



A paddy field at Udoykathi village in Pirojpur Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Average production of paddy decreases, Boro sees rise

Pirojpur DAE says Aus was cultivated on 17,540 hectares, Aman on 64,180 hectares and Boro on 19,581 hectares of land

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Within over a decade, average production of paddy has decreased in Pirojpur though it is one of the important districts in growing paddy in the southern areas of the country. But of the Aus, Aman and Boro, the production of Boro has increased during this period.

According to a statistic of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Pirojpur, in the fiscal year 2005-2006, Aus paddy was cultivated on 23,790 hectares of land, Aman on 70,390 hectares of land and Boro on 17,000 hectares.

In the fiscal year 2019-2020, Aus was cultivated on 17,540 hectares of land, Aman on 64,180 hectares of land and Boro on 19,581 hectares.

Farmers said because of decreasing paddy fields, the cultivation of Aus and Aman has decreased.

On the other hand, the growers

are being interested in cultivating Boro paddy as new varieties have been invented and irrigation facility is available.

"Now you will find unplanned houses and gardens available where there were paddy fields around ten years ago. Thus, paddy cultivable land has been vanished," said grower Abdul Halim from Togra village in Pirojpur's Indurkani upazila.

The farmers also said that with the development of road communication, the value of roadside paddy fields is increasing. Due to this, the owners are using the lands for different commercial purposes. Shops and houses are being constructed there.

Farmers have also said that within three to four years of making vegetable garden heightening land inside paddy field, it has turned into wooden orchards that hamper the production of adjacent paddy fields.

Then other farmers are compelled to make orchards there leaving paddy cultivation.

Mainul Ahsan Munna, executive director of Royal Bengal Foundation in Pirojpur, said the government has taken many initiatives for the development in agriculture sectors.

"If wastage of farmland cannot be saved, the development of agriculture sector will be hampered," he said.

He also urged the government not to allow any farmland for non-productive activities.

Chinmoy Roy, deputy director of DAE in Pirojpur, said paddy fields are being decreased as they are being used for development works and other purposes like brick kiln construction.

"Wastage of cultivable land is creating pressure on paddy field," he said, adding that attempt of inventing new variety of paddy is going on to cope up with the demand of paddy.

Thai guava bears hope in Chougachha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Idris Ali of Jashore's Chougachha upazila has found success in cultivating Thai guava at his village.

His orchard on four bighas of land in Narayanpur village has been producing good yield of Thai-5 variety of guava since 2015.

After graduating from high school, Idris joined Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB). Following the completion of 10 years of service at BGB in 2005, he went to Singapore the next year.

Idris returned home in 2015 and started working on setting up the guava orchard in his village. He made Tk 3.5 lakh in sales from the very first harvest.

The orchard has been producing good yield every year and he expects even better harvest this year, with plenty of flowers on the guava plants, said Idris.

Aside from guava, he also grows improved varieties of lychee on about 1.5 bighas of land in his orchard. Tropical storm Amphan caused extensive damage to the lychee orchard last year, but he hopes to make up for the loss from an expected good harvest this year.

Guava is a profitable crop because in order to get a good yield, one needs only a minimal work after planting seedlings, Idris said, adding that he spent Tk 1.5 lakh



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Idris Ali tends to a guava plant at his orchard in Narayanpur village of Jashore's Chougachha upazila.

on the guava orchard till date and if there is no natural disaster or the prices do not drop at markets, he would make a good profit this time too.

A number of locals said they also have been considering cultivating guava commercially after seeing Idris achieve remarkable success with his guava orchard.

Chougachha Upazila Agriculture Officer Raichuddin said the office continues to provide necessary assistance to guava farmers and currently different varieties of guava – including Thai-5, Thai-6 and Thai Golden-6 varieties -- are being cultivated on 260 hectares of land in the upazila.

Six get life term for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A Kishoreganj court yesterday sentenced six people to life term imprisonment in connection with a case for killing a housewife in 2011.

The convicts are Sohrab Hossain, 55, his wife Joytsna Begum, 50, their son Sharif, 32, Muslim, 65, his wife Noor Nahar, 50, and their neighbour Rukun, 40, of Morolpara in Kishoreganj's Karimganj upazila.

According to the case statement, Ruba Akter, 18, of Morolpara village, was married to Mohammad Shamim in 2011.

On June 3 the same year, Shamim informed his in-laws that Ruba was missing from her in-laws' house.

The following morning, Ruba's body was recovered from a local water body.

Victim's elder brother Al Amin lodged a case with Karimganj Police Station accusing seven people, including Shamim, his uncles, aunts and cousin.



Journalist from form a human chain in front of Feni Press Club yesterday, demanding arrest of those who killed Borhan Uddin Muzakkir, correspondent of local online portal Barta Bazar. Borhan, who was bullet-hit during Friday's clash between two groups of Awami League in Noakhali's Companiganj upazila, died at a Dhaka hospital on Saturday.

PHOTO: STAR

Italian envoy killed

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Samrat Mohammad Abu Suffiun, operations officer, BANFPU-1, Kinshasa, DRC, told The Daily Star that there are around 82 female and 98 male officers from Bangladesh Police deployed in DR Congo to ensure security. "We are on alert to face any kind of situation in Congo," he said.

TROUBLED REGION

A vast country the size of continental western Europe, the DRC is grappling with numerous conflicts, especially in its remote, mineral-rich east.

Scores of militias roam the four eastern provinces, many of them a legacy of wars in the 1990s that sucked in countries around central-southern Africa and claimed millions of lives.

The Rome-based WFP said that Attanasio was on a fact-finding mission with the UN's food agency.

"The delegation was travelling from Goma to visit a WFP school feeding

programme in Rutshuru when the incident took place," it said in a statement.

"The attack... occurred on a road that had previously been cleared for travel without security escorts," it said.

Yesterday's attack occurred north of Goma, in Nyiragongo Territory.

Armed groups in the area include a Rwandan Hutu militia called the FDLR, as well as the M23, also known as the Congolese Revolutionary Army.

The region includes the Unesco-listed Virunga National Park, a vast wildlife reserve that is home to a quarter of the world's population of critically endangered mountain gorillas.

More than 200 of the park's rangers have been killed in attacks stretching back more than a decade.

The UN's refugee agency, the UNHCR, said last week that more than 2,000 civilians were killed in North and South Kivu and Ituri province last year.

Yellow penguin sighted

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expedition in December 2019 when they stopped on an island in South Georgia to photograph a colony of at least 120,000 king penguins, and spotted the bright plumage.

He said: "They all looked normal except for this one. It really was something else. It was an incredibly unique experience.

"One of the birds looked really strange, and when I looked closer it was yellow. We all went crazy when we realised. We dropped all the safety equipment and grabbed our cameras.

"We were so lucky the bird landed right where we were. Our view wasn't blocked by a sea of massive animals. Normally it's almost impossible to move on this beach because of them all."

He said it was a "leucistic" penguin, whose cells no longer create melanin, so its black feathers become a yellow and creamy

colour. "It was heaven that he landed by us. If it had been 50 metres away, we wouldn't have been able to get this show of a lifetime."

Scientists suspect the sighting represents the discovery of a new class of feather pigment.

In 2012, a "white" penguin was spotted in a chinstrap penguin colony in Antarctica. Its condition was thought to be a from genetic mutation that dilutes pigment in penguins' feathers.

Researcher Daniel Thomas told the Smithsonian Insider: "Penguins use the yellow pigment to attract mates and we strongly suspect that the yellow molecule is synthesised internally.

"[It's] distinct from any of the five known classes of avian plumage pigmentation and represents a new sixth class of feather pigment."

17 project directors

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said, wishing not to be named.

In a circular, 16 BR officials were given charges of 16 projects. However, one of them will carry out his duties as a PD only.

Golam Mostafa, who was the director (procurement) of BR, was given the charge of the PD of the project for construction of the dual-gauge double line from Joydebpur to Ishwardi.

In another circular, Al Fattah Md Masudur Rahman, who was the chief engineer (west) of BR, was made the project director of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Railway Bridge Construction

Project. The incumbent PD of the bridge project was made the additional director general (infrastructure) of BR and Monirul Islam Firozi, PD of Joydebpur to Ishwardi rail lines, was made the chief engineer (west) of BR recently.

The rest 15 PDs have to discharge their responsibilities alongside their duties in different projects and railway offices.

Asked about giving additional charges of the BR officials, Joint Secretary Khaled Hussain said they have to do so due to a lack of necessary manpower.

He added that they would take steps so that the officials could only work as PDs.

Take the jobs

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Bhaban. Awami League organised the programme at its 23 Bangabandhu Avenue central office.

Bangladesh reported its first coronavirus cases on March 8 and the first death on March 18.

Until yesterday morning, the country recorded 543,717 cases, including 8,356 fatalities.

Bangladesh signed an agreement with the Serum Institute of India Pvt Ltd for 30 million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine.

India also gifted Bangladesh 2 million doses of the vaccine last month. Bangladesh launched a countrywide vaccination drive on February 7.

Although reluctant at first, people are receiving the vaccine en masse.

"We've collected vaccines [while] many countries couldn't. It was possible as I took measures in advance," the PM said.

AL General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader delivered the introductory speech at the programme from 23 Bangabandhu Avenue while its Publicity and Publication Affairs Secretary Abdus Sobhan Golap conducted the event from the Gono Bhaban.

Presidium members Matia Chowdhury, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, Abdur Rahman, Joint Secretary and Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, Religious Affairs Secretary Sirajul Mostafa, Women and Children Affairs Secretary Meher Afroj Chumki, Cultural Affairs Secretary Asim Kumar Ukil, Dhaka South unit AL President Abu Ahammad Mannafi and Dhaka North unit AL President Sheikh Bazlur Rahman also spoke on the occasion.

One-minute silence was observed to show respect to all martyrs for establishing independent Bangladesh and democracy in the country.

Probe takes back seat as cops

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Two cases have been filed in connection with the violence, but police could not arrest anyone.

Mir Zahidul Haque Rony, officer-in-charge of Companiganj Police Station, said a situation of unrest was prevailing in the area. The police were struggling to maintain law and order.

Just now, police do not have enough time to investigate the clash. The police would start investigation after the situation becomes normal, he told The Daily Star.

Echoing him, Md Alamgir Hossain, superintendent of Noakhali police, said they now cannot pay full concentration on investigation of the clash.

Criminals will be arrested soon, the police officer added.

Meanwhile, breaching the imposed section 144, Quader Mirza tried to hold a press conference at Rupali Chhattar around 3:00pm yesterday. His attempt failed due to interference of the local administration.

At that time, he had locked in an altercation with law enforcers and officials

of the administration who prevented him from holding the press conference.

Mirza stayed on stage for a few moments. MUZAKKIR'S PHONE

Seeking anonymity, a journalist said Muzakkir was recording video during the clash when some people snatched his phone.

When Muzakkir wanted his phone back, the criminals opened fire, said the journalist who was present at the scene.

Now both the AL groups are claiming that Muzakkir was their man.

A source told The Daily Star that the Detective Branch of police had recovered the phone, but DB Inspector Zakir Hossain denied it.

Meanwhile, supporters of Mirza on Sunday attacked journalist Gias Uddin, correspondent of an online portal.

The victim said he tried to exchange greetings with Mirza when Mirza was passing by his shop at Rupali Chhatar. Mirza got furious and hurled abuse.

Mirza's followers then chased him to his shop and beat him up, the victim claimed.

US reaches 5 lakh deaths

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VACCINATION ROLLOUTS

According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), more than 61 million people have received at least one shot of vaccine in the United States, with some 18 million getting the full two doses.

Biden has made it a priority to get 100 million people vaccinated within the first 100 days of his administration.

In Australia, top officials Sunday were among a small group receiving the first vaccinations, a day before the program starts in earnest.

And in Gaza on Sunday, some 20,000 Russian-made Sputnik V vaccine doses arrived from the United Arab Emirates.

The jabs came via the Rafah crossing with Egypt, meaning they did not pass through Israel, which has maintained a tight blockade on Gaza since 2007.

Britain's government has vowed to offer a first dose to every adult by the end of July. More than 17 million people have now received at least a first vaccine dose -- one third of the adult UK population.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson was set to start unwinding England's third lockdown yesterday as a quickening UK-wide inoculation drive relieves pressure on hard-hit hospitals.

Johnson was expected to confirm the reopening of all English schools on March 8 in the first big step towards restoring normal life, nearly a year after he imposed the first stay-at-home order.

In Hong Kong, leader Carrie Lam received a shot of the Chinese Sinovac

drug after the financial hub last week fast-tracked its approval.

ITALY CASES RISING AGAIN

Coronavirus cases in Italy are on the rise again, in large part due to the more infectious British variant, a top virologist warned in a newspaper interview published Sunday.

His comments came as Italians in several cities ignored official appeals to stay at home to go out and enjoy the unusually mild weather over the weekend.

"Obviously, I'm worried," Massimo Galli, a specialist based at the Sacco de Milan hospital, told the Rome-based daily Il Messaggero.

"The resurgence in infections is due in large part to the English variant. To be honest, all the data is going in the direction of a rise in new cases," he added.

Although Italy's Higher Institute of Health (ISS) appealed to people on Friday to stay at home despite the forecast of milder weather, crowds packed the streets, parks and seafronts in several cities.

GlaxoSmithKline and Sanofi yesterday said they had started a new clinical trial of their protein-based Covid-19 vaccine candidate, reviving their efforts against the pandemic after a setback in December delayed the shot's launch.

The British and French drugmakers aim to reach final testing in the second quarter, and if the results are conclusive, hope to see the vaccine approved by the fourth quarter after having initially targeted the first half of this year.

Seven more

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from Sunday's 2.33 percent, while the overall infection rate stood at 13.73 percent, a little lower than Sunday's 13.76 percent.

However, the mortality rate remained almost steady at 1.54 percent for the past few days, said the handout, adding that 492,059 patients (90.50 pc) have recovered from the virus infection so far.

As of now, 3,958,776 samples have been tested, including 11,103 in the same 24-hour period.

Bangladesh reported its first novel coronavirus cases on March 8 last year and the first death on March 18.

NBR

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and Markets (DFIM) and the Department of Banking Inspection-2.

SK Sur Chowdhury, a former deputy governor of the central bank, also assisted PK Halder, according to the confessional statement.

In its directive to the banks and financial institutions, NBR's Central Intelligence Cell (CIC) asked banks to furnish information regarding all sorts of deposits including fixed deposits, savings and current accounts, loans, foreign currency accounts, savings certificates, vault or locker, beneficiary owners' accounts, investment schemes.

The CIC wanted banks to provide updated information of all accounts of the persons from July 1, 2013 within seven working days.

The NBR also directed banks to provide account information of SK Sur's spouse Suparna Sur Chowdhury, and Shah Alam's spouse Shaheen Akhter Shalley and Nasrin Begum, according to letters sent to banks by the end of last week.