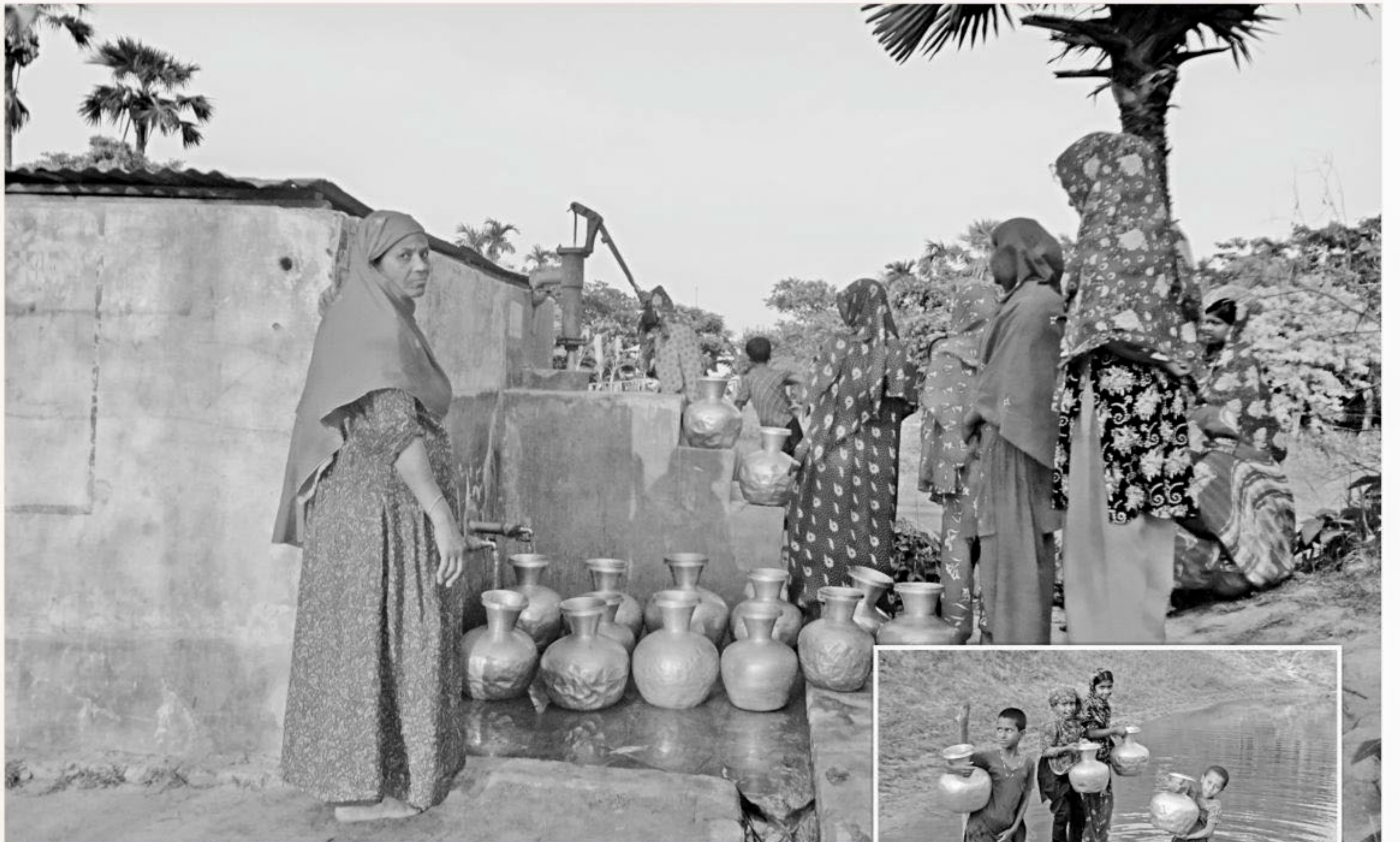


Housewife murdered for dowry

Our Correspondent, Jamalpur
A housewife was killed by her husband and in-laws allegedly for dowry in Sarishabari upazila of the district on Wednesday. The deceased, Rabeya Begum, 20, was wife of Farid Uddin of Mulbari village in the upazila, also mother of a seven-month-old baby boy. Police arrested Farid and his elder sister Moyna Begum from the house suspecting their involvement in the killing, said Officer-in-Charge (OC) Rezaul Islam of Sarishabari Police Station. Deceased's family members said Rabeya's father Moyeen Uddin of Sharsha upazila in Jessore paid Farid Tk 1.5 lakh during their marriage three years ago. Moyeen Uddin said recently Farid was putting pressure on his daughter to bring Tk 50,000 more, which she refused to do.



Villagers are seen standing with pitchers in a queue to collect water from a pond sand filter (PSF) plant at Lathimara village in Barguna. Inset, some girls collect drinking water from a nearby pond in the same village.

PHOTO: STAR

Teacher assaulted for expelling HSC examinee

Manikganj college lecturer admitted to hospital
Our Correspondent, Manikganj
An HSC examinee and his accomplices beat up a college teacher on Wednesday for expelling him from the examination hall at Jhitka Pilot Girls' High School centre in Harirampur upazila. Md Mizanur Rahman, lecturer of botany department of Kowri MA Rouf College, was admitted to Manikganj Sadar Hospital with severe injuries. Police, however, could not arrest the main culprit Atiqul Islam, an examinee from Khawaja Rahmat Ali College, and his accomplices. Al Mamun, a lecturer at Kowri MA Rouf College, said Mizanur expelled Atiqul during the English Second Paper examination on April 8. Atiqul and the others swooped on the teacher when he was returning home on his motorcycle after the end of the examination. Al Mamun said he was with Mizanur during the attack, adding that he was also slightly injured when he tried to save Mizanur. Mizanur lodged a case with Harirampur Police Station, accusing Atiqul and 12 unnamed people, said Md Lutfor Rahman, officer-in-charge of the police station. We are trying to arrest the culprits, the OC said.

Driver found dead

Our Correspondent, Dinajpur
A battery-run easy-bike driver was found dead in Raninagar upazila of the district yesterday morning. The deceased was Motiar Hossain, 40, son of Dulu Sardar of Ataikula village. Police and family sources said Motiar went out of home with his easy-bike on Wednesday and did not return home. Informed by locals, police recovered the body from the area the following day. His bike was missing, Mostafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Raninagar Police Station, said, adding that they are not sure whether it was murder or an unnatural death.

Stone Layer Found under Earth in Pathorghata Thousands suffer without water

Our Correspondent, Patuakhali
Several thousand people are facing acute crisis of drinking water as deep tube-wells cannot be sunk due to stone layer found under the earth in four unions of Barguna's Pathorghata upazila. Over one lakh villagers of Chardoany, Pathorghata Sadar, Kathaltali and Nachnapara unions face the crisis in the dry season from November to May. Ponds or ditches are the main sources of drinking water. There are four ponds at Charlathimara village in Pathorghata union from where over 5,500 people draw water for taking bath and drinking. But all ponds have become dry as the bottoms have been silted. Kohinoor Begum of Nijlathimara village said, "We are facing acute crisis

of drinking water as there is no tube-well here." The situation worsens in the dry season, she said. Zakir Hossain of Ruhita village said, "We have to buy water at Tk 10 per pitcher from a pond in Badurtali village, about one and half miles away." Abdul Aziz of Baroitola area in the town said they have to buy water at Tk 15-20 per pitcher from the upazila parishad's pond. According to the local office of the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) sources, 10 percent people of Pathorghata municipality, Chardoany and Kathaltali unions, 50 percent in Nachnapara and 60 percent in Kalmegha union get safe drinking water. One hundred and ninety seven out of 550 shallow tube-wells in all four

Bricks smaller than standard size!

S Dilip ROY, Lalmonirhat
Smaller bricks are being manufactured in several brick kilns in the district, defying the government manual. The owners are cheating the customers as well as the contractors by supplying bricks that are smaller than standard size, taking the price of standard size bricks, alleged the customers. Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution (BSTI) officials said the standard size of a brick is 10x5x3 inches, but the bricks manufactured in some brick kilns measure 9x4.5x2.8 inches. At least 40 lakh to 75 lakh bricks are manufactured in each brick kiln in six months. One thousand bricks are being sold for around Tk 8,700 in the brick-kilns this year, while it was Tk 7,500 last year. Contractor Kamruzzaman Plabon said their expenditure has increased due to the smaller bricks, adding that they have been facing this problem for the last three years. Mason Kobad Miah said, "The work which could be done with 1,000 bricks three years ago now needs around 1,100. "We cannot estimate

how many bricks will be needed to complete the construction due to their smaller size," he added. Ataur Rahman said, "We are being cheated by the brick kiln owners as we pay for standard size bricks but get smaller ones." Nabiul Islam, a worker in Hatibandha upazila, said they make bricks following the instruction of the brick kiln owner. He, however, refused to reply when asked about the size of the bricks. Brick kiln owner Entazur Rahman Enta said he manufactures the bricks as per the government manual, but some owners may be manufacturing smaller ones. Owner Shahidul Islam of Aditmari upazila echoing the same said brick prices increased this year due to high labour cost. Rangpur BSTI Field Officer Delwar Hossain told this correspondent that brick kiln owners manufacture smaller and sub-standard bricks. He said they have sent letters to all the brick kiln owners, asking them to follow government manual in making standard size bricks, but they continued to defy the instruction. Delwar said the BSTI will conduct drives within a week against the kilns



A section of unscrupulous brick kiln owners in Lalmonirhat are cheating the customers by manufacturing and supplying bricks that are smaller than the standard size, defying the government manual.

PHOTO: STAR

Asbestos Roofs Used in Houses Tea workers at cancer risk

Mintu D Eshwara, Moulvibazar
Asbestos roofs widely used on the houses of the tea garden workers in greater Sylhet region pose high risks of cancer, said health experts and environmentalists. The natural mineral was once lauded for its versatility, but in the mid twentieth century scientists discovered that inhalation of asbestos fibres for long can cause fatal illnesses including lung cancer. About one lakh workers die each year from asbestos-related diseases, the International Labour Organization says. More than 50 countries have banned or restricted the use of asbestos since early 1970s. However, the tea workers in Sylhet region have been using asbestos for long as it was distributed by the tea garden owners. Deaths of quite a few tea garden workers in cancer raised concerns over the use of asbestos recently. "My father died of cancer. We have been living in houses with roofs made of asbestos," said Dilip Pashi, 27, son of Hardew Pashi, a worker of Doloi Tea

Garden in Kamalganj of Moulvibazar. Tea workers Mintu Rikmon, 20, Sajia Rabidas, 48, Boloram Rikiason, 80, Doiram Pashi, 60, and Rekha Kurmi, 45, of the same garden died of cancer in recent times. Each of them lived in houses with asbestos roofing, said Bhailal Ghor, in charge of Doloi Tea Garden Hospital. "Mintu had chest pain and breathing problems before his death at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital. The doctor said Mintu died of cancer," said his father Nikhil Rikmon, 60. In recent years around 10 people died of cancer in Doloi Tea Garden, he said. During a visit to the area, this correspondent saw hundreds of houses with asbestos roofing. Many of the cancer patients in the tea gardens have died but the workers hardly know what is causing the disease, said Shibnarayan Shil, president of Doloi Tea Garden unit of Bangladesh Tea Workers Union. "Asbestos is a fibrous dust that gets released into the air. The people living close to asbestos may suffer from

breathing problems and cough and at one stage, the body cells develop cancer," said Prof Dr Muzammel Haque, head of the Department of Food Engineering and Tea Technology at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology. "We visited many tea gardens in the country for survey and found asbestos roof being used in most of the tea workers' houses," said Philip Gain, executive director of the Society for Environment and Human Development that works for tea garden workers. Harun-ur-Rashid, former director of Project Development Unit of Bangladesh Tea Board, said the government-owned tea gardens already stopped the use of asbestos. However, there are still some houses with asbestos roofing in private tea gardens. Safwan Chowdhury, vice-chairman of Bangladesh Cha Sangsad, an association of the tea garden owners, said, "We stopped distributing asbestos many years ago. The houses with asbestos roof were built long time ago. The remaining asbestos roofs would be removed soon."

One killed over trivial matter

Our Correspondent, Jhenidah
A man yesterday succumbed to injuries sustained in a clash between two families at Shailakupa upazila. The victim was Hafizur Rahman, 40, son of Kayes Mollah of Chandpur village in the upazila. Officer-in-Charge of Shailakupa Police Station Md Tarikul Islam said Rana Hossain and Sajib Hossain of Chandpur were taking bath in a pond and throwing mud at each other. At one stage, they locked in an altercation. Later, the families of the two men clashed and Hafizur sustained injuries. He was taken to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital. As his condition became critical, he was referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died yesterday.

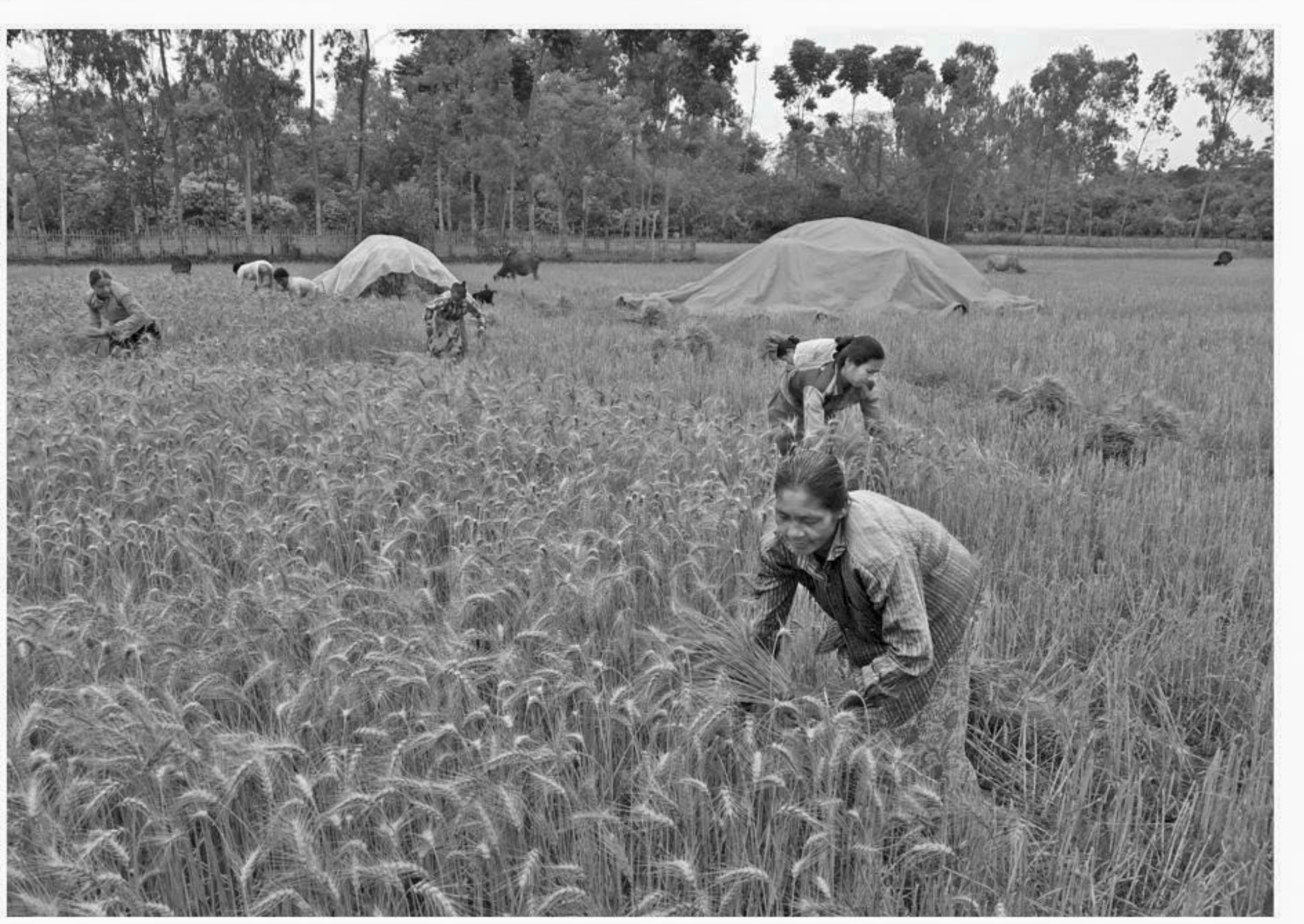


PHOTO: STAR

This recent photo shows farmers at Dakkhin Bathina village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila covering up heaps of harvested wheat on a field to save the crop from untimely rain during the ongoing harvesting season.

Thakurgaon, Panchagarh Rain lowers quality of wheat

Md Quamrul Islam Rubaiyat, Thakurgaon
Frequent rain during the ongoing wheat harvesting season leads to quality fall of the crop, much to the frustration of growers in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts. Due to the situation, farmers are being deprived of fair prices while such produces cannot be preserved as seeds for the next sowing season. During a visit to different villages in the two districts last week, this correspondent saw many farmers covering up heaps of harvested wheat on the field to save it from rain. "Usually the wheat harvesting period does not witness rainfall. But this time we are facing serious trouble due to frequent rain," Amalya Roy, 35, of Akcha village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila said while harvesting wheat with farm labourers at his field. "The untimely rainfall badly affected the matured crop. Some of the grains became blackish and it cannot be preserved as seeds," he said.

Anil Chandra, 45, of Chutbathina village under the same upazila, said he cultivated BARI-26 variety of wheat on 50 decimals of land for seed production and got 20 maunds of yield. "If it did not rain during ripening period I could sell the produce for Tk 800 to Tk 1,000 per maund (40kg) as seeds. But I sold it at Tk 675 in the local market as the quality fell," he said, adding that they fear seed crisis in the next sowing season as most of the farmers of the area will not be able to preserve their rain-affected wheat. Abdus Sattar, owner of Mukta Husking Mill and a wheat trader of Farabari Haat of Thakurgaon Sadar upazila, said a sack containing two maunds of wheat is selling for Tk 1300-1400, which is lower than previous harvesting season, as the crop quality deteriorated and the grains turned whitish due to frequent rain this time. The price could be higher if the government procured wheat during

the harvesting season, he said. During visit to different villages in Panchagarh, this correspondent saw similar pictures. Deputy Director of Thakurgaon Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Maududul Islam said the produces which get rain after ripening cannot be preserved as seeds. Usually 75.46 percent of wheat seeds come from farmers' preservation, 13 percent from BADC, 8.35 percent from DAE's demonstration plots and 3.13 percent from NGOs, he said. This season farmers in Thakurgaon district cultivated wheat on 67,820 hectares of land against the target of 68,247 hectares and the production target is two lakh 11,556 tonnes, DAE officials said. In Panchagarh 26,430 hectares have been brought under wheat cultivation against the target of 25,150 hectares with the production target of 77,965 tonnes, they said.