



This winter, vegetable farmer Azmol Ali was blessed with a good yield, which bore him a profit twice that of the preceding years. While he cultivated different kinds of vegetables, Azmol took a leap of faith and decided to grow a hybrid variety of sweet pumpkin, that grows well despite minimum care. As its lush flowers start to bloom, they signal hope for Azmol. This photo was taken from Sylhet’s Mogalgaon union.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Four killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Four people were killed in road accidents in four districts during the last two days, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Dinaipur, a motorcyclist was killed after a truck hit him on Dinajpur-Gobindaganj road in Birampur upazila yesterday.

The deceased – Minarul Islam (38) from Nilphamari – was an employee of a local NGO.

Ershad Mia, a sub-inspector of Birampur Police Station, said Minarul was going to Birampur from his home riding a bike.

In Rangpur, another motorcyclist was killed as a bus hit the bike from the opposite direction at Dewti village in Pirgachha upazila yesterday. Sagar Mia (30) died on the spot, said police.

In Joypurhat, another biker was killed as the motorcycle hit a roadside tree in Radhanagar village on Saturday night.

The deceased – Kausik Chakraborty (22) – was from Panchbibi municipality area in the district.

Panchbibi Police Station OC Polash Chandra Deb said the accident occurred as Kausik lost his control over the bike.

In Netrakona, a lorry driver was killed as the vehicle fell into a ditch beside Durgapur-Nazirpur road at Dashed village

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Benefits for some, but what about the rest?

Govt excludes temporary tea workers from welfare scheme

MINTU DESHWARA

The government has recently started listing beneficiaries for a special programme to improve the lives and livelihoods of tea workers of the country, under the “Cha Sramikder Jibanman Unnayan Karmasuchi” scheme.

While an appreciable step, the scheme leaves out temporary tea workers, despite their number being significantly higher than the permanent workers.

According to the latest data from the Statistical Handbook on Bangladesh Tea Industry-2019, Bangladesh currently has 166 tea gardens in total, where there are 1,03,747 permanent workers and 36,437 temporary workers.

The total tea population, i.e. those who are dependent on the income of the permanent and temporary workers, is 4,72,125.

According to Central Committee of the Bangladesh Tea Workers Union’s data, the tea population in the country is approximately seven and a half lakhs.

However, after reviewing the data of 166 tea gardens, this correspondent found that there are no permanent tea workers in many of the gardens, including Baban Tea Garden of Habiganj; Sayilan, Dahuk, Karotoa and MM Tea Garden of Panchagarh; Greenfield Tea Garden of Thakurgaon and Hamidia Tea Garden of Moulvibazar.

This means the government’s scheme will exclude the vast number of workers employed by these gardens from its benefits.

Talking to The Daily Star, Koloti Rabidas, a temporary tea worker from Kulaura upazila, said they get no benefits other than the regular wage. “We work the same hours as permanent workers, but the limited grants and opportunities are



As the government starts listing the beneficiaries of its special scheme for tea workers around the country, temporary workers of the tea gardens remain excluded from its benefits. With the sense of uncertainty looming over their heads, they have only one question: What does the future hold?

PHOTO: STAR

always reserved for them,” he said.

“With the government following the same policy in their scheme as well, our woes keep going overlooked,” he added.

The fact that benefits are mostly given to permanent workers was confirmed by Nipen Paul, Bangladesh Tea Workers Union’s acting general secretary.

He informed that permanent workers get medical treatment, ration, homestead and provident fund benefits under the scheme, while temporary workers get close to nothing.

“This population is in dire need of these benefits, considering their living condition,” added Nipen.

Pranesh Goala, Kalighat’s UP

chairperson, said, “All voters in this union are from the tea gardens. Each vote was counted to form the current government, but it has only allowed benefits to permanent workers in return.”

He added that the new rules are in clear violation of the “Cha Sramikder Jibanman Unnayan Karmasuchi Bastobayan Nitimala-2013”, which prioritises worse-off workers.

Md Shah Jahan, deputy director of the social services (Bede, backward and transgender people) department, told this correspondent that they have talked to union leaders about introducing the scheme for permanent workers.

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420 WAGONS

Railway inks deal with Indian company

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Railway (BR) yesterday signed a contract with an Indian company to procure 420 Broad Gauge (BR) wagons, aiming to increase its capacity to operate more freight trains.

As per the contract, Hindustan Engineering and Industries Ltd will provide the wagons within two and half years from the date the contract will be effective, at the cost of Tk 231.19 crore.

Project Director Mizanur Rahman and Pradip Guha, vice president (marketing) of the Kolkata-based company, signed the contract on behalf of the organisation at Rail Bhaban, in presence of Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan.

The agreement was signed only five months before the expiry of the revised deadline of the project, meaning another lengthy extension is most definitely in the offing.

As per the contract, Hindustan Engineering and Industries Ltd of India will provide 420 broad gauge wagons within 2.5 years from the date the contract will be effective, at the cost of Tk 231.19 crore.

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CTG METRO RAIL

Govt to start feasibility study

Says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to start a feasibility study for launching the metro rail service in Chattogram city, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.


Apart from the feasibility study, a long-term and comprehensive transport masterplan for the port city will be prepared under a Tk 77 crore project. Korea International Cooperation Agency (Koica) will provide Tk 51 crore as grant. The study is slated to be completed within one year, he said.

The study will be implemented by Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority, he told reporters after holding a meeting with South Korean ambassador Lee Jang-keun at the Secretariat. The move comes a month after the prime minister at an Ecneec meeting on January 4 called for a metro rail from Chattogram airport to the railway station in Chattogram.


However, the discussion to construct metro rail in port city has been going on for longer. Back in October 15, 2019, Quader said the PM had asked him to start a feasibility study for the project.

Quader yesterday said feasibility study for the metro rail will be carried out along with the preparation of a comprehensive transport plan for port city and adjacent areas.

A Korean expert team has already arrived in Bangladesh and they will hold series of meetings with stakeholders in Chattogram and collect necessary data from February 8 to 12, he said.



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