

Coastal fishermen ready as 'fish drying season' starts Nov 1

Sundarbans forest department targets Tk 3-crore revenue this year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Thousands of fishermen are preparing to go to the Bay for netting fish as six-month-long 'fish drying season' starts on November 1.

During the period, around 20,000 fishermen from different districts including Bagerhat, Patuakhali and Barishal will catch fish in the Bay and dry them in coastal island areas like Alorchar, Majherchar, Dublarchar, Shalerchar, Narkelbaria and Majherkella in the Sundarbans, said forest department officials.

For repairing nets and trawlers and arranging food and other necessary things, they often borrow money from the moneylenders and NGOs with high interest. Leaving their families amid uncertainty, they work in the sea and island areas for months, braving various odds like rough weather and abduction for ransom by robbers in the coastal areas, said several fishermen.

Some 1500 fishermen of Bagerhat, most of them from Rampal, Kachua and Sharankhola upazilas, will go to for netting fish and drying them, said forest department officials.

"For preparation to go for fishing in the sea, we have to borrow money from mahajons [moneylenders] at 30 to 40 percent interest. And we have to work amid fear of bandits and a section of unscrupulous forest guards," said Azad Sheikh, 42, of Perihali in Rampal.

He demanded adequate security arrangement by the forest department. Talking with this correspondent, several fishermen urged the government to ensure fair prices of fish and arrange sufficient treatment facilities in the coastal island areas.

They also demanded easy term loans to help them survive in the profession. Mahmudul Hassan, divisional forest officer of Sundarbans (East) Forest Department, said, "Fishermen will go fishing with the permission of the forest department from November 1 when the fish drying season starts. Forest guards always cooperate with them on various issues, including security."

"We collected Tk 2 crore 83 lakh as revenue from the sector last year while this season's target is Tk 3 crore," he said.



Trawlers lie anchored at a canal in Bagerhat as fishermen are ready to go for netting fish in the Bay from November 1.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Freedom fighters and their children form a human chain in front of Dinajpur Deputy Commissioner's (DC) Office on Monday, demanding removal of DC Mahmudul Alam for what they said the official's failure to save job of freedom fighter Ismil Hossain, who later died at a hospital in Dinajpur on October 23.

PHOTO: STAR

Two Kushtia kids to attend JSC exams at night

Jashore edn board accepts their petition for 2 Saturdays on religious grounds

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two students in Kushtia will sit for their JSC (Junior School Certificate) examinations in the night time, instead of the usual time from morning to afternoon, on two Saturdays as the authorities of Jashore Education Board accepted their petitions due to religious reasons.

The families of the two students - Albert Smith Bala of Kushtia High School and Adenis Ratul Bain of SunUp International School and College - belong to "Seventh Day Adventist" community, a denomination of Protestant Christians who observe "Sabbath" from Friday dusk to Saturday dusk.

During the time, the community people do not attend any work,

including writing, and observe rest and worship, revering "God's Rest" following the six days of creation, as described in the Jewish and Christian scriptures.

The authorities of Jashore Education Board made the special arrangement following applications from the two schools a few days after the publication of the examination schedule, said Prof Madhab Chandra Rudro, controller of examinations of the board.

The JSC examinations will start on November 2 and 2.44 lakh students will appear in it under Jashore Board.

"Accepting the applications, the board authorities in a circular published on its website announced that the two students' exams on two Saturdays (November 2 and November 9) will be arranged in the

evenings," Prof Madhab said.

Bangla and mathematics examinations will be held on November 2 and 9.

"The two students will have to enter the exam hall at 9:00am, along with all other students, and stay there the whole day. They will not be allowed to make any outside communication during the period. We will arrange food and other facilities for them," the exam controller said.

"We have already given necessary instructions to the official related to examinations in Kushtia to ensure smooth arrangement of two students' exams," said Prof Abdul Alim, chairman of Jashore Education Board.

Fifteen families of "Seventh Day Adventist" community now live in greater Kushtia, including Chuadanga and Meherpur Christian dioceses.

Drug addict stabbed dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A local drug addict was stabbed to death in Talpukur area of Sadar upazila on Monday night.

The deceased was identified as Md Ujjal Hossain, 26, son of Mohammad Ali of Nishindhara area in the upazila.

Police said some friends of Ujjal called him over phone. He then went to Talpukur area around 11:00pm.

At one stage, they stabbed Ujjal following an altercation over drug peddling, said Sub-Inspector Abdul Gafur of Upashahar police outpost.

Later, locals rescued Ujjal and sent him to Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital where he died later.

He was accused in two cases including one for robbery, said the police official.

Child slips from mother's lap, meets tragic end

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A two-year-old boy met tragic death when he fell onto a road from his mother's lap and was run over under the wheels of a bus in Birganj upazila of the district on Monday.

The deceased was identified as Md Nihan, son of Shamim Ashraf Shawan of Purba Narayanpur village in Magura's Mohammadpur upazila.

Police and family members said recently, Sinthia came to her parents' home in Birganj upazila with her son Nihan. After visiting the village home, she along with her was returning Magura by a bus of Bangladesh Road Transport Corporation (BRTC) on Monday morning.

They got on the bus from Bijoypur village in Birganj upazila.

The victim's grandfather Badsha Mia collected a ticket of a seat next to the door of the BRTC bus thinking that this seat would be comfortable for his grandson and daughter. The mother and son got the bus around 7:00am to return Magura. Nihan sat on his mother's lap.

As the bus reached the upazila health complex, the boy slipped from his mother's lap and fell onto the road. At the time, the door of the bus remained open. The boy was run over under the rear wheels of the bus.

The accident took place when the driver did a hard break.

The helper tried his best to save the body, but, failed, said Rafiqul Islam, a passenger of the bus.

Shakila Parvin, officer-in-charge of Birganj Police Station, confirmed it.



Elderly farmer Hamidul Islam of Rajabasar village in Dinajpur's Parbatipur upazila putting fertilisers on his cropland with the help of his sister Rokhsana.

PHOTO: STAR

Bid to cut production cost

Instead of hired labourers, growers and their family members themselves do work for early Aman cultivation to avoid loss

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Badly hit by losses over the Boro paddy lately, farmers in Dinajpur are now avoiding engaging labourers in a bid to cut cost and recoup the losses by cultivating early variety of Aman.

Family members of the farmers are doing the chores like sowing seeds, spraying pesticides and irrigating land by themselves. For the work, farmers otherwise paid Tk 3,000 per yard to day labourers.

Manik Hossain of Dewrtoil village under Dinajpur Sadar has cultivated Aman paddy on one acre of land. In the last Boro season, he had spent Tk 13,000 on labourers, but now he and four of his family members were collecting Aman harvests.

Prices of paddy plummeted in

the market during Boro season, said the farmers.

"Millers did not buy paddy from us as they had rice from previous Aman season stored," said Manik. "I had to sell one bag (77 kilogram) of paddy at Tk 850 to Tk 900 whereas the expected rate was Tk 1,200."

Boro season spreads over four months from the end of February every year while Aman season starts in August.

According to DAE Dinajpur, Boro crops were cultivated on about 1.74 lakh hectares of land and the district saw a yield of 7.29 lakh tonnes during the season.

About 2.59 lakh hectares have been cultivated for the Aman variety now with a production target of 7.80 lakh tonnes. But the district has seen harvests from only

two percent of the cultivated land so far, said DAE officials.

During a recent visit to Rajabasar village in Parbatipur upazila, this correspondent found an elderly man Hamidul Islam putting fertilisers on his land with assistance from his sister Rokhsana.

"He cannot do such a laborious task alone so I am helping him," said Rokhsana.

With a hope of profit, Hamidul has cultivated Aman paddy on 50 decimals of land.

"There was no profit in last Boro season. All my six family members are now working on field as well as taking up other part-time tasks to recoup the loss."

"Most farmers are now in a soup as they could not clear the debts taken during Boro cultivation. Many have taken fresh loans to

start Aman cultivation," said Azizul Haque, a farmer of Uttar Gosaipur village in Sadar upazila.

This correspondent talked to 39 farmers in different upazilas of the northern district.

They said they could not supply paddy to the government during the last procurement drive. They urged the government to collect the produces from farmers not millers.

Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman, food controller in Dinajpur, said 13,461 tonnes of paddies were collected from 16,508 farmers whereas the district has 4.5 lakh farmers.

He went on saying that 85,047 tonnes of boiled rice were procured from 2,354 millers while 8,784 tonnes of Atap rice were procured from 121 millers.



A mobile court during a drive yesterday demolished this brick kiln in Madla area under Bogura Sadar municipality.

PHOTO: COLLECTED