

Boy killed in wall collapse, another hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Benapole

A three-year-old boy was killed and another injured in a wall collapse in Jessore's Monirampur upazila yesterday.

The victim, Mohammad Ishan, was son of day labourer Ashraf Ali of Mokamtola village.

Injured Khairul, 9, son of Hazer Ali of the village, is now undergoing treatment at Monirampur Upazila Health Complex.

Local union parishad member Sanjay Raha said Ishan and Khairul were playing beside a nearby old brick house in the morning.

Suddenly a portion of a brick wall of the house collapsed on them, he said, adding that family members rescued the two kids.

Ishan died on the way to the health complex while another was admitted to the hospital, Medical Officer of Monirampur Upazila Health Complex Md Shafiullah Sabuj said.

Mahmudur appears before Tangail court

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Tangail

Dainik Amar Desh acting Editor Mahmudur Rahman appeared before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court in the district yesterday.

He submitted a copy of the bail order, which he got from the High Court (HC) recently in a defamation case filed against him in the district, to the court.

Chief Judicial Magistrate Khaleda Yasmin received the bail order copy, said defence lawyer Arfan Ali Mollah.

Arfan told journalists that a Tk 2,000 crore defamation case was filed against Mahmudur on December 12 by local Awami League leader Saifuzzaman Sohel.

A HC Bench on January 30 granted eight-week anticipatory bail to Mahmudur in six seditious and defamation cases, including the case filed in the district, he said.



A number of logs from felled trees lie beside Singair-Hemayetpur road in Manikganj as the authorities have sold off around 4,000 trees for expansion of the road. Inset, a portion of the road that is still covered with trees on both sides.

PHOTO: ZAHANGIR SHAH

4,000 trees being felled for Manikganj road widening

Zila Parishad illegally sold those for much lower prices, depriving the stakeholders

ZAHANGIR SHAH, Manikganj

A staggering 4,000 trees, planted under a social forestry project, are being cut for the expansion of Hemayetpur-Manikganj-Singair regional highway, amid allegations of flouting the rules and depriving the beneficiaries of the project.

Around half of the trees have already been felled.

The market value of these trees is at least Tk 5 crore but Manikganj Zila Prishad has sold those for less than Tk 1.5 crore, alleged officials of Proshika Human Development Center, and its association members assigned to take care of the trees.

As part of the social forestry programme, 10 thousand tree saplings were planted beside the regional highway under the initiative of Proshika Human Development Center in 1991, said Mohidur Rahman, coordinator of Proshika's Singair upazila office.

"Four thousand trees including mahogany, koroi, shishu, eucalyptus and epil-epil

survived till now, each worth Tk 10 to 20 thousand, according to the present market price. But the zila parishad sold each tree for Tk 3,675 on an average, causing huge losses for the government, Proshika and its beneficiaries," he said.

After taking lease of the land from Singair Upazila Parishad, one thousand members of ten associations of Proshika planted the trees.

"As per the condition of the government's social forestry programme, the members of Proshika's associations will get 65 percent of the profits for taking care of the planted trees. Proshika will get 20 percent and the upazila parishads concerned 15 percent," said Proshika's Chief Executive Kazi Khaje Alam, then director of Proshika's Social Forestry Programme.

To cut or sell the trees, it is mandatory to inform and take opinion of Proshika, its association members and Upazila Parishad authorities as the implementing agency, he said.

Azimpur Nabajagaran association's

members Moslem Uddin, Bachchu Mia and Garadia Samata Mohila association's member Momena Begum and members of Proshika's different associations said they have been maintaining the trees for the last 27 years.

Although 65 percent of the profits were theirs, they were not informed about cutting their trees and no money was given to them yet, they said.

The trees were sold for lower than the market price and the chairman and officials of the zila parishad are taking financial benefits from it.

Manikganj Roads and Highways Department sources said the 31-kilometre-long regional highway is 17 feet wide and it will be expanded to 28 feet.

Manikganj Zila Parishad office sources said the parishad invited tender on November 6 last year as decision was taken to sell the trees for widening of the regional highway.

According to the tender, 3,725 trees were sold under 28 packages, at the highest bid

of tender price of Tk 1 crore 36 lakh 14 thousand 139.

Singair Upazila Parishad Chairman Abidur Rahman Roman said, "According to the agreement, the upazila parishad, Proshika and its beneficiaries are owners of the trees. But zila parishad sold the trees for much lower than the market prices."

"We informed the zila parishad office to take necessary action in this regard. If there is no solution, Proshika will take lawful action," said Kazi Khaje Alam, chief executive of Proshika.

Zila Parishad Chairman Golam Mohiuddin said, "If Proshika and the members of its associations are entitled to get the share of the sale, they will be given it after verification."

Asked about the sale of the trees at a lower price than the market price, he said, "The matter of selling the trees was notified in national and local newspapers. The tender was conducted following the rules and the trees were sold at the highest rates."

Six policemen suspended for selling seized cannabis

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Brahmanbaria

Six policemen of Kasba Police Station have been suspended on charge of selling recovered cannabis on Tuesday night.

The accused are sub-inspectors Shyamal Majumder and Monir Hossain, assistant sub-inspectors Faruk and Salahuddin, and constables Shahjahan and Abul Quasem.

"The six-member police team seized a huge quantity of cannabis from two private cars at T Ali crossing point. But they deposited only 40 kg to the police station," said Md Mohiuddin Ahmed, OC of Kasba Police Station.

"Informed, a DB team reached the spot immediately and recovered around 100 kg of cannabis. By the time, buyers of the item fled away," he said.

The six were suspended as they sold most of the cannabis that they had seized, said Md Iqbal Hossain, additional superintendent of police.

MADRASA BOY MURDER Prime suspect still at large

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Mymensingh

Three days into killing of 11-year-old boy Tauhidul Islam in Bhaluka upazila, prime suspect Aminul Islam, a teacher of Umar Faruq Hafizia Kindergarten Madrasa, is yet to be held.

Meanwhile, arrestee Enamul Haque, head teacher of the madrasa, was produced before a court with a seven-day remand prayer on Tuesday. However, no hearing on the prayer was held on the day, said Mazharul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bhaluka Police Station.

Yesterday, the court rejected the prayer and asked police to interrogate Enamul at jail gate.

Tauhidul, a student of the madrasa, succumbed to his injuries at a hospital in Dhaka on Monday.

Aminul allegedly beat Tauhidul as he failed to memorise his lesson on February 27.



Rotten wheat imported from India and seized at Banglabandha Land Port in Panchagarh on January 17, lying on the floor of the land port.

PHOTO: EAM ASADUZZAMAN

Rotten Indian wheat spreads virus, bacteria at land port

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

A huge amount of low-quality imported Indian wheat seized by Banglabandha Land Port authorities in Panchagarh on January 17 is still lying in the warehouse as the port authority and the importer from Nilphamari blame each other for failure to return the goods to the Indian exporter, ignoring a directive of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Dhaka.

The rotten wheat, which was detained over one-and-a-half-months ago, is causing pollution and threatening spread of virus and bacteria.

Importer Md Imtiaz, proprietor of Messrs Imtiaz Traders in Saidpur Municipality of Nilphamari, said he opened a Letter of Credit on January 4 in 2018, amounting to \$54,000, from Saidpur branch of Islami Bank Ltd to import 200 tonnes of wheat from India.

Accordingly, Indian exporter Mohon Kumar Agarwal of Uttar Dinajpur in Paschim Banga of India sent 190.10

tonnes of wheat through Banglabandha Land Port on January 17.

"As the imported wheat went through quarantine test, it was found that it was rotten and contained harmful viruses and bacteria," said land port's Revenue Officer Zakir Hossain.

The port authority detained the consignment and sent a sample to DAE for further test by its quarantine wing. DAE said the wheat was rotten and carried five kinds of bacteria and viruses, and directed the port authority to return the consignment soon, Zakir added.

"I sent two letters to Assistant Commissioner (AC) of Customs at Banglabandha Land Port Abdus Sattar on February 14 and February 19 and also to Commissioner of Customs, Excise and VAT in Rangpur Ahsanul Huq on February 22, requesting them to release the wheat so that I could return it," Imtiaz said.

"I received a letter from the land port authority on February 28, asking me to submit no objection papers

from National Board of Revenue (NBR), Bangladesh Bank (BB) and Export-Import Bureau for returning the wheat," he added.

"I appealed to the three offices concerned to give me the papers. As it is a lengthy process, I was worried that the entire consignment might rot and the exporter would be unlikely to accept the wheat, compelling me to pay demurrage as a long time has already passed," Imtiaz said.

The land port authority directed the importer to pay warehouse charge at a rate of Tk 5,200 per day from the day the consignment was detained.

The AC Customs rejected the allegation of negligence to release the wheat and said they were taking every step as per law.

"As soon as the importer submits the papers from NBR, BB and Export-Import Bureau, we will hand over the wheat to him for returning it," he added.

Egg price hits record low

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Chicken egg producers in Dinajpur and Joypurhat are incurring huge losses and struggling to continue the business as egg price has hit a record low in the last one month while the cost of chicken feed and medicine remains high.

Additional District Livestock Officer in Dinajpur Ashika Akbar Trisha and acting District Livestock Officer in Joypurhat Dr Md Mamunur Rashid said there are around 550 chicken egg farms and approximately 45.35 lakh chickens in Dinajpur and Joypurhat.

Around 38 lakh eggs are produced every day in these farms, the officials said.

They are selling each egg for Tk 4.50 to wholesalers, while the production cost is around Tk 5.80 per egg, farmers said.

Many unemployed educated youths in rural and urban areas in the districts took up poultry business, but they are now helpless due to the continuous price fall.

"Poultry farmers are frustrated due to the fall in the price of eggs in the mar-

kets," said Md Firoz Ahmed of Karimpur village in Kalai upazila of Joypurhat.

He said he sold most of his egg laying chickens to reduce daily cost of running the farm.

Abdul Aziz of Bottoli village under Dinajpur Sadar upazila said he has a farm of 22,500 egg laying chickens and has sold 4,500 of them to cut his daily losses. "I am still incurring loss of Tk 9,000 per day," he said.

Aziz told this correspondent that such low price of eggs has been continuing in the markets for around one month and there is no sign of improvement, adding that he has never witnessed such a price fall since he started poultry business 10 years ago. The price of each egg one month ago was Tk 6.00, which has dropped to around Tk 4.50. The price of poultry feed continues to rise, he added.

During a visit to the egg wholesale market at Bahadurbazar in Dinajpur, this correspondent found that eggs are being sold for Tk 550 per 100, while the price in the retail market is Tk 600 per 100. The price was Tk 800

for 100 eggs in the retail market about one month ago, traders said.

Razu Mia, a wholesale egg trader of Bahadurbazar market, said the supply of eggs has gone up manifold against the demand, which is one cause of price fall. Traders expected more price fall ahead.

Besides, traders of other districts are not coming to buy eggs there as before due to bad road connectivity with Dhaka, farmers said.

Moniruzzaman, a poultry feed trader at Kalitola in Dinajpur town, said many farmers are selling their egg laying chickens as they are unable to make profit due to the low price of eggs in markets.

Additional Livestock Officer in Dinajpur Dr Ashika said Dinajpur has surplus production of eggs. If the eggs cannot get to markets of other districts, farmers will not get fair price, she said.

"If farmers are deprived of their due price, it will ultimately harm the poultry sector," she added.



An egg market in Bahadurbazar in Dinajpur town.

PHOTO: STAR