



Farmers in Jamalpur are getting upset due to a fall in jute prices, though the district witnesses a good yield of jute this year. The photo was taken from Sonarhat wholesale market in Jamalpur's Islampur upazila. PHOTO: STAR

Low price frustrates Jamalpur jute growers

Each maund is selling from Tk 1,800 to Tk 2,200 at local markets

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Jute growers in different upazilas of the district are becoming frustrated due to fall in jute price. Their dissatisfaction has doubled as the cultivation cost was much more than the previous years due to high labour cost this season.

As a result, many farmers in the district, who have been involved in jute cultivation for long, are now opting to leave jute cultivation from next season.

Local farmers said the price of jute was satisfactory at the beginning of the season, but now it has drastically dropped due to unknown reason.

They said due to the sharp fall in jute price farmers are getting frustrated as many of them are facing huge losses in the important cash crop.

At start of the season, each maund of jute was selling from Tk 3,000 to Tk 3,200, but the



current market price is between Tk 1,800 and Tk 2,200, depending on its quality.

While talking to this correspondent, a number of jute growers of different villages in Islampur and Sarishabari upazilas said due to high labour cost they had to spend Tk 16,000 to Tk 17,000 to cultivate one bigha land this year.

Growers said if the weather is favourable, they get eight to nine maund of jute from each bigha land.

According to Jamalpur Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), about 26 thousand and 704 hectares of land have been brought under jute farming this year, compared to 29 thousand and 945 hectares

the previous year.

During a visit to Sonarhat jute market in Islampur and Aramnagar jute market in Sarishabari, this correspondent saw farmers were coming to the wholesale markets carrying jutes on small boats, horse carts or different locally assembled vehicles and selling those at a low price.

Farmer Bhikku Mia of Guthail village in Islampur upazila, who brought seven maunds of jutes to Sonarhat market for sale, said, "I have been selling my jute at a low price as I need some money on an emergency basis."

Another Delwar Hossain of Satpoa village in Sarishabari upazila said after witnessing fair prices last season he cultivated jute on his five bighas of land this year.

But he will have to count huge losses due to a drastic fall of jute price this season, Delwar said.

Grower Momin Mia from

Malandah upazila, who cultivated jute on his three bighas land, said though he had to work hard in his field, he is not getting proper benefit from it.

Another Hasan Ali from Madarganj upazila said he had spent extra money to irrigate his jute field as there was not enough rain this year.

Meanwhile, one of the jute traders Alam Mia said he has been doing the business for nearly 25 years, but never seen such gaps between cultivation cost and selling prices of the product.

Jamalpur DAE Deputy Director Zakia Sultana said local farmers are gradually losing interest in jute cultivation as they are not getting fair prices of their products.

Jamalpur Chief Jute Inspector Jahangir Alam said his office will monitor the jute market and if necessary, they will conduct mobile court drives to control the market price.

LALMONIRHAT MODEL MOSQUE

Construction work goes on at snail's pace

S DILIP ROY

Construction work of a model mosque-cum-Islamic cultural centre in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila sees very slow progress, much to the inconvenience of the people from local Muslim community.

The government took the initiative of constructing 564 model mosques across the country in 2017. After almost four years, the first 50 mosques were opened for public in 2021.

Department of Public Works (PWD) is implementing the project, located at Dhairkhata village under Kulaghat union in the upazila, on 48 decimals of land at a cost of over Tk 12.6 crores.

PWD officials said Sajid Construction Limited got the work order, but Sakhawat Hossain Sumon, a local contractor, has been supervising the work on behalf of the construction firm from Dhaka.

The construction work was started on September 25 in 2019 and scheduled to be completed by March 24, 2021, but about 75 percent work has been completed so far.

Meanwhile, though about 25 percent work is yet to be done, the construction firm has already withdrawn bills worth Tk 8.50 crores.

Mentionable, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the model mosque and Islamic cultural centre virtually from the Gono Bhaban on April 17 this year.

Abed Ali, president of Dhairkhata Jam-e-Mosque managing committee, said construction of the model mosque may not be completed in next one year due to slow progress of the work.

Mantaj Ali, Imam of the mosque, said the contractor has been running the construction work with only four to five workers every day.

Contacted, Sakhawat Hossain Sumon said construction of the model mosque-cum-Islamic cultural centre could not be completed on time due to rapid spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) across the globe.

"We have sought a time extension till the end of February next year," Sakhawat said.

Lalmonirhat PWD Executive Engineer Al Mamun Haque said despite giving repeated ultimatum the contractor concern seems reluctant to complete the construction by the end of this year.



PHOTO: STAR

Hasina to start polls campaign from Sylhet Bribe taken at minister's house now

FROM PAGE 14 party chief's Dhanmondi political office yesterday.

"The prime minister will offer prayer at the shrines of Hazrat Shahjalal and Hazrat Shah Paran in Sylhet, followed by a grand rally. With the rally, she will formally inaugurate the electioneering," said Quader.

Quader alleged that talk of human rights does not suit the BNP as they broke all records in violating human rights.

"The example they set for violating

human rights is unmatched in the contemporary world. How come they are talking about human rights? They don't even have any shame," said Quader.

Asked for comment on the Jatiya Party's demand to withdraw AL nominees from some constituencies, Quader said he would not make any comment until the decision is finalised.

"Today, human rights are being plundered in the hands of those who are more vocal about human rights.

But internationally, we have seen that the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada have imposed sanctions on 90 people from 13 countries. Bangladesh is not on the list," said Quader.

"If you talk about human rights, you have to talk about Palestine. At least 18,000 people were killed. But the United States is the only supporter for Israel on the UN Security Council. This proves once again that the wicked boy named Israel is the son of America," he added.

EC orders withdrawal

FROM PAGE 1 Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah had long been alleging that the commissioner was close to him and demanding his transfer.

BMP commissioner Saiful yesterday told this newspaper that people alleged he belonged to a group. "As such an allegation was raised against me in the last Barishal city corporation polls, I sought my own transfer but the authorities concerned asked me to continue."

Meanwhile, locals of Sylhet could not give any possible reason for the

transfer of the SMP commissioner. About the withdrawal of Noakhali SP Shahidul Islam, locals said the continuous deterioration of law and order and allegations of corruption against him could be reasons.

Shahidul had joined as the SP of Noakhali on August 1, 2021.

Even just last Friday, they said, robbers looted two gold shops in Kabirhat and killed a security guard.

On the other hand, AL leader Abdul Quader Mirza, brother of the party's General Secretary Obaidul Quader, at a rally brought allegations

of corruption and supporting BNP-Jamaat against the Noakhali SP and the OC of Companiganj police.

There are also allegations of corruption against Satkhira SP Kazi Moniruzzaman.

Gold trader Sheikh Saifullah had filed a complaint against him with the IGP complaint cell at the police headquarters earlier in April, saying Moniruzzaman had took away his car and two kilograms of gold while the trader was on his way to Satkhira on February 2. The complaint is still under investigation.

Onion prices remain high despite raids

FROM PAGE 14 establishments a total of Tk 3.7 lakh. Several teams of the Detective Branch of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police are working on the field in Chawkbazar and Shyambazar areas to keep the market under control, said the DB chief Harun Or Rashid in response to a reporter's question at his office in the capital's Minto Road yesterday.

"If anyone hoards onions to sell them at high prices, we will bring them under the law," he said. But the initiative had little effect so far.

For instance, the wholesaler Babul was selling the local onions at Tk 200 a kg even yesterday.

Since Saturday, each kg of onion has been selling for Tk 180-220 in Pabna, said a retail trader.

Last week, each maund (37.3kg) of onion sold for Tk 4,000-4,500. Now, it is more than Tk 7,000 a maund, said Rabiul Islam, a wholesale trader.

Over in Dinajpur, a kg of onion was selling for Tk 210 to Tk 220, up from Tk 90 a kg on Friday.

Govt to import onion The government has taken the initiative to import some 52,000 tonnes of onion from India against the LCs that were opened earlier before the ban was slapped by the neighbouring country in a bid to curtail the price of the kitchen

essential in local markets, Commerce Ministry Senior Secretary Tapan Kanti Ghosh told BSS.

The Ministry of Commerce has already sent a letter to the Bangladesh High Commission to take the necessary action in this regard.

"We've taken various initiatives to keep onion prices under control. Efforts are also on to increase the import of onion from alternate countries. Alongside, the sale of onion will continue through TCB among the low-income group," he said, adding that the concerned deputy commissioners have been asked to monitor the sale of onion at a rational price in the districts.

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"Finally on Thursday, the minister's secretary asked us to visit the minister's residence, but the security guard beat us up when we went there," he added.

Two other job aspirants -- Nasir Howlader and Jahid Hasan -- were also with him, he said.

"I do not know about the other people's money. The [state minister's] representatives had not said anything about it to me."

Contacted, State Minister Zakir said, "My house is an open place. People from my area come to my house, stay, and have food."

"Additional drivers and armed guards stay in my house. They [job seekers] have talked with them [drivers, and guards]."

"I saw that the media reported

about Tk 94 lakh. But in reality, Tk 9.5 lakh was given to Liton and others.

"So, I asked the people whose names were mentioned in the media to return the money within 24 hours. I told them to return the money to the person it was taken from. I gave the responsibility of settling the issue to a young man from my area. Why would this issue come to me?"

He said that he asked them to return the money or face police action.

"I did not touch the money... but got defamed. They tarnished my reputation. This is the work of a syndicate."

Contacted, Sufian, also a joint secretary general of Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sontan Sangsad, said, "The minister's representatives handed over the money. The police currently have it for verification. They told me to collect it in a day or two."

Oil reserve found

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The reserve has 8-10 million barrels of oil, the value of which would be about Tk 7,000 crore, according to the data provided by Petrobangla.

The gravity of the oil is 29.7 API (American Petroleum Institute) unit, which is a medium-quality crude oil, according to the authorities of Sylhet Gas Field.

The samples have been sent to the Eastern Refinery and Buet, said Md Mizanur Rahman, the managing director of Sylhet Gas Field.

"We will be able to confirm the quality in a couple of days," he added. Bangladesh has a demand for 210,000 barrels of oil per day, 90 percent of which are imported.

Gas was found in all four layers of 3,300 metres. Earlier on November 26, the government announced finding gas in the Sylhet-10 well under the Hariapur gas field.

The reserve gas in the well is 43 to 100 billion cubic feet and 20 million cubic feet of gas can be extracted in a day for the next 15 years, Hamid said. Sinopec had started the drilling

in June this year and the total expenditure for the well has been around Tk 203 crore, said officials.

This has been a part in the ongoing move to add around 618 million cubic feet of gas per day (mmcf) by 2025 by drilling 46 wells in different gas fields.

Currently, the local gas fields supply about 1,250 mmcf of gas against the daily demand of 3,700 mmcf. About 500-600 mmcf of gas is being added from LNG imports.

Boats with 400 Rohingya

FROM PAGE 14 coordinating in the field to collect data.

Susanto confirmed the military was aware of a second boat but did not have information of where it had landed or how many were on board.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo said in a statement on Friday that he suspects human trafficking is behind the recent escalation in boat arrivals and has promised to work with international organisations to handle the issue.

He added that he had provided a written statement, saying, "I have received the owed money."

Harun Or Rashid, additional commissioner (DB) at Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told reporters that a settlement had been reached, adding, "I will give the details once I have all the information."

Police sources said one of the two minister's men present at the DB office is named Arif. Fazle Elahi, an additional deputy commissioner of DB's Ramna division, was present there as well.

Elahi could not be reached for comment.

A high official of DB, requesting anonymity, said officers would return the money to Sufian after talking with other job seekers who also claim to have paid money for the job.

Gaza health

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"underground tunnel shafts" in southern Gaza as well as "a Hamas military command" in Shejaiya, an army statement said.

Residents said Israeli tanks had reached the main north-south road through the middle of Khan Younis after intense combat through the night.

The fighting has killed at least 17,997 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

Mediation efforts are continuing to secure a new Gaza ceasefire despite ongoing Israeli bombardment that is "narrowing the window" for a successful outcome, Qatar's prime minister said yesterday.

"Our efforts as the state of Qatar along with our partners are continuing. We are not going to give up," Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani told the Doha Forum.

Aid groups have sounded the alarm on the "apocalyptic" humanitarian situation in the narrow Palestinian territory, warning it is on the brink of being overwhelmed by disease and starvation.