

Farmers hold sheaves of burnt paddy plants during a human chain programme at Manikganj Press Club premises yesterday, demanding compensation for the damage and removal of brick kilns from croplands.

PHOTO: STAR

## Remove brick kilns, save paddy lands

Manikganj farmers demand at human chain as crop on 500 bighas damaged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Paddy growers of five villages in Sadar upazila yesterday formed a human chain in the town, demanding compensation for their burnt paddies and removal of the brickfields adjacent to the croplands.

Following the rally in front of Manikganj Press Club, they submitted a complaint to Manikganj deputy commissioner (DC), seeking his intervention in this regard.

Among others, comrade Azharul Islam, comrade Arshed Ali Master and advocate Mostafizur Rahman Bishwas, spoke on the occasion.

The speakers alleged that paddy plants on vast tracts of land in five villages were either burnt or died due to emission of hot air and heat, generated from the nearby brick kilns.

The affected villages are Gokulnagar, Solandi, Airmara, Mitara and Baitora under Putail and Betilla-Mitara unions.

There are at least twelve brickfields in those villages, they said.

Farmer Tota Mia of Airmara village said he planted Irri on seven bighas of leased land and had already spent Tk 1 lakh.

But, all his paddy plants died due to excessive heat released by a nearby brickfield and he wants compensation for the damage, he said.

Meanwhile, Ismat Ali of Solandi village said paddies on at least five hundred bighas of land were burnt after one of the brickfields Diana Bricks Company dumped its hot burnt coal under the open sky on Saturday.

Another Ali Akbar of Gokulnagar village said they have been demanding removal of the brickfields, adjacent to the croplands, for long, but to no avail.

Manikganj DC SM Ferdous said after receiving the complaint he asked the officials concerned to take immediate steps in this regard.

## Organic *muri* from Natore gaining popularity

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Traditional organic *muri* (puffed rice) producers at Goadighi Krishnapur village in Natore Sadar upazila are passing busy time to produce the item as the popular item brings them good profit.

Around 350 families of the village under Dighapatia union in the upazila are now engaged in producing the traditional organic puffed rice to meet its increasing demand during the holy month of Ramadan.

Muri is taken as a common item during iftar in the month.

One of the *muri* producers Salma Begum, 34, of the village said both the male and female members of her family work together to produce the item.

Although it is a very hard working job, it brings them a handsome profit, she said.

"Earlier, we passed our days in hardship, but by producing organic *muri* now we are solvent enough," another *muri* producer of the village Aleya Begum, 55, said.

Chemical-free and traditionally produced *muri* is tastier and more nutritious than the chemically treated one, she said, adding that



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there is a good demand of their produce.

"We can produce two maunds of *muri* in a day with a production cost of Tk 2,000 to Tk 2,200," another *muri* producer Amzad Hossain, 45, said, adding that they sell the produce for Tk 4,000 to Tk 4,200 a maund to the wholesalers.

Most of the puffed rice producers take loan from different local NGOs or borrow the amount from local moneylenders at a high interest rate to manage capital for the business, Amzad said.

"Health conscious people prefer organic puffed rice as it is free from chemical contamination. Though the item is produced round the year, its demand increases during the

Ramadan as it is a common iftar item," said Abul Kalam, 30, of the village.

Locals said around 200 maunds of *muri* are being sold at Krishnapur Halsarak market every day and wholesalers from Dhaka, Rajshahi, Sirajganj, Tangail, Meherpur and Kushtia come to purchase the organic item.

A good number of *muri* producers have urged for the government support to continue their traditional business.

"We will arrange loan facilities for the small entrepreneurs in future to promote their puffed rice business," said Dilruba Dipti, deputy director of Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) in Natore.

Selim Hossain, 28, of the village said machine-made puffed rice of different brands and wrapped in attractive packets are occupying the market very fast.

Manually prepared *muri* is facing a huge challenge as machine-made *muri* of different brands has flooded the rural markets as well, Dighapatia Union Parishad Chairman Omar Sharif Chouhan said.



A couple prepare chemical-free organic puffed rice at their house of Goadighi Krishnapur village in Natore Sadar upazila. Inset, traders sell puffed rice at Krishnapur Halsarak market in the upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

## Girl killed after rape, 3 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A schoolgirl was killed after rape at a hotel in Madaripur's Shibchar upazila on Sunday. The deceased was Anny Akter, 13, daughter of late Ilias Mridha of Nowdoba village in Zinjira upazila of Shariatpur, and a Class IX student at Sheikh Fazilatunnesa Government Pilot Girls' High School.

Anny lived with her mother in Colony area of Shibchar municipality.

Police on Sunday night arrested key suspect Rubel Khan, 23, son of late Tota Khan of Shibchar, Md Khairul, manager of Utsab Hotel, and Md Ronaldo, an employee of the hotel.

Anwar Hossain, sub inspector of Shibchar Police Station, said Rubel introduced himself as the girl's husband while checking into Utsab Hotel around 1:00pm on Sunday.

Seeing the girl's blood stained body on the bed, the hotel authorities informed police, who sent it to Madaripur General Hospital for autopsy.

"Rubel told police that he raped the girl after taking sex stimulant pills and later she died of excessive bleeding," OC Md Zakir Hossain Mollah said.

## 'Mirzapur mass killing day' today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Today is dreadful Mirzapur mass killing day.

On this day during the Liberation War in 1971, the Pakistani occupation forces and their local collaborators entered several villages, mostly belonging to Hindu community, in the upazila and killed 31 innocent villagers.

Earlier on the day, the Pakistani army went to Kumudini Hospital premises and looked for philanthropist Ranada Prasad Saha, popularly known as RP Saha, founder of Kumudini Welfare Trust.

But he was not there. Recalling the memory of that dreadful evening, Protibha Mutsuddi, director of Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal (BD) Limited, said Pakistani troops led by Captain Aiyub along with local peace committee president Maulana Odud and their collaborators entered the villages near Kumudini Hospital around 5:00pm.

"After conducting the massacre and loot, the same team went to the house of Jethamoni (RP Saha) in Narayanganj town and picked him up along with his son Bhabani Prasad Saha and one of their employees Gourapada Saha from there," Protibha said, adding that since then they were never seen or heard of again.

Kumudini Welfare Trust will chalk out different programmes, including special prayers, marking the day today.

Mirzapur upazila administration will also pay tribute to the martyrs by lighting candles at 'Mukti Mancha' in the upazila parishad premises, Mirzapur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Abdul Malek said.



This vulture, rescued in an injured state from Boraibari village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila on Thursday, was released to the nature after treatment at 'wildlife rescue and temporary nursing centre' in Saidpur upazila yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## A family devastated by road crash

Yunus Ali, one of 10 May 2 Saudi Arabia road accident victims, had joined a job there only a month earlier

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

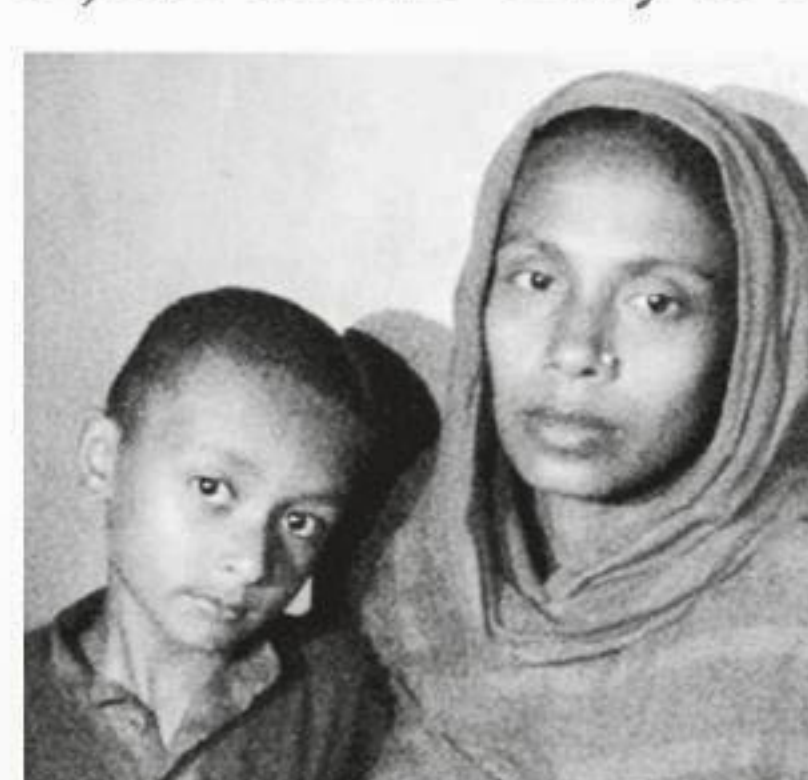
Since hearing the appalling news, Taslima Akter cried so much that her tears have dried up.

The 22-year-old, mother of three children, is widow of one of ten Bangladeshi workers who died in a road accident in Saudi Arabia on May 2.

Before leaving for Saudi Arabia a little more than a month ago, on March 27, Taslima's husband Yunus Ali, 25, used to make a living by selling vegetables at a market in his birthplace -- Raghunathpur village of Pulbaria upazila in Mymensingh.

Sharing her last memory of her husband, Taslima said sobbing, "My husband made a video call on Tuesday afternoon [two days before his death] and that was the last conversation he had with us."

After having small talks, Yunus wanted to see the children and then spoke with other members of his family, the grieving widow said. "All of us were so happy to hear that after struggling for a month, he had



Taslima with her son

finally found a job."

Excited about the opportunity, Yunus asked her not to worry about the future anymore as he would now be able to pay off his loans and provide for his children's education with his salary each month, said Taslima.

The couple has three children -- the youngest is six months old and the oldest is eight years old. Their middle child is five years old. Yunus' elderly parents also

depend on his income.

Aside from the worries over a bleak future for the family, Taslima is now more perturbed by the consequences of failing to repay the Tk six lakh loan that Yunus took to go to Saudi Arabia.

They have recently admitted their oldest son to a madrasa and his fees are still unpaid, she said, adding that she was at a loss to imagine how she alone would handle all the expenses and repay the loan without financial support from the government.

Yunus' father Abdul Khaleque said since it was getting more and more difficult to make ends meet with the vegetable store, his son left for the foreign land to earn a good living for the family.

But his endeavour met a tragic end in one instance, lamented Abdul Khaleque.

Nurun Nahar, younger sister of Yunus, said none of their relatives are solvent enough to support the family members who depended on her brother's income.

## Seized fry released

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Over 82 lakh shrimp fry, seized at Charkhali ferry terminal in Pirojpur's Bhandaria upazila, were released into the river yesterday.

The coastguards seized 82.20 lakh shrimp fry from four trucks and four motorbikes, said Golam Mostofa, senior upazila fisheries officer.

Later, Bhandaria UNO Md Nazmul Alam arranged releasing the fry into the nearby Pona river.



Advertorial

Shahid Ullah Khan, Mayor, Noakhali Pourashava & Syed Hasinur Rahman, Managing Director, Bangladesh Municipal Development Fund (BMDf) jointly inaugurated the construction work of a six-storeyed shopping complex in the municipal market at Sonapur of Noakhali District. The construction work is funded jointly by the BMDf and Noakhali Pourashava. They also inaugurated two other development projects at that time.