective Branch (DB) of police led by sub-inspector Moniruzzaman raided the house of Rafiqul and arrested him. In primary police interrogation, Rafiqul confessed to killing his son over family feud, said Imarat Hossain Gazi, officer-in-charge of DB, Mymensingh. Police produced the arrestee before a Mymensingh court that sent him to jail. A murder case was lodged with Nandail Police Station.

20 houses gutted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

At least 20 houses were gutted in a devastating fire at Nandagaon village in Haripur upazila of Thakurgaon early yesterday. Fire-fighters said the fire originated from one Ariful's house and soon engulfed the adjacent houses. On information, fire-fighters from Pirganj unit rushed to the spot and doused the blaze with the help of locals after two hours of frantic efforts. The victims claimed the fire damaged properties worth Tk 25 lakh.

Schoolgirl found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A schoolgirl was found dead in Akkelpur upazila of Joypurhat on Saturday. The deceased Mithun Akhter, 13, daughter of Rezaul Mondal of Khapura village under Akkelpur upazila, was a Class IX student of Tilakpur Girl High School in the upazila. Family members found her hanging from the ceiling of her room. Azahar Ali Dulu, chairman of Tilakpur Upazila Parishad, confirmed the incident, saying the girl was a meritorious student. Sajjad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Akkelpur Police Station, said the body was sent to Joypurhat Modern Hospital for autopsy.

Two kids drown in pond

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Two cousins drowned in a pond in Rajnagar upazila of the district on Friday. The victims, Suchona Mollick, 10, daughter of Binoy Mollick, and Sotabdi Mollick, 7, daughter of Bipul Mollick of Kornigram village, drowned in a pond near their house. Suchona was a Class IV student and Sotabdi was in Class II. Quoting locals, police said the cousins all on a sudden fell into the pond near their house while playing on its bank, and drowned at around 6:00pm. Ashkir Khan, chairman of Rajnagar upazila, said locals recovered the body from the pond.