

Memo to PM to cancel Rampal Power Plant

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Local leaders and activists of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Port in Phulbari upazila submitted a memorandum (MoU) to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday to press home their four-point demand.

Their demands include cancellation of Rampal Power Plant project, immediate arrest and punishment of those who issued death threat to eminent economist Prof Anu Muhammad, who has been spearheading the campaign, implementation of anti-coalmine agreement and withdrawal of all cases filed against the locals.

Phulbari upazila unit convenor Saiful Islam Jewel submitted the memorandum to Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Ehtesham Reza.

PCP general secretary arrested

A CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Police arrested a central leader of Pahari Chhatra Parishad (PCP), student front of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF), from Panchhari upazila headquarters yesterday.

The arrestee, Bipul Chakma, is general secretary of PCP's central unit.

Police said Bipul is a fugitive accused in at least 17 cases filed with different police stations of the district.

Niran Chakma, a member of UPDF's press section, said law enforcers intercepted a Jeep in front of Panchhari Police Station and arrested Bipul while he was taking his ailing mother to a Chittagong hospital around 9:00am.



A farmer shows aman plants destroyed by pests at his field in Ramchandrapur village of Gobindaganj upazila under Gaibandha district.

Pest attack makes aman plants sterile

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Pest attack badly affects aman plants in some areas of the district, much to the worry of farmers.

The menace has continued spreading as spraying pesticide hardly makes any impact, said farmers.

Despite recurrent floods this season, 1.24 lakh and 105 hectares of land in seven upazilas of Gaibandha district has been brought under transplanted aman cultivation against the target of 84,471 hectares, said sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

But lack of adequate rain is adversely affecting the growth of plants, they said.

Akbar Ali, a farmer of Nalsia village

in Saghata upazila, said he has transplanted aman seedlings on five bighas of land, although he had to procure seedlings from different areas and re-transplant those due to damage by repeated floods.

"But pest has already attacked plants on two bighas of land, turning those reddish. And there is no sign of flowering yet," he added.

"My three bighas of aman field had gone under waist-deep water during the last flood. I made floating seedbed on banana tree raft and after receding of water I again transplanted seedlings on flood ravaged crop field. But now those are being attacked by pest," said Hyder Ali of Bonarapara village in Saghata upazila.

Helaluddin, another farmer of Sreekola village in Palashbari upazila, said aman plants on his one and a half bigha of land have been attacked with pest and spraying pesticide brought no results.

Aman plants are turning reddish and drying before growth of spikes and the disease is spreading in adjoining areas, said Jahidul Islam of Ramchandrapur village in Gobindaganj upazila.

Admitting the pest attack AKM Ruhul Amin, deputy director of Gaibandha DAE, said pest mealybug might be controlled naturally through irrigation and planting trees and bamboo branches in crop fields, so that birds can easily eat up the pest and worms.

SUNAMGANJ BORDERS

Unabated cattle smuggling

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Sunamganj

Cattle smuggling through the borders in the district has continued despite recurring drives by different law enforcement agencies, especially Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

BGB seized 11 cattle worth about Tk 5.5 lakh in Matirabon area last week. They seized one cow on October 14, and five cattle on October 18 in the border areas of the district.

A syndicate of cattle smugglers brings the cattle from neighboring India through different border points in the district and sends them to different parts of the country by various means of transport.

Cattle traders pay Tk 1,000 to Tk 2,000 per cow for bringing the animals from the border, depending on the size.

Smugglers usually prefer the routes in different border areas of the district as there are few rivers there, making the smuggling of cattle easy, locals said.

BGB Commanding Officer (CO) Lt Col Nasir Uddin Ahmed told this correspondent that the law enforcers have zero tolerance towards cattle smuggling as it is the main reason for border killings. Some people take up this profession because they can make a lot of money, he added.

If cattle smuggling can be stopped, border killings will also decrease, Col Nasir said, adding that they try to raise awareness of the people about the matter and encourage rearing of cattle that will reduce the demand for smuggled cattle.

He said communication is the main problem in patrolling the border areas in the district.

Sand on arable land worries farmers

Floodwater remains stagnant for long at Teesta river basin village

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

About 150 bighas of arable land at Teesta river basin Barabari village in Patgram upazila of the district have become sandy due to floodwater remaining clogged for long, much to the worry about livelihoods of at least 50 farmer families.

Farmer Sohrab Ali, 55, of the village in Dahagram union, said he is very worried about livelihood of his five-member family as his two bighas of arable land, which went under recent floodwater, have become sandy.

Due to the situation, many are finding alternative sources of income to maintain family burden, he said.

Dahagram is a remote area where agriculture is the lone source of earning, Sohrab said, adding that huge sand deposited by this year's floodwater made over 150 bighas of arable land in the village unfit for cultivation.

Bidubhusan Roy, deputy director of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Lalmonirhat, said a vast tract of arable land in different areas of Teesta and Dharla rivers basin have become sandy as recent floodwater brought huge sands there.

The farmers cannot cultivate any crops until the sand is removed from the lands, he said.

Abducted girl still traceless

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police are yet to rescue a college girl three months into her abduction and arrest the culprits as well.

Rather there is allegation that the relatives of the abductors repeatedly gave death threat to the family members of the victim to withdraw the case.

On July 23, the 16-year-old Hindu girl was abducted allegedly by her stalker Rakib, son of Rafiqul Islam of Amirbari Namapara area in Trishal upazila, and his accomplices, said the victim's family members.

Girl's brother said "Abdul Motlab and Abdul Awal, uncles of prime accused Rakib, continued threatening me and my father with life to withdraw the case."

Saidpur people suffer as new bridge construction delayed

TEAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Thousands of people in Saidpur municipality under the district are facing immense suffering for want of a concrete bridge over Pocha Nala canal across an important road near Saidpur Cantonment as the age-old bridge collapsed under the pressure of a sand laden truck on July 1.

For want of a permanent bridge, a large number of people including students of Cantonment Public School and College are using a weak bamboo bridge to go to destinations on foot, as movement of all kinds of vehicles are stopped.

The road serves as a convenient route for people of Badarganj and Taraganj upazilas of Rangpur and Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur to go to Saidpur, a big business centre, said Al Mamun Sarkar, municipality councillor of the area.

Besides, Saidpur upazila parishad complex, Saidpur Cantonment Public School and College, residents of high officials of Saidpur Railway Workshop are situated beside the road which leads to renowned

Saidpur Railway Market, the councillor added.

"As the bridge is damaged, I have to carry the goods from Saidpur market to my village on mini trucks using a longer alternate way via Saidpur bus terminal, and it costs me additional time and money," Tarikul Islam, a businessman of Badarganj upazila, said during this correspondent's visit to the site on Saturday.

Farhad Reza, a student of Cantonment Public School and College, said, "We have to cross the bamboo bridge at least twice a day to go to the institution. We feel scared as it trembles when we walk on it."

Saidpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abu Saleh Md Musa Jongi said the latest district co-ordination committee meeting decided that WDB will build the bridge and the latter was directed to start the work early.

Executive Engineer of WDB in Saidpur Abdus Shahid said, "We have sent a project proposal to the higher authorities concerned and it has got approval. We will start work as soon as we get the budget."



Workers prepare land for potato farming in Bangibechaghat area under Dinajpur Sadar upazila and inset, potato seeds on sale at Railbazarhat in the town. The photos were taken on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR



EARLY POTATO FARMING

Growers eye good profit

Seeds price drops this season in four districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Farmers of four northern districts have started early potato cultivation this year for getting good profit from this robi crop due to high demand at the onset of winter, farmers said.

"We earned good profit in the last season cultivating early potatoes," said Julfikar Ali, a farmer of Jamalganj village in Akkelpur upazila of Joypurhat.

Officials of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rangpur, Dinajpur, Joypurhat and Naogaon said farmers of these districts usually start early potato cultivation at the end of September and continue till October. They can harvest the crop from mid-November.

Last year, early potato was cultivated on 36,000 acres of land in the four districts.

During a visit to different areas in Dinajpur and Rangpur district, this correspondent saw farmers passing

busy time planting potato seeds or preparing their land for planting the early varieties of potatoes.

"I sold early potatoes at Tk 1,600 per maund last year, and I am expecting the same price this year," said Abu Kalam of Taraganj upazila in Rangpur. This year, he cultivated potatoes on two acres, he added.

Farmers prefer to plant arstisca, ganola and romana varieties as they have good yield. If the weather remains favourable, production will be good, they said.

"Price of potato seeds remained low from end of September through October. But it will go up when potato planting starts in full swing in early December," said Toffazzal Hossain, a potato seed trader at Railbazarhat in Dinajpur town.

The seeds cost between Tk 1,500 and Tk 1,700 per maund, depending on quality, he added.

Many farmers who wanted to

cultivate early varieties of potatoes bought seeds from Railbazarhat. "Seed price is reasonable," said Saiful Islam, a farmer of Bangibechaghat area in Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

DAE officials in Dinajpur, Rangpur, Joypurhat and Naogaon said potato was cultivated on 2.9 hectares of land last year. Their offices are yet to fix this year's target.

Farmers got 22.7 tonnes of potato per hectare last year.

The potatoes which were produced last season are now being sold in local markets at between Tk 20 and Tk 25, said AK Azad, a customer from Dinajpur town.

"We suffered heavy losses in the last two seasons due to political unrest, but we expect good price of our produce this season," said Azizur Rahman of Chehelgazi village under Dinajpur Sadar upazila.

Madrasa girl sues youth for uploading obscene video

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A youth has been sued on charge of videoing and uploading obscene video clips of a teenage madrasa girl in Mollahat upazila of the district.

Officer-in-Charge Khairul Anam of Mollahat Police Station said the 16-year-old girl filed a case against Sabuj Sardar, son of Jarin Sardar of Kulia village in the upazila, in this regard on Thursday night.

Sabuj had gone into hiding soon after filing of the case, Anam said.

According to the prosecution, Sabuj developed an affair with the girl couple of months ago and raped her twice promising to marry her and videoed the incident on September 17 and 25.

As the victim was putting pressure on Sabuj to marry her, recently Sabuj circulated the obscene video clips on the internet, the CO added.



A bulldozer breaks the structure of MAF Brick Field-2 in Mojumdar Bazar area of Krishna Nagar union under Sadarpur upazila in Faridpur on Sunday as a mobile court of the district administration accompanied by the Directorate of Environment (DoE) officials conducted the operation. Earlier on October 19, The Daily Star ran a report on the harmful effect of the brick kiln set up on a farmland, without the permission of the DoE.

PHOTO: STAR