

2 van pullers found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Two van pullers were found dead in the district yesterday and on Tuesday night.

Van puller Tota Mia, aged about 60, was found dead in a paddy field beside Gopalbari-Chalitabari regional highway of Sadar upazila around 8:30am yesterday.

Tota, son of Ismail Hossain, was resident of Palashbari in the same upazila.

Family members said Tota went out of his house with an auto-van on Tuesday afternoon and did not return home.

Meanwhile, the body of auto-van puller Siddiqur Rahman was recovered from the Dorgarhat area in Kahaloo upazila around 11:00pm on Tuesday night.

Siddiqur, 40, son of late Abul Hossain, was inhabitant of Chokdulahar area in Shajahanpur upazila.

Police said criminals left his body in the area after strangulating him. The body has been sent to SZMCH for autopsy.

4 held with foreign currencies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Officials of Customs intelligence arrested four Bangladeshi nationals with US 21,000 dollars and 8 lakh Indian currencies at Benapole check post yesterday morning.

The arrestees are Kabir Khan, 30, Jamal Hossain, Barkat Hossain, 38, and Ujjal Hossain, 32, of Manikganj district.

Informed that a group of people were carrying huge foreign currencies illegally through Benapole check post, the officials raided the area and arrested the four, said Sadik Hossain, assistant director of Benapole Customs House.



Such joyful pastimes in Cox's Bazar sea beach sometimes lead to tragic deaths as a section of visitors remain oblivious of warnings about risky spots and time.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ALI ZINNAT

SAFETY RULES IGNORED IN COX'S BAZAR BEACH

Drowning a major concern

MOHAMMAD ALI ZINNAT, Cox's Bazar

Drowning of tourists in Cox's Bazar sea beach remains a serious concern as a section of people often violate safety rules and get into the water in risky areas and times.

"Seventy six tourists lost their lives in the beach area while taking bath in the Bay from 2005 to 2016. Besides, around 1200 endangered tourists were rescued alive," said diver Mostafa Kamal, team leader of Yasir Life Guard.

Four people drowned while taking bath in the sea beach area last year.

They include Jamal Hossain, 12, a Class VI student of Baitus Sharaf Jabbaria Academy in the district town, and Mushrat Jahan Asma, 45, a tourist from East Rampura in the capital.

Swimming zones with safe areas for bathing have been marked at Sugandha and Laboni points of the beach, with flags at the north and south points of the zone.

Some 25 trained workers of two organisations -- Yasir Life Guard and Sea Safe Life Guard -- are deployed at the points to ensure safety of people bathing there.

"But defying risk, many tourists go into the sea beyond the safe zone for a bath. There is a ban on bathing in the sea during ebb tide but the tourists seldom follow it," said Imtiaz Ahmed, manager of Sea Safe Life Guard.

"Kolatoli point has become popular with the tourists as there are arrangements for entertainment like water bikes. Many tourists take bath there although the point is very risky due to strong tide and waves. Accidents frequently occur here as no life guard is deployed here.

"It is very risky to go to the sea with tubes during ebb tide. Caught in the strong tides, the swimmers often lose grip on the tubes and face the risk of drowning," he said.

A large number of tourists also go for bathing in the sea at Saibal, Darianagar, Himchhari, Inani and Teknaf Hatchery points of the beach although they frequently face danger at these points.

During a visit to the sea beach from Kolatoli to Diabetic Hospital point it was found that although red flags were hoisted during ebb

tide many tourists ignored the danger signal and hired tubes to go to the sea on those.

Despite widespread awareness campaign, many tourists continue to ignore safety rules, said Hossain Md Raihan Kazemi, senior assistant superintendent of Cox's Bazar Tourist Police.

Naimul Haque Chowdhury Tutul, member of Cox's Bazar Beach Management Committee, said netting the beach area would minimise the incidents of deaths in the sea beach but it cannot be done at this moment due to fund shortage.

Two killed, 28 burnt in rice mill blast

Use of expired boiler alleged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Two people were killed and 28 others got badly burnt as a boiler of Jamuna Automatic Rice Mill at Gopalganj in Dinajpur Sadar upazila burst yesterday.

The killed are mill employees Anjali, 40, and Ranjit Roy, 35, both hailing from Raniganj village under Dinajpur Sadar.

Fifty workers were inside the rice mill when its boiler went off with a huge bang around 11:30am, leaving at least 30 people seriously burnt, said Arif, one of the victims.

Locals rushed in, rescued the victims and sent them to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur where Anjali died.

Ten more serious patients were shifted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital and Ranjit died there.

"Our doctors and staff faced a serious problem in dealing with such badly burnt patients and holidays of doctors, officials and staffs of the hospital have been cancelled to deal with the situation," said Dr Sarwar Jahan, director of the hospital.

Locals alleged that the rice mill boiler was expired and the mill staff on several occasions told the owner to replace it, but to no effect.

This correspondent made failed attempts to reach mill owner Subal Ghosh for his comment.

Dinajpur Superintendent of Police Hamidul Alam said police have started investigating the tragic accident as there are allegations of irregularities against the mill authorities.



A farmer collects onion from his field ravaged by pest attack and nor'wester at Duoshuo village in Baliadangi upazila of Thakurgaon.

PHOTO: QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

Onion harvest faces setback for untimely rain, hailstorm

Thakurgaon, Panchagarh farmers are worried due to pest attack

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Onion seed growers of Thakurgaon and Panchagarh suffered a setback only a few days before harvesting due to pest attack brought on by untimely rainfall and the damage caused by Saturday's hailstorm.

The most affected fields are in Duoshuo, Bara Palashbari and Barabari unions in Baliadangi upazila, and Akcha and Mohammadpur unions in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila.

Haidar Ali, 40, son of Abdus Samad of Duoshuo village, told this correspondent that he cultivated onion for seed production on one acre of land spending Tk 75,000. He expected to harvest the crop in three or four days and get 250 kg. Unfortunately, his field was damaged in the hailstorm.

Mohidul Islam, 32, of Parua village

said he cultivated onion on 33 decimals of land, which was totally damaged in the hailstorm, adding that he spent Tk 30,000 and is facing a total loss.

Besides, onion farmers are uncertain about getting good production due to pest attack caused by untimely rainfall during the last fifteen days.

Agro officials and farmers said sunshine is needed in the last quarter of the cultivation period, but there was untimely rain and damp weather, which caused the pest attack.

Saddam Hossain, 40, of Dinmara village in Atway upazila of Panchagarh told this correspondent that he cultivated onion for seeds on 50 decimals of land spending around Tk 52,000. His total crop died due to sudden pest attack about 18 to 20 days ago.

Deputy Director of the Department

of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Thakurgaon Maududul Islam said onion has been cultivated on 350 hectares of land against the target of 335 hectares in Thakurgaon, while 1,281 hectares of land were cultivated against the target of 1,250 hectares in Panchagarh.

Thakurgaon DAE officials said ten demonstration plots have been prepared for onion seed production in the district.

Onion seed cultivation is gaining ground in the districts, especially in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila and Debiganj upazila of Panchagarh, due to the good return compared to the investment.

DAE officials advised farmers to spray fungicides on the plants that will be ready for harvesting in 10 to 12 more days.

Fertiliser factory shut for gas crisis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Production at Ashuganj Fertiliser Company Limited stopped yesterday for an indefinite period due to gas crisis.

The factory could not produce around 1,200 tonnes of fertilizer daily following the crisis, incurring a loss of at least Tk 1.68 crore, sources said.

Bakhrabad Gas Systems Ltd, the local gas supplier, sent a letter to the company to stop fertiliser production on April 15, said managing director of the fertiliser company SS Kamran.

"There is no scope of shortage in our supply as there is plenty of stock. A total of 80,000 tonnes of fertiliser were produced here in the current fiscal year," Kamran said.

The government has decided to stop gas supply to all fertiliser factories in the country to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply during the summer.

Fungus attack on paddy fields

Farmers are anxious in Gaibandha

K M REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Fungus attack on paddy fields is discolouring the crops in Palashbari upazila, much to the worry of the farmers.

Paddy farmers of Kumedpur village in the upazila are facing problems as their paddy fields have turned white in two weeks. The attack is spreading to adjoining fields, which will have an adverse affect on boro production, farmers said.

"I cultivated boro paddy on three bighas of land as a sharecropper, but the ear of paddy turned white and there is no rice inside the husk," said Mokbul Mia.

"I am worried over the attack of disease on my two and half bighas as I may not be able to recover the production cost," said Shahidul, another marginal farmer.

Monoharpur Union Parishad Chairman Mizanur Rahman said, "Adverse weather affected boro cultivation and I am being informed about the attack by fungal disease from different areas every day. We have requested the agriculture department to take measures to stop the attack on boro fields."

Additional Deputy Director of Gaibandha Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Motiur Rahman said a similar situation is also prevailing in other upazilas of the district, adding that the attack was caused by mild cold wave and cloudy weather that has been continuing for the last two weeks.

A views exchange meeting was held at Madrasa Bazar in Udakhali union under Fulchhari upazila on Saturday to raise awareness of the farmers, where agriculture experts advised boro farmers to spray pesticides and anti-fungal chemicals to stop the attack, he added.

Deputy Director of DAE AKM Ruhul Amin said farmers were not prepared for the fungal attack, and the disease spread in some areas as timely action was not taken against it.

Farmers of affected areas have formed teams to conduct drives against the disease, and it will continue till harvesting of the boro crop, he added.



A worried farmer at his boro field at Kumedpur village in Palashbari upazila of Gaibandha. The paddy turns white after fungus attacks the crop due to untimely rain.

PHOTO: K M REZAUL HOQUE