

# Potato price shoots up further in Dinajpur

*Soaring price of potato worries consumers*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Price of potato, one of the common and essential item of our daily dishes, has shot up at a rapid speed in retail and wholesale kitchen markets of Dinajpur in last one week.

Early variety of potato production in different upazilas of the district faced a huge setback this year due to sudden rain.

Traders of different markets in the district said price of each kilogram of potato has gone up by Tk 6 in last couple of days.

While visiting several wholesale and retail markets in Dinajpur town, this correspondent found potato is now selling at Tk 30 per kilogram in retail markets which was Tk 24 a week ago.

Alamgir Hossain, a wholesaler in Rail Bazar area of the town, said prices of potato will continue soaring in the next few days till the fresh potatoes arrive in the local markets

this season.

'Potato markets are facing a huge crisis of the item as the stocks from the last season are nearly finished but local markets are yet to see arrival of potatoes even in the month of December this season,' Alamgir said.

Usually, newly harvested potatoes start entering the markets in mid November, he added.

According to Dinajpur Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) officials, about 80,000 hectares of lands in the district were brought under potato farming this year.

Farmers in the region cultivated early variety of potato this season in early October, which was totally damaged due to incessant rainfall by the end of the same month.

Due to the rainfall, local potato growers were forced to prepare their lands again in early November, said Azizul Islam of Ghugudanga village in Sadar upazila.

Potatoes are generally harvested after at least 70 days of its plantation time, he said.

'Price of potato that started soaring since August this year has already jumped three times since October this year,' said Rafiqul Islam of Baluadanga village in Sadar municipality.

Rafiqul said high price of potato is affecting the monthly budgets of the low and middle income people as dishes without potatoes are incomplete.

Jiten Roy, a farmer in Biral upazila of the district, said he stored 200 sacks of potatoes at a local cold storage last season.

Although most of the stocks were sold before, large quantities of the remaining stocks were found rotten in recent days, he added.

Jiten said he has no alternatives but to sell the rest of the item at a high price to recover his losses.

## Shat Gambuj Mosque pride for the world

Says US envoy Bernicat

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The historic Shat Gambuj Mosque along with the museum on its compound is a great archaeological asset of Bangladesh, US Ambassador to Dhaka Marcia Stephens Bloom Bernicat said yesterday.

The historic site with instances of rich cultural diversity is also a matter of pride for the world, she said while talking to reporters after visiting the mosque built in 1416 by Khan Jahan Ali, who came from Persia to preach Islam.

"I feel lucky to have got the opportunity to visit the historic place," Bernicat said.

"The renovation for preserving its traditional look has been successful," she added.

Later the US envoy went to Basarpara village and talked to the beneficiary mothers who are receiving facilities under a USAID-funded maternal health project there.



## Horrors of '71 still haunt war heroine Ganobala

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

War heroine Ganobala breaks into tears when she recalls the horrible days of torture on her by the Pakistani soldiers during the War of Liberation.

"The Pakistan military killed my husband in front of me and took me to their camp beside the Teesta Railway Bridge, where I was tortured by them every day," said Ganobala Barmoni, 76, of Teesta Baraitari village in Gokunda union under Sadar upazila. "I could somehow escape from the camp a few days later," she added.

"I was declared satibhrasta (defiled) by my relatives and the villagers as I was captured by the Pakistan army and I was not allowed to live with them in the village," she said, adding that she had to take shelter in a Muslim's house.

Ganobala said she took shelter in a nearby village where she has been working as a housemaid. She, however, said she has regular communication with her children. She has requested the government to recognise her as a freedom fighter.

The war heroine has been earning her livelihood working as a domestic help in different houses in the area as she became homeless after the War of Liberation.

Assistant Commander of District Muktiyoddha Sangsad Command

Mozammel Haque said Ganobala's husband Shashi Mohan Barmon was a village doctor who organised young people in the area to join the War of Liberation. Shashi also sent them to the training camps in India during the freedom struggle, he added.

Mozammel said the Pakistan soldiers killed Shashi and took his wife to their camp.

"We appealed several times to the ministry concerned to recognise Ganobala as a freedom fighter, without any response," he added.

Tofazzal Hossain Tofa, in whose house Ganobala stays, said he gave shelter to her as she was disowned by her relatives. "We never asked her to work in the house but she works on her own as she doesn't want to sit idle," Tofa said, adding that he is proud of war heroine Ganobala.

Hindu leader, also cultural activist at Teesta village Makhon Lal Das, said her relatives and the villagers were wrong to send her away from the village as there is no religious custom to declare a birangana as a satibhrasta. The authorities concerned should take steps to recognise war heroine Ganobala Barmoni as a freedom fighter, he appealed.

Ganobala Barmoni now dreams of being called a freedom fighter, but she does not know if and when her dream will come true!

## IU admission test tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kusthia

The admission test for first year honours courses for academic year 2016-17 for Islamic University (IU) will be held tomorrow.

Around 72,910 admission seekers are vying against 1695 seats in the entry test, said university's public relations office sources.

At least 43 admission seekers will vie for one seat in the test, it said.

Vice Chancellor Rashid Askari urged all to create congenial atmosphere for holding the admission test in peaceful manner.

## Robbery at hijra's house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A daring dacoity took place at the house of a hijra in Chapali village under Kaliganj municipality of the district early yesterday.

The robbers looted 13 tolas of gold ornaments and Tk 4 lakh in cash.

The dacoity happened at Asmani Khatun's house in the municipality. Another hijra Khairunessa sustained injuries during the robbery.

Khairunessa said they were asleep on Wednesday night when seven to eight dacoits entered the house and tied them at gun point. When they tried to resist, the robbers beat up them with sticks and looted the ornaments and money.

Earlier, on November, 25 another robbery was committed at one Selim's house in the same village. Selim informed the police but they did not take any step.



Farmers take care of cotton at a field at char Nizam Kha in Teesta basin area under Sundarganj upazila of Gaibandha. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## Cotton farming gets popular in Teesta basin areas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Cotton farming on vast char lands along the Teesta river basin areas in Sundarganj upazila of the district is gaining popularity as the local farmers are showing much interest in cultivating the item.

Encouraged by the higher prices of the item, the farmers of the area cultivated a vast area this season expecting a bumper cotton production.

Moreover, Cotton Development Board is motivating the farmers to use their fallow lands for cotton cultivation.

Cotton Development Board (CDB) officials said over 100 bighas of land in Belka, Tarapur, Haripur,

Kapasias and Chandipur areas have been brought under cotton farming this season.

Of the areas, HSC-4 variety of cotton is cultivated on 40 bighas of land while CB-12 variety on the remaining land.

'I have cultivated cotton for the first time on seven bighas of land this season expecting an extra profit as the production cost of the item is very little,' said Dulu Mandal, a cotton grower of Khorda village.

'If I earn a windfall profit this season I would bring more lands under cotton farming next season,' said Hanif Mia of the same village.

Abdul Aziz Sarkar, an official of Sundarganj Cotton Unit, said high

profit against low production and labour cost is inspiring the local farmers in cotton farming on fallow lands.

Adequate nursing of cotton plants and farmlands will produce better yield, Aziz said.

The high-yielding varieties are expected to offer 12 to 15 maunds per bigha this year, the official added.

Besides, farmers can extract oil from cotton seed which is used as ingredient for soap manufacturing, he said.

Rashedul Islam, upazila agriculture officer in Sundarganj, said if the production is satisfactory this year more areas will be brought under cotton farming next season.

## FAVOURABLE WEATHER IN PIROJPUR

## Good aman yield expected

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Farmers and agriculture officials in the district are expecting good yield of aman paddy amid favourable weather this year.

"At the beginning of the season, some of our paddy saplings got damaged. But we could cultivate the crop on all of our lands as we had prepared seedbeds that was more than the usual demand," said Emdaul Haq, 42, a farmer of Kalikhathi village under Pirojpur Sadar upazila.

Unlike the last couple of years, the paddy plants did not face any pest attack this season and so, the crop grew well, farmers said.

"Aman paddy is growing well on my five bighas of land. We expect a good yield this season if there is no natural calamity before the harvest," said Motiur Rahman, 55, a farmer of Kalakhali village in Pirojpur Sadar.

Harvesting will start within a few weeks, farmers said during this correspondent's visit to several paddy fields.

This year aman paddy has been cultivated on 64,977 hectares of land in the district that was 64,180 hectares last year, according to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

On an average, 1.91 tonnes of rice was produced in one hectare of land last year. This year the DAE has set a target to produce 1.17 lakh and 879 tonnes of rice in the district.

"It rained well when the aman plants flowered and there was no pest attack. Besides, the plants remained free from natural calamities this season. And so, we expect that rice production will cross the target this year," said Md Abul Hossain Talukder, deputy director of Pirojpur DAE.

## 'Withdraw case against bdnews journalists'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Speakers at a human chain demanded withdrawal of a case filed against the editor of bilingual online news portal bdnews24.com and its local correspondent Shakil Ahmed.

Thakurgaon Online Journalist Association organised the programme in the town yesterday.

Local lawmaker Md Dabirul Islam lodged the case with Baliadangi Police Station under section 57 of the ICT Act on November 28.

On November 26, a clash took place between two families of Goaltuli village in Baliadangi over a piece of land.

Following the incident, bdnews24.com ran a report in their online version, said the speakers.

According to the case statement, the news was published with an aim to tarnish image of the lawmaker.

## Unabated illegal power crushing in Natore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Illegal crushing of sugarcane by power crushers in the district is going on unchecked that may hamper sugar production in achieving the target.

Natore Sugar Mills General Manager Shahnur Reza said about 175 power crushers are now in operation in the area to prepare molasses, violating the law.

The authorities of the mill have so far filed 15 cases and sent 64 legal notices to the law breakers. They also seized 85 power crushers with the help of local administration.

Delwar Hossain, a sugarcane grower of Agdigha village in Sadar upazila, said the sugar mill is buying sugarcane from the growers at low price. "We get Tk 3,198 by selling 30 maunds of sugarcane, but if we make molasses we can sell it at Tk 6,000 to Tk 7,000."

"Now the mill authorities are giving the money through mobile banking, and they take Tk 10 per Tk 1,000 when we withdraw the money. Sometimes the money is sent to a wrong number and it becomes very difficult to get it back," Delwar added.

Abul Kashem, another sugarcane grower and also owner of a power crusher, said they are crushing sugarcane because it is more profitable than selling it to the mill. "We get

money immediately, but the sugar mill pays the money 10 to 30 days later," he added.

Sajjad Gazi, a sugarcane grower of the same area, said, "When sugar was Tk 37 per kg, we sold sugarcane at Tk 3,207 per maund, but now we get Tk 3,198 per maund when sugar costs Tk 60 per kg. How can we sell the sugarcane to the mill?"

Younus Ali, a power crusher owner, said it is true that if they make molasses in large quantities the sugar mill will lose production, and then nobody will buy sugarcane. "We use power crusher as the mill is giving low price. If we get minimum Tk 150 per maund we will not crush the sugarcane," he added.

President of North Bengal Sugarcane Growers' Association Ibrahim Khalilullah said if growers make molasses by crushing sugarcane they can cultivate a monsoon crop on the same land. He requested the authorities concerned to grant permission to operate power crushers on temporary basis. He also urged the authorities to start online banking suspending the mobile banking.

Deputy Commissioner of Natore Shahina Khatun said, "We are determined to stop the illegal power crushing of sugarcane," adding that Natore is a major sugarcane producing district in the country and two sugar mills are operating in the district.



A farmer crushes sugarcanes to prepare molasses in Agdigha village of Natore Sadar upazila. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR