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RANGPUR SUGAR MILLS

Production on despite loss

*Santals find it a move to stop
them from reclaiming land*

ANWAR ALI

Despite incurring losses, the Rangpur Sugar Mills Ltd in Gaibandha is increasing production to make sugar, a move which according to the Santals is aimed at stopping them from returning to their ancestral land.

The mill, spanning 1,842.30 acres and about 20 kilometres from the Shahebganj-Bagda cane farm in Gobindaganj upazila, counted losses of Tk 3.65 crore in fiscal 2018-19, while it was Tk 4.09 crore and Tk 3.39 crore in the two previous years, shows its balance sheet.

The losses in these three years were much higher compared to the preceding years. Previous reports show a profit of Tk 50 lakh in 2014-15 and a loss of Tk 49.73 in 2015-16.

The mill's Managing Director Md Rafiqul Islam attributed the losses to a hike in labour and irrigation costs. "The soil quality was not congenial to cane farming either, resulting in low yield," he told The Daily Star recently.

However, Khaledur Rahman, an officer at the upazila Department of Agricultural Extension, said the soil was of optimal quality for cane production.

The land mainly belongs to the Santal community. However, they were evicted in 1956, leaving them landless.

Six years after the eviction, a land acquisition agreement was signed in 1962 between the then Pakistan Industrial Corporation, which subsequently set up the Rangpur Sugar Mills, and Office of the Deputy Commissioner, Rangpur, to cultivate sugarcane for the mill.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 3



A man works with hay and bamboo to build a home inside Shahebganj-Bagda cane farm in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila. Some of the 1,200 Santal families evicted from the farmland in 2016 have returned recently.

PHOTO:
ANWAR ALI

IS cap came from jail

Police find in primary probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rakibul Hasan Regan, a death row convict in the Holey Artisan café attack case, carried the prayer cap emblazoned with the IS logo to the court from jail, police found in primary investigation.

"Primarily, we have come to know that from jail he wore the cap outside in, and in the courtroom he wore it inside out," Mahbub Alam, joint commissioner of Detective Branch of police, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He added that usually if any accused carried a prayer cap, they were not barred.

Mahbub, chief of the three-member committee formed by Dhaka Metropolitan Police commissioner on Wednesday to probe how the convict got such a cap and brought it to the courtroom, said there was no instance of IS making such a cap.

The committee has been asked to submit its report within three working days.

Its two other members are Mashru Rahman, DB deputy commissioner (north), and Shahadat Hossain, additional deputy commissioner of the Intelligence and Analysis Division of DMP.

As soon as a Dhaka court completed the judgement delivery in the Holey Artisan

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

'We no longer have dreams'

Says son as body of father, killed in an airstrike in Libya, arrives home; 152 Bangladeshis back from the war-torn country

JAMIL MAHMUD

The body of Babulal, who was killed in an airstrike in Libya on November 18, reached home yesterday.

The victim's son -- Nazim Hossain, 14 -- received the body at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport yesterday morning.

Talking to The Daily Star, Nazim said his father migrated to the war-torn African country around a decade ago.

"We will now suffer as my father was the only breadwinner of our family."

Nazim also said that his father took loan from relatives and went to Libya with a hope that he would be able to bring solvency for his family.

"He was yet to finish repaying the money he borrowed. He had so many dreams ... He even wanted to build a home for all of us after returning the money," Nazim said, adding, "Now my father is gone. We no longer dream."

The victim, hailing from Rajshahi's Bagmara upazila, along with six other persons died while working at a biscuit factory in Tripoli.

Along with the son, Babulal left behind his wife, daughter and relatives to mourn his death.

Meanwhile, two more bodies returned from Libya.

The victims were identified as Arshad, of Gaibandha's Gobindaganj, and Nazrul Islam, of Natore's Lalpur upazila, said a Brac Migration Programme.

Arshad was electrocuted on August 19 in Tripoli while Nazrul was shot dead on August 6 in the city of Murzuq, Brac sources said.

SEE PAGE 17 COL 1

**Sir Abed
hospitalised**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Brac founder and Chair Emeritus Sir Fazle Hasan Abed was admitted to a city hospital on Wednesday evening after he fell sick, said a Brac statement yesterday.

According to the statement, Abed's condition is stable now and his family members are staying by his side.

Considering his health condition, his doctors have advised the hospital authorities to limit the number of visitors, said the statement, adding that the privacy of the patient and his family members is very important at this moment.

Sir Abed, 83, retired as the chairperson of Brac Bangladesh and Brac International in August 2019 and became the chair emeritus of the world's largest non-governmental organisation.

On November 20, he was honoured with the Officer in the Order of Orange-Nassau for

SEE PAGE 17 COL 6

**Artificial skin that
allows robots to feel**



CNN ONLINE

Robots are one step closer to gaining a human sense that has so far eluded them: Touch.

Scientists last month unveiled an artificial skin that enables robots to feel and respond to physical contact, a skill that will be needed as they come in increasingly close contact with people.

In 2017, manufacturers worldwide used roughly 85 industrial robots per 10,000 employees, according to a report by the International Federation of Robotics. The same report predicts the global supply of industrial robots to grow 14% per year until 2021.

But if robots end up working more closely with their fleshy colleagues, one concern is how they will interact safely.

"Currently, robots do not have any sense of touch," Professor Gordon Cheng, who developed the special skin with his team at the Technical

SEE PAGE 17 COL 6

Onion prices
going down
in Ctg whole-
sale market

3,000 tonnes arrived
at port in one week

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

Prices of onion at Khatunganj, one of the biggest wholesale essentials markets, saw a downward trend in the last three days as supply increased.

The supply began to rise after a good quantity of the essential cooking ingredient had been imported through Chattogram port over the last one week.

Around 3,000 tonnes of onions in 104 containers have reached the port. Some 2,000 tonnes have been imported by two large commodity importers -- BSM Group and Meghna Group -- which brought onions on for the first time.

Onion prices saw a hike at the wholesale hub of Khatunganj on November 21 and sustained an upward trend until November 25 due to supply shortage, traders said.

Wholesale prices of good quality onions from Myanmar rose to Tk 190 a kg on Monday and dropped by Tk 30 to Tk 40 in the last three days. It was sold at Tk 150 to Tk 160 a kg yesterday.

Prices of comparatively low-quality onions of Myanmar came down to Tk 130 a kg yesterday against Tk 150 a kg three days ago.

Prices of both Egyptian and Chinese onions also saw a decreasing trend at Hamidullah Mia Market, a wholesale hub for onion in Khatunganj.

Yesterday, wholesalers were seen selling Egyptian onions for Tk 140 a kg, which was Tk 170 a kg on Monday. Prices of Chinese onions came down to Tk 90-100 a kg yesterday. They were between Tk 120 and Tk 130 a few days ago.



PRAYER TIMING NOVEMBER 29

Fazr Juma Asr Maghrub Esha
AZAN 5-10 12-30 3-45 5-19 7-00
JAMAAT 5-45 1-15 4-00 5-22 7-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



**THE HOODED
ONE**

A cinereous tit sits atop the branch of a mango tree. Different varieties of the bird species are hard to identify at first glance. But for the cinereous tit, their grey-back, black hood and white cheek patch are a dead giveaway.

PHOTO:
RABIUL HASAN

Trump signs HK rights act

Pro-democracy protesters in the crisis-hit city hail the move; China threatens 'countermeasures'

AFP, Hong Kong

China yesterday threatened retaliation against Washington after US President Donald Trump signed legislation supporting Hong Kong pro-democracy protesters, just as the world's top two economies edge towards a trade truce.

Activists in the crisis-hit city hailed the move, saying it would help them pile pressure on Beijing-backed local authorities, and staged a "Thanksgiving" rally saluting Trump and US lawmakers.

Trump signed the legislation under heavy pressure from Congress, where it attracted rare bipartisan support, and in a statement spoke of his "respect" for Chinese President Xi Jinping, calling for both sides to "amicably settle their differences".

But Beijing lashed out furiously, summoning the US ambassador, threatening unspecified "firm countermeasures" and warning Washington not to implement the legislation.

"The nature of this is extremely abominable, and harbours absolutely sinister intentions," the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement.

"China strongly urges the US side to correct mistakes and change course," the ministry added later.

In Hong Kong, the government expressed "extreme regret" after Trump signed the legislation requiring an annual review of freedoms in Hong Kong and banning the sale of crowd control equipment.

The two acts are obviously interfering in Hong Kong's
SEE PAGE 17 COL 3