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Price woes for rice growers

Prospects of good harvest fail to bring any joy to farmers in 10 south-western districts

AMANUR AMAN, from Kushtia

Although paddy farmers are poised to get a bigger harvest this year, low prices have sapped their joy in the 10 south-western districts of the country.

The amount of paddy the government plans to buy directly from farmers would not help them much as well, they said while talking to The Daily Star yesterday.

In the 10 districts, Boro paddy was grown on 6.25 lakh hectares of land this year. It was 6.23 lakh hectares last year. The amount of harvest they expect is about 40 lakh tonnes, 60,000-70,000 tonnes higher than last year, said officials.

"Harvest has been good so far, but we are not going to reap the benefit because of low prices," said Asadur Rahman, a farmer of Kushtia's Khoksa upazila. "We're frustrated."

According to farmers, per maund of paddy is selling for Tk 580-850, based on the variety, while they expect the price to be Tk 1,200-1,350.

Mosarraf Hossain, a farmer of Gangni upazila in Meherpur, said paddy cultivation is less profitable than other crops. "All sorts of expenses are on the rise."

Echoing him, farmer Asad said paddy farming is costlier, but it takes in lower profits. "If I had cultivated maze, I would have Tk 30,000-35,000 in profit."

Ramesh Chandra Ghosh, an upazila agriculture officer of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Kushtia, said farmers spent Tk 15,000 to Tk 15,850 per bigha, but they are earning about Tk 19,000 to Tk 19,450.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Hundreds of people wait in long queues at the ticket counter of Hanif Paribahan in the city's Gabtoli yesterday to buy tickets in advance to go to village homes to celebrate the Eid-ul-Fitr. Inset, counter staff issue tickets.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Rush for Eid bus tickets

Hundreds throng city's bus counters

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mamun had been in a long queue since early morning to get an advance bus ticket for Rajshahi for June 3 to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr with his dear ones. When he finally reached the Hanif Paribahan counter in Gabtoli around 8:30am, he came to know that tickets for the date were already sold out.

Finding no other way, he had to buy the ticket for the next morning, and his seat was in the back.

Just 300 yards away, in front of SR Paribahan counter, 50-year-old Rubina Akhter came from Azimpur with her daughter to get tickets of AC buses for Rangpur. But a notice was hung on the counter's window reading "no advance ticket for AC bus".

Talking to The Daily Star, Rubina said she was unaware of the matter.

The first day sale of advance tickets for the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Trump unveils new plan on immigration

Emphasises skills, education over family ties to Americans; Democrats dismiss proposal

REUTERS, Washington

President Donald Trump on Thursday proposed overhauling the US immigration system to favour young, educated, English-speaking applicants instead of people with family ties to Americans, a plan he will push in his 2020 re-election campaign but has little to no chance of being approved in Congress.

Trump's plan, roundly panned by Democrats and immigration advocacy groups, is aimed at trying to unite Republicans - some who want to boost immigration, others who want to restrict it - ahead of next year's presidential and congressional elections.

"If for some reason, possibly political, we can't get the Democrats to approve this merit-based, high-security plan, then we will get it approved immediately after the election when we take back the House (of Representatives), keep the Senate, and, of course, hold the presidency," Trump said in a Rose Garden address to Republican

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Clashes hit Kolkata city after Modi rally

Police arrest 26, bolster security ahead of final round of voting tomorrow

AFP, Kolkata

Police made new arrests following clashes and poured thousands of security forces into the eastern city of Kolkata yesterday as tensions mounted ahead of the final round of voting in India's marathon election.

Supporters of right-wing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and opposition followers clashed in the eastern metropolis late Thursday after Modi held a rally there.

It was the second night of street battles between activists of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the regional Trinamool Congress (TMC) this week.

Police said at least 26 arrests were made yesterday over the latest unrest as they bolstered security before Sunday's voting.

India's six-week election ends on Sunday with the seventh round of voting in eight northern states, including West Bengal, where Kolkata is the capital.

With Modi seeking a second term, but scrambling to hold on to his overall majority, the results will be announced on May 23.

Modi's BJP has been aggressively campaigning in West Bengal, hoping to make gains from the TMC, which controls the state, to make up for losses expected in other states.

An official election observer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said there have been more than 300 incidents of poll violence across West Bengal since campaigning started on April 11.

"Kolkata will witness an unprecedented deployment of security forces before Sunday," the official added.

Tens of thousands of troops and paramilitaries were expected in the city

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Army man killed in blast during training

11 others injured

STAR REPORT

A member of the Bangladesh Army was killed and 11 other soldiers were wounded when a bomb exploded at a firing range in Bandarban during a training exercise yesterday.

Air Force helicopters flew the injured soldiers to Combined Military Hospital in the capital immediately after the incident took place around 10:30am, according to a release from the Inter-Services Public Relations.

The body of deceased soldier Jahidul Islam of Bandarban's Lama upazila was handed over to the army after an autopsy in the afternoon, said Protosh Paul Tripura, resident medical officer of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Driverless truck hits Swedish roads



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A driverless electric lorry has begun making deliveries using public roads in Sweden in what its creators believe to be a world first.

The T-Pod, which weighs 26 tonnes when fully loaded, does not have a driver in the cabin.

It is being tested out by developer Einride and logistics company DB Schenker. Swedish start-up Einride estimate that it will reduce road freight operating costs by about 60 percent compared to a diesel truck with a driver.

The T-Pod will not be completely autonomous, as an operator sitting miles away will be able to supervise and control up to 10 vehicles at a time.

Having a permit to use the semi-autonomous lorry on public roads to make deliveries was a "major milestone", said Einride's chief executive

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

HRW slams recent arrests

Urges Bangladesh to uphold right to peaceful expression

AFP, Dhaka

The Human Rights Watch yesterday slammed Bangladesh authorities after some arrests this week under the country's internet laws, raising worries over the freedom of expression in the nation.

Poet Henry Swapan, lawyer Intiaz Mahmood and human rights defender Abdul Kaium were arrested in the past few days, prompting social media outrage and protests in the capital Dhaka and elsewhere.

Swapan and Mahmood were released on bail Thursday, but Kaium remained in detention and faces charges of extortion and defamation under the digital security law.

These were first major arrests since the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took power in January for a third term

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

5-month-old boy killed in road crash

Pick-up plying wrong side hits 3-wheeler

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A five-month-old infant was killed in a road accident on Moghbazar-Mouchak flyover in the city's Satrastra area early yesterday.

The dead, Md Shihab, had been suffering from severe diarrhoea from the last couple of days and was being taken to Mohakhali's International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b) in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw, said Hannan Mia, sub-inspector of Tejgaon Industrial Area Police Station, quoting family members.

Four other passengers, including three of the child's family members, of the auto-rickshaw were injured when a pickup, allegedly being driven through the wrong side, crashed head-on into the vehicle around 5:15am, the SI added.

Soon after the incident, SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Firemen search for people trapped under the pandal at Baitul Mukarram national mosque in the capital yesterday. The pandal collapsed during a storm in the evening. The accident left one person dead and around 22 others injured.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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PRAYER TIMING MAY 18

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 3-52	12-45	5-00	6-39	8-00
JAMAAT 4-02	1-15	5-15	6-49	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN MAY SEHRI IFTAR				
12	18		6:39	
13	19	3:45	6:39	
14	20	3:44	6:40	

'Ruh Afkaj' শরবত সম্পর্কে অপপ্রচার থেকে সতর্ক হোন

রুহ আফজা ১৯০৭ সাল থেকে উপমহাদেশের মানুষের কাছে অত্যন্ত জনপ্রিয় শরবত হিসাবে সমাদৃত। একটি ষাঠীবাঁধে মূল অসাধু উদ্দেশ্যে শরবত 'রুহ আফজা'র বিরুদ্ধে অপপ্রচারে নেমেছে। ফেসবুক, অনলাইন পত্রিকাসহ বিভিন্ন যোগাযোগ মাধ্যমে মিথ্যা ও বিভ্রান্তিকর তথ্য দিয়ে জনসাধারণকে বিভ্রান্ত করার চেষ্টা করাচ্ছে। সাম্প্রতিক সময়ে "বাংলাদেশ নিরাপদ খাদ্য কর্তৃপক্ষ" এবং বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয়ের অধীনস্থ "জাতীয় ভোজা অধিকার সংরক্ষণ অধিদপ্তর" বিভিন্ন প্রিন্ট মিডিয়ায় "মহামান্ন হাইকোর্টের আদেশ বলে ৫২টি পণ্য বাজার হতে প্রত্যাহার সংক্রান্ত গণবিজ্ঞপ্তি" প্রকাশ করেছে। কিছু অসাধু চক্র ৫২ টি প্রোডাক্টের মধ্যে রুহ আফজার নাম না থাকা স্বত্ত্বেও উদ্দেশ্য প্রণোদিতভাবে 'রুহ আফজা'র শত বছরের সুনাম নষ্ট করার জন্য সম্পূর্ণ মিথ্যা, ভিত্তিহীন ও মনগড়া তথ্য দিয়ে 'রুহ আফজা' সম্পর্কে অপপ্রচার করেছে। সম্মানিত ভোজা সাধারণের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, আপনারদের পছন্দের 'রুহ আফজা' আন্তর্জাতিকভাবে সুপরিচিত একটি পণ্য। BSTI কর্তৃক প্রয়োজনীয় পরীক্ষা-নিরীক্ষার পর অনুমোদন সনদ প্রাপ্ত হয়ে 'রুহ আফজা' উৎপাদন ও বাজারজাত করা হচ্ছে। এছাড়াও ইসলামিক ফাউন্ডেশন কর্তৃপক্ষ 'রুহ আফজা'কে হালাল সনদ প্রদান করেছে। সম্মানিত ক্রেতা, ভোজা ও শুভানুধ্যায়ীসহ জনসাধারণকে এইসকল অপপ্রচারে বিভ্রান্ত না হওয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হচ্ছে এবং আমাদের পাশে থাকার জন্য আপনারদের আন্তরিক ধন্যবাদ ও কৃতজ্ঞতা জ্ঞাপন করছি।

হাসানুল হক
হাসানুল হক

বিশ্ব নাম, পরিচিত পণ্য