

# Maize production setback

*Cobs do not develop grains for 'low quality' seeds in Teesta char*

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Maize farmers at Baishpukur village in Teesta char area of Dimla upazila are bewildered as the crop on around 500 acres of fields has become sterile allegedly due to poor quality of imported seeds.

Visiting the area on Saturday, it was found that green and tall maize plants in vast fields looks healthy but there is no grain on the cobs.

Farmers said those who sowed imported Kaberi-50 variety of Indian seeds are the worst victim of the situation.

Kaberi Seeds Ltd imported and marketed the variety.

"I planted Kaberi-50 variety of maize seeds on my 20 bighas of land and took adequate care and provide timely irrigation. But there is no grain on most of the cobs due to substandard seeds," said Bhutto, 45, a farmer of Baishpukur village.

Another farmer Senor Ali, 50, said he sowed Kaberi-50 variety of maize seeds on nine bighas this season but the crop, like that in other fields in the area, shows sterility.

Marginal farmer Abul Kasem, 50, said, "I cultivated Kaberi-50 variety maize in two bighas of land taking loan from local NGOs and money lenders on high interest with condition to repay all money after harvesting the crop. Now I'm anxious as there is no sign of yield."

"Most farmers in the village cultivated Kaberi-50 variety of seeds as it gave bumper yield last year but the situation is reverse this year," said farmer Lalta Mamud, 60.

Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, GM Idris said he visited the area on Monday and talked to farmers and officials of the seed marketing firm.

"The firm has agreed to give compensation to affected farmers. If they

fail to do so, we'll take stern legal action," he said.

Contacted, Sultan Mahmud Mintu, district manager of Kaberi Seed Limited, claimed that they usually import best quality seeds and farmers in Jaldhaka and Domar upazilas are using it without any complaint.

"The affected area this season is not more than 7 to 8 bighas. It may happen due to lack of micro nutrient in sandy soil and want of irrigation in proper time.

"Our authorities have agreed to pay compensation to only those farmers who can place genuine proof in support of their claim like cash memo against purchasing the seed, issued by prescribed retailer," he said.

However, many farmers said they had purchased the seed from local retailers on credit with condition to repay after harvesting and they did not collect cash memo for the purpose.



A farmer shows sterile cobs of maize plants at his field at Baishpukur village in Dimla upazila of Nilphamari. PHOTO: STAR

## Too tragic

*Two kids die, falling into holes*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two kids met tragic death after falling into separate holes at Chandpur village in Bhaluka upazila under the district on Sunday evening.

One of the holes was dug to deposit poultry waste and another to collect earth for household purposes but no fencing and safety measures were taken to prevent such accidents, said locals.

The victims are six-year-old Asif Hossain, son of tea stall runner Mosharrif Hossain of Chandpur village, and two-year-old Nadira Begum, daughter of Noor Jamal, a driver, hailing from Tangail, police said, adding that Nadira with her parents had come to visit her grandfather's house at the village.

Nadira, the only child of Noor Jamal, went missing Sunday evening. Yusuf Ahmed, a ward member from the village, said referring to family members and local people.

Later, locals found the kid's body in the five-foot-deep hole of a nearby poultry farm owned by Rafiqul Islam, a

relative of Nadira, at the village, he said.

Nadira was rushed to Bhaluka Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared her dead.

In another incident, Asif, a play group student, died as he fell into a big hole recently dug to collect earth for household purposes.

Asif, the only son of Mosharrif, went missing on Sunday afternoon and local people found his body in the hole in the evening, said Yusuf.

"I have asked all the poultry farmers of Chandpur village to fence their farms immediately to avoid such accidents. Through the village policemen, the message has already been sent to over 200 poultry farmers," said the ward member.

The farm owners were also warned of legal action if such incident takes place in future, he added.

Termining the incidents very painful, Md Saiful Islam, chairman of local Dakatia Union Parishad, said the incidents took place due to carelessness of the guardians and the poultry farm owner.

## 2 'abductors' held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested two people in Sadar upazila for allegedly abducting a middle aged man and his teenage son on March 15.

The arrestees are Nazmul Hasan Sumon, 30, of Chilabari village and Rahim Badsha, 28, of Rangachira village in the upazila.

Rab-12 Crime Prevention Company-3 Commander Bina Rani Das said the gang abducted Faruk Hossain, 50, and his son Fatin Hasnat, 17, of Rangpur from Dhaka-Tangail Highway at Gharinda bypass in Tangail Sadar upazila on March 15.

Bina said the criminals demanded Tk 2 lakh from them as ransom for their release. Faruk was freed after paying Tk 40,000 to the abductors through a Bikash number by his relatives, she said. The criminals freed Faruk to collect rest of the amount for freeing his son, but he informed the local Rab office of the matter, Bina said.

Rab members then arrested one Noor Alam, 20, and rescued Faruk's son Fatin from the highway in Ashekpur bypass area in the afternoon the same day while other members of the gang managed to escape, the Rab commander said.

During interrogation, the arrestees admitted that they are involved with the killing of expatriate Shahidullah, she said.

## BORDER-BOND FAIR

# Rendezvous for relatives

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

The occasion of Ganga Puja in the Maldah river was an opportunity for poor people like Minoti Bala Sarkar to make a sentimental visit to India as Ghongagachh border in Kaliganj upazila was kept open for a few hours yesterday for the event.

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF) took tight security measures when the border gate was kept open for five hours from 9:00am.

Both Bangladeshi and Indian people took a dip in the river and met each other to exchange views but they were not allowed to exchange gifts.

Locals said the bordering people's annual reunion on the occasion of Ganga Puja has been continuing at the border since the Liberation War.

The puja has also become a border-bond fair as the BSF temporarily opens the gate for union of relatives, they said.

Minoti Bala Sarkar, 58, wife of Nabin Chandra Sarkar of Chaparhat village was seen waiting on the border in the morning to meet her daughter Niyoti Rani Sarkar, 35, who lives in India.

She broke down in tears on seeing her daughter across the barbed wire fence on the Indian side. They met after three years, so her daughter was also emotional.

Babar Ali, a member of Burirhat BGB camp, said over 3000 Bangladeshis from different villages in Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Kurigram and Gaibandha took part in the border-bond fair.

## To get back ex-wife

*Man kidnaps sister-in-law, forced to return her later*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Police yesterday rescued a seven-year-old girl from Barguna after her former brother-in-law abducted her from Pirojpur's Mathbaria upazila on Friday in a bid to get back his divorced wife.

The victim, Moyna Akhter Ria, daughter of Kamal Gharami of Ghatichora village, is a Class II student at Thanapara Government Primary School.

Sub-Inspector Bikash Chandra Dey of Mathbaria Police Station said Russell Hawlader of Kumirmara village, who divorced Ria's elder sister Keya couple of months ago picked up the girl from in front of her house on Friday afternoon and took her to Naniarchar in Rangamati.

Russell later phoned his in-laws' and put pressure on them to marry off Keya with him once again, otherwise, he threatened they would face dire consequence.

Following a case filed by the victim's mother, Mathbaria police phoned Russell and forced him to return the minor girl, the SI said.

Police rescued Ria after Russell left her at Douatala Bazar in Bamna upazila of Barguna but could not arrest the kidnapper, added the SI.

## Ultimatum to arrest Shakil's killers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Students of different educational institutions yesterday staged a sit-in at Bangabandhu Chattar in the town demanding immediate arrest of the killers of Shakil, an HSC examinee from Gouripur Govt College this year.

They gave a 24-hour ultimatum to the upazila administration in Gouripur to bring the killers to book and demanded their exemplary punishment.

'Sarbadalio Chhatra Sangram Parishad' also brought out a procession at the upazila headquarters, demanding the same.

Student leader Mizanur Rahman said "If the accused are not arrested by tomorrow (Tuesday), we will go for tougher movement."



Amiul, Noor Islam, Muja Ali and Chan Miah of Goalgaon village in Bakshiganj upazila of Jamalpur still bear the signs of injuries they sustained in the mortar attack by the Pakistan occupation army on November 14 in 1971. PHOTO: STAR

# Tale of unsung war heroes

ABM AMINUL ISLAM, Jamalpur

The people of Goalgaon village in Bakshiganj upazila of the district, who were killed or injured in a mortar attack by the Pakistani army on November 14 in 1971, have not been recognised as martyrs or freedom fighters as the local administration is not aware of their contribution to the War of Liberation.

At around 7:00am, a mortar shell exploded in a corner of the village, killing six people and seven to eight cattle, and severely injuring six other people, witnesses said.

The deceased were Muzammel Haque, 50, Burhan Uddin, 35, Class VI student Nazrul Islam, Shahjamal, 8, Kulsum, 9, and her two-year-old brother Javed Ali, said Nuruzzaman, son of Muzammel.

The injured are Noor Islam, 66, Amiul Haque, 62, Muja Ali, 70, Chan Mia, 60, Shamsul Alam and Mohammad Ilias.

Of them, Shamsul died 10 years ago and Ilias in 1982, said Nuruzzaman. Their families are now surviving

amid much hardship. They are not even under the social safety net, let alone getting recognition of their dear ones' martyrdom, family members of the deceased said.

Noor Islam, Amiul Haque, Muja Ali and Chan Mia are still suffering due to their injuries.

"I was an SSC candidate then, but could not study as we were very concerned about becoming victims of the indiscriminate firing by the occupation forces. Besides, we provided help to the freedom fighters," said Noor, who received major injuries in the legs and stomach.

"I could not walk for four years. My 12 bighas of land had to be sold for my treatment," he said, adding that he works as a security guard at a residence in Dhaka for 35 years.

Amiul also became landless after spending a huge amount of money for treatment. He has been maintaining his family by working as a bicycle mechanic, he said.

Injured Muja Ali and Chan Mia, who were farm labourers during the Liberation War, are still in the same

position. They are in vulnerable condition as they cannot work with much energy due to their injuries, they said.

"What we had done during the war was our moral duty to make the land free from the occupation forces. Forty-six years have passed since we got the long cherished independence. But who cares about jobs for people like us?" they questioned.

Administrative officials do not know about the horrifying shell attack at the village, said Zahurul Haque Munshi Bir Pratik, who fought at Kamalpur in Bakshiganj under Sector-11 from October to December 4, when Kamalpur was freed from the occupation forces.

The people, who were killed and injured in the attack, should be recognised formally and given support for their sacrifice and heroic deeds during the War of Liberation, Zahurul added.

Jamalpur Deputy Commissioner Md Shahabuddin Khan said the people who embraced martyrdom and those who are still suffering due to their injuries in the November attack should be recognised, and their families must be given needed support.

# Under-construction road collapses in Lalmonirhat

*Low quality materials allegedly used in repair work*

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

A road being rebuilt under the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Sadar upazila is breaking down in some places, allegedly due to use of low quality materials in the work.

Villagers, commuters, and transport owners and workers have expressed concern about the longevity of the road as it is collapsing even before its inauguration.

Executive Engineer of LGED in Lalmonirhat Al Amin Khan said an eight-metre-wide by 18-metre-long culvert is being built and road protection work carried out on the 5.53 km-long Mahendranagar-Mostafi road. The work, costing Tk 4.35 crores, is being implemented by a local sub-contractor.

The construction work was started on January 19 in 2016 with the target of completion in June 2016, but the

deadline was missed and the second deadline was also missed in December, 2016. The third deadline ends this month (March). Almost all the work of the road and culvert construction has been completed and the road protection work is going on, LGED officials said.

Local Sohrab Hossain, 48, of Mahendranagar village said cracks were found in at least eight places on the under-construction road, which is breaking down at 10 points. "The road has become vulnerable as the contractor used low quality materials for constructing it," he said, adding that locals informed the LGED officials about the matter, but no steps have been taken.

Transport worker Mobarok Hossain, 35, of the bus terminal area, said, "The road is in an awful condition though only light vehicles move on it. Imagine what will happen when

heavy vehicles start moving on it."

Truck owner Shah Alam said Mahendranagar-Mostafi road is the connecting road to the district headquarters, so it is of great importance. "Huge amount of money has been sanctioned for constructing the road, but the work is substandard," he said, adding that the broken down road will have a bad impact on transport service and even the district's economic activities.

Sub-contractor Bablu Mia, who is doing the construction work, refused to talk with journalists in this connection.

Executive Engineer Al Amin Khan said the contractor is responsible in this regard and he will do the work according to schedule. "The contractor assured me that he will repair the vulnerable areas before handing over the road," he said, rejecting the allegation of using low quality materials.



Mahendranagar-Mostafi road, being reconstructed under Local Government Engineering Department, has broken down in Mahendranagar area of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila due to 'low quality' materials used in the repair work. PHOTO: STAR