



Smile eludes farmers coming to sell newly harvested paddy in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila's Durakuti Haat as the market price is too low. PHOTO: STAR

Farmers upset as paddy prices fall in Lalmonirhat

Paddy being sold below production cost

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers in the district are upset due to fall in prices of paddy in the local markets to below the production cost, and some of them have lost interest in cultivating paddy in future.

Farmers said they sold paddy at Tk 700 to Tk 730 per maund (1 maund = 40 kg) in the local markets in the last week of December, but the price has come down to Tk 620 to Tk 630 per maund from the first of January. They are forced to sell paddy below the production cost as they need money for growing winter crops and Boro paddy, they said.

An official of Lalmonirhat Department of Agriculture Extension said 3,35,990 tonnes of paddy were produced from 84,845 hectares of land in the district in the last Aman season.

Farmer Shushil Chandra Barmon, 58, of Doljor village in Aditmari upzaila, said he got 72 maunds of paddy from seven bighas of land in the Aman season, and he sold only 20 maunds at

Tk 710 per maund. "I stored the rest of the paddy for selling it at higher price, but the paddy prices fell," he said, adding that he sold 10 maunds of paddy at Durakuti Haat for Tk 620 per maund, which is below the production cost.

"I sold eight maunds of paddy at Tk 625 per maund at Durakuti Haat. I was upset at selling paddy at a price below the production cost," said Jamsher Ali, 56, another farmer of Shalmara village of Aditmari upzaila. "As I need money for farming other crops I had to sell the paddy for less than the production cost," he said.

Promodh Chandra Barmon, 62, of Karnapur village in Sadar upazila, said they spent Tk 650 for producing one maund of paddy as they spent additional Tk 500 for arranging irrigation water in the Aman season last year. "We got 10 maunds to 12 maunds from each bigha, spending Tk 6,500 to Tk 7,000," he said, adding that he got 123 maunds of paddy from 12 bighas last year. "We thought we would get Tk

750 to Tk 800 per maund, but our thinking was only a dream," he said.

A small paddy trader Sirajul Islam of Durakuti Haat said paddy prices fell suddenly on the first of this month as merchants showed no interest in buying and storing paddy in their warehouses. "We purchase paddy at low rate from the farmers and sell them at low rate to the merchants," he said, adding that there is no scope of price hike of paddy in future.

Paddy merchant, also rice mill owner, Sekendar Ali of Puran Bazar in the town, said there is no space in the warehouses for storing more paddy, so the merchants are not showing interest in buying paddy.

Lalmonirhat Marketing Officer Abdur Rahim said rice prices are low in the local market due to fall of paddy prices. Paddy prices have fallen as rice mill owners are not buying paddy, he said, adding that the owners produce rice from their stored paddy and supply it to the local market.

College teacher assaulted by policemen, 20 students hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A college teacher was physically assaulted allegedly by some on-duty policemen near Mymensingh Zila School Intersection in the town yesterday.

The victim, Sheikh Mohammad Shariful Islam, an assistant professor at Shaheed Syed Nazrul Islam College, was given first aid at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH).

Victim Shariful said he had an altercation with a three-wheeler driver when the latter hit the bumper of his private car while he was crossing the Zila School Intersection around 9:45am.

"Seeing the altercation, an on-duty traffic policeman came to the spot and charged my car driver for alleged wrongdoing. When I protested about his misbehaviour, he locked in an altercation with me," Shariful alleged.

He later grabbed the collar of my shirt and punched me several times and at one stage, four other policemen joined him, Shariful said, adding, "They tore off my shirt, picked me on a police van and took

me to a nearby police outpost."

Later, some of his colleagues rushed to the police outpost, rescued him from there and took him to MMCH for treatment, he said.

A shopkeeper near the spot, seeking anonymity, said he saw five policemen beating a man and later he learnt that the victim is a college teacher.

Meanwhile, hearing the news, some agitated students of the college brought out a protest procession and went to Kotwali Police Station, demanding arrest of the attackers.

Police later fired several rubber bullets to disperse the agitating students that left at least 20 students injured, a teacher of the college Mofizun Nur Khoka said.

Of them, four are now undergoing treatment at MMCH while six others were given first aid, he added.

Police fired four rubber bullets to disperse the agitating students, who ransacked the windowpanes and some motorbikes of the police station, Mymensingh Additional Superintendent of Police (Sadar Circle) Mohammad Al-Amin said, adding that four policemen were injured in the attack.



Mohammad Shariful Islam

Tk one cr jute gutted on mill premises

Sirajganj Jute Mill authorities form probe committee

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Jute worth Tk one crore was gutted in a fire at Sirajganj National Jute Mill in Raipur area of Sirajganj Sadar upazila early yesterday.

A four-member probe committee, headed by Production Manager Rafikul Islam of the mill, has been formed to find out the reason behind the fire, said Md Aminul Islam, general manager (GM) of the mill.

The fire originated at the yard of ready jute beside the spinning section of the state-owned mill around 5:50am, said Assistant Director of Sirajganj Fire Service Md Abdul Hamid.

On information, five units of firefighters rushed to the spot and doused the blaze after five hours of frantic efforts, he said.

The reason behind the fire could not be known immediately, said Hamid.

The fire entirely gutted over 600 bales of jute worth Tk one crore, he said.

A total of 2,163 bales of ready jute worth Tk 6 crore was preserved at the mill, said the GM.

'Robber' killed in 'gunfight' with gang

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

An alleged robber was killed in a 'gunfight' between two gangs at Sahapur Rajganj of Jashore's Monirampur upazila early yesterday.

"Informed of the gunfight, a police team raided the area around 3:30am and the robbers fled. Police found a robber with bullet injuries and he later died at Jashore General Hospital," said Sahadat Hossain, OC of Monirampur Police Station.

Identity of the deceased could not be known. Police recovered a pipe-gun and a bullet from the spot, he said.

This newspaper could not independently verify the police version.

Two passport brokers held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Police detained two brokers in front of regional passport office in the district town yesterday.

The detainees are Ajmirul Kabir, 32, son of late Shariful Kabir of Malaria Pul area, and Kamruzzaman Riaz, 32, son of Abdur Malek Akan of Ukilpara area in the town.

SM Ziaul Haque, officer in charge of Sadar Police Station, said the two were arrested from in front of the passport office at noon.

Locals said every day some brokers harass people coming to the passport office in different ways.

Ajmirul and Riaz are active members of a passport brokers' group.

'Social commitment needed to check drug abuse'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Mymensingh Divisional Commissioner Mahmud Hasan yesterday said strong commitment is needed to make the society free from the curse of drug addiction.

"Without social commitment and a concerted move against drugs, we cannot reach the ultimate goal of all-round development," he said while addressing a discussion meeting at Mymensingh Press Club auditorium as chief guest.

He urged the community leaders and individuals to play roles to check the menace.

Mymensingh Madakasakta Punorbasan Samity (a forum to rehabilitate drug addicts) organised the meeting under the banner "To render free medical services to poor and floating drug addicts."

Many drug addicts get involved with drugs again due to lack of proper monitoring, so the family is a big factor in this regard, said speakers at the meeting.

Unemployment problem is also another reason why addicts go back to drugs after recovery and so, adequate job facilities could minimise the menace, they said.

Many of the floating drug addicts are involved with crimes, including theft and snatching, and if the move is successful such crimes will also be curtailed, they opined.

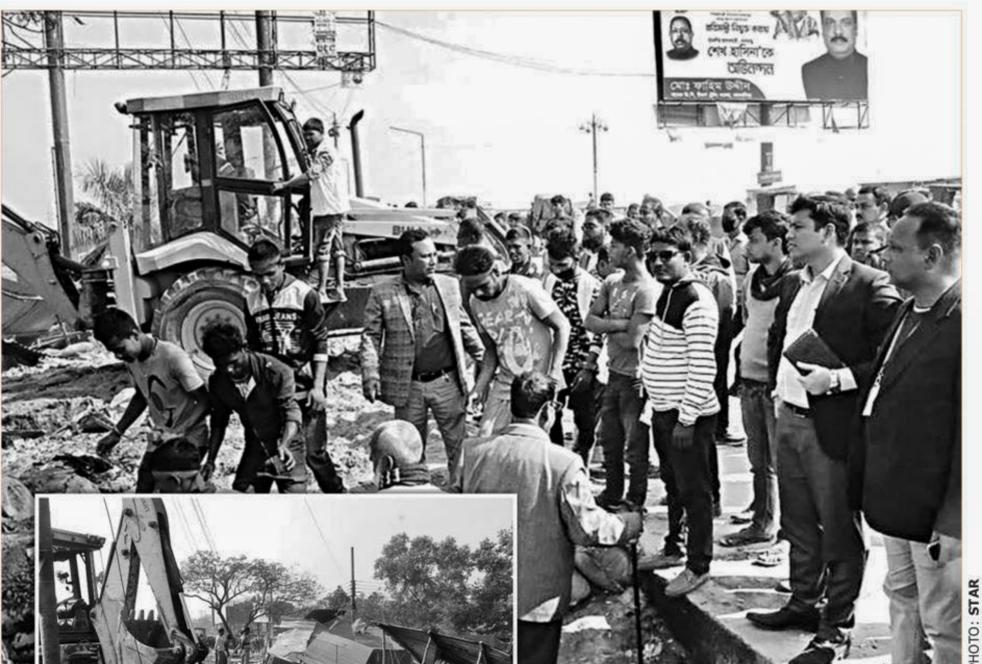
President of the forum Arif Siddiquee Sumon said 22 centres are associated with the samity and if they treat two patients each for free, it will be a great relief for poor and floating drug addicts.

"A recommendation committee involving official of administration and police will be formed to prepare a list of addicts," said association adviser Dr Mahfuzul Alam Liton.

Additional Deputy Inspector General of Police Dr Akkas Uddin Bhuiyan and Additional Director of Narcotics Control Department Poritosh Kumar Kundu were present, among others.



Mymensingh Divisional Commissioner Mahmud Hasan addresses as chief guest at a discussion on free treatment of addicts, especially the poor and homeless ones, held at Mymensingh Press Club yesterday. PHOTO: STAR



The district administration and Mymensingh City Corporation jointly conduct a drive to remove illegal structures on government land in Shambhuganj Bridge area yesterday. Around 40 illegal structures were demolished during the drive, also conducted at Malgodam in the city. PHOTO: STAR

BSF returns cattle trader's body

The move follows flag meeting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) returned the body of a Bangladeshi cattle trader following a flag meeting with Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) on Tuesday evening.

The meeting was held along the zero line at Minapur border in Haripur upazila, said Lt Col Gazi Nahiduzzaman, commanding officer (CO) of BGB-42 Battalion.

The victim was Jenarul, 30, of Taldangi village in the upazila.

BSF members opened fire on a group of Bangladeshi cattle traders around 5:00am in the border area when they were returning with cattle, the CO said, adding that Jenarul died on the spot while others escaped unhurt. BSF immediately took the body away.

At the flag meeting, BGB strongly protested the killing, saying that they opened fire on the unarmed Bangladeshi violating the international border rules.

After receiving the body, the BGB men handed it over to the Haripur police who later sent the body to the victim's family on the same night.

PUST agitation halts teachers' association election

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Election of Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) Teachers' Association was halted yesterday as students staged a demonstration demanding removal of the proctorial body of the university and locked the university administrative building and the departments.

Due to the students' agitation, the scheduled election of the PUST Teachers' Association was halted yesterday. Two panels are contesting the election, one is the Blue Panel and the other is allegedly supported by the VC, sources said.

Earlier, on Tuesday, a group of teachers of the Blue Panel alleged that the VC was supporting their rival panel, although the university administration refuted the allegation.

Protesting the assault on a female student of the university, angry students staged demonstration and demanded removal of the entire proctorial body for not ensuring security of the students.

A stalker assaulted a female student of the university in her room at a students' mess at Radhanagar in the town on Friday evening. Angry students blocked Dhaka-Pabna Highway on Saturday and started demonstration against the proctorial body.

Proctor Dr Pretom Kumar said a case was filed against the alleged stalker Asif Iqbal Chinmoy on Friday night, adding that police are investigating the incident.

"Legal action has been taken so why the students are going for agitation is not clear," the proctor said, adding that the students might have been motivated by somebody to foil the peaceful environment in the campus.