

A farmer harvests paddy from jhum land in Rangamati. PHOTO: STAR

JHUM HARVEST

begins amid fears of poor yields

RIKORS CHAKMA, *Rangamati*

Farmers from indigenous communities across Rangamati have begun harvesting their jhum crops amid concerns over declining yields, which threaten their year-round food supply.

During visits to several hilly areas, this correspondent saw farmers harvesting and threshing paddy, while others were collecting and storing sesame, turmeric and maize.

Farmers said yields of jhum paddy and other crops have been falling for several years, leaving many families worried about their food supply.

Kyasinu Marma, a jhum farmer from Kaptai, said paddy yields had fallen by half over the past few years despite using the same quantity of seeds on the same plot of land.

Gayan Moy Chakma, a farmer from Barkal upazila, said jhum land was no longer as productive as before, with yields declining every year.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), jhum cultivation covered 5,000 hectares across Rangamati's 10 upazilas this year, with a production target of around 10,000 tonnes.

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Falling veggie prices bring relief to buyers



SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Prices of most vegetables have fallen in Dhaka kitchen markets as supplies of early-winter produce have increased. Over the past two weeks, prices of some vegetables have dropped by more than half.

However, tomatoes and new potatoes remain relatively expensive.

The trend was observed during visits to markets in Shewrapara, Kazipara, Ibrahimpur, Mirpur-1 and Karwan Bazar over the past two days.

Ranu Begum, 60, a resident of Kathalbagan, visited the Karwan Bazar kitchen market yesterday to buy essentials for her six-member family.

She said early winter vegetables were expensive even two weeks ago. Although she wanted to buy the seasonal produce at the beginning of the season, high prices had prevented her from doing so.

According to her, cabbage and cauliflower were selling for Tk 60-80 each two weeks ago, beans for Tk 140-160 per kg and round brinjal for over Tk 150 per kg. Radish was selling for Tk 50 per kg.

Yesterday, she bought beans for Tk 50 per kg. She also paid Tk 60 for two medium-sized cauliflowers, Tk 30 for a cabbage, and Tk 25 per kg for radish.

Private company employee Monjurul Islam was buying vegetables from a roadside vendor at Shewrapara kitchen market yesterday.

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Terrible toilets at Dhaka bus terminals

Women face inadequate facilities; poor maintenance add to commuters' woes

HELEMUL ALAM

Afsana Akter arrived at Mohakhali Inter-District Bus Terminal one recent afternoon to catch a bus to Mymensingh.

While waiting, she and her husband went looking for a toilet. But the only cubicle designated for women in the terminal's main building was occupied, forcing her to wait.

The terminal once had separate toilet facilities for men and women, but most of the women's section was converted into facilities for men around three years ago.

"I have been working here since the terminal began operations in 2006. There were separate sections for men and women. However, around three years ago, the women's section



was converted into a men's toilet, leaving only one chamber for women because the number of female users is comparatively low," said Mohammad Razu Mia, cashier of the toilet facility.

Afsana called the arrangement unacceptable.



Mohakhali bus terminal. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

"It is very difficult for women. The number of toilets should be increased. We should not have to share facilities with men," she said.

During recent visits to Mohakhali, Gabtali and Sayedabad bus terminals, this correspondent found most public toilets poorly maintained, with inadequate facilities for women.

Mohakhali has four public toilets, none with a separate section exclusively for women. Most were dirty, with unclean toilet pans and urinals and foul odours.

Anannya, a dedicated women's toilet built jointly by WaterAid and Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) at the south-east corner of the terminal's entrance, was inaugurated on March 16. However, it was locked during a visit around 3:00pm on July 28.

A nearby shopkeeper said it usually remains open and suggested that staff might have been away for lunch.

At Gabtali Bus Terminal, only one of the four public toilets, built with WaterAid support, was clean and well maintained, with liquid soap and other basic hygiene facilities.

The facility remains open 24 hours and is cleaned round the clock by five cleaners, said cashier Mohammad Dipu.

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GURUDASPUR IN NATORE

Shakil killing puts BNP MP's family rivalry in spotlight

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

The death of Chhatra Dal leader Shakil Islam in Gurudaspur has sparked outrage and criticism of Natore-4 BNP lawmaker Abdul Aziz and his family, amid allegations that a rivalry between his two sons has divided local party ranks.

Local BNP and JCD leaders said the rivalry has disrupted party politics since the BNP government took office.

Party sources said Aziz chose his younger son, Mahamuduzzaman Shohag, as his political successor after being elected to parliament, fuelling tensions with his elder son, Nooruzzaman Mintu, who had worked alongside their father for decades.

The rivalry intensified when Shohag began preparing to contest the next upazila parishad chairman election, they said.

"Both brothers have formed their own factions to establish supremacy, and tensions have escalated recently due to this rivalry," said Imam Hasan Tipu, a former JCD leader.

Former Gurudaspur municipality mayor and senior BNP leader Moshiur Rahman Bablu said, "Gurudaspur has essentially become heavily influenced by the Aziz family, dragging the BNP's political reputation down just months into the new government."



SHAKIL ISLAM

Md Shah Alam, a JCD leader of the Bilchalan Shahid Shamsuzzoha Government College unit, said Shakil was a follower of Shohag.

Moshiur alleged that the family feud led to Shakil's death. However, Shakil's family did not blame the lawmaker's family.

Contacted yesterday, Aziz dismissed the allegations, claiming that a group backed by Awami League members was conspiring against him.

"These are false allegations aimed at defaming me and my family and destroying my political career. Those who failed to secure nominations earlier are now conspiring against me," he said.

Aziz acknowledged a rivalry between his sons but described it as a private family matter unrelated to politics.

Asked about Shohag's possible candidacy for upazila chairman, he said no election-related initiatives were underway.

Denying his family's involvement in Shakil's murder, Aziz said, "The victim's father named two attackers. An Awami League leader, who is currently living in the US, was behind the killing, but my family's name was dragged into the incident for political leverage."

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Members of the landless artist community, alongside Nijera Kori founder Khushi Kabir, attend the opening of "Peripheral Imaginaries" at Bengal Shilpalay in Dhanmondi on Thursday. The exhibition marks the 45th anniversary of Nijera Kori, a human rights organisation working with landless people, and features collaborative artworks exploring their lives, struggles, and cultural heritage. Curated by Mahbubur Rahman, the exhibition will end today. PHOTO: AISHWARYA RAIHAN

IN BRIEF

HSC, equivalent exam results today

BSS, *Dhaka*

The results of this year's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) and equivalent examinations, in which more than 12.70 lakh examinees took part, will be published today.

The results will be formally announced at 11:00am in the meeting room of the Secondary and Higher Education Division, Ministry of Education.

Right after the announcement, examinees will be able to check their results simultaneously through their educational institutions, designated websites, and SMS.

Online, results can be checked using roll and registration numbers from https://eduboardresults.gov.bd and https://educationboardresults.gov.bd.

Results can also be known instantly by sending an SMS to 16140 from any mobile operator in the prescribed format.

Meanwhile, an Inter-Education Board press release said applications for re-scrutiny or reassessment of answer scripts by students dissatisfied with their results will start from November 1. Students can apply online until November 7. Detailed instructions will be published on the websites of the respective education boards.

Biman forms probe body on PM's flight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines has formed an investigation committee to determine the cause of the technical fault that delayed a flight carrying Prime Minister Tarique Rahman and his entourage home from Japan on October 29.

The committee was formed following Biman's existing rules and procedures, the national flag carrier said in a press release yesterday.

Biman did not disclose the committee's composition or specify when the investigation report would be submitted.

It has been directed to finish the investigation as quickly as possible and submit a report to Biman's senior management and the civil aviation and tourism minister.

Further action will be taken based on the minister's instructions and recommendations, Biman said.

Flight BG377 encountered a technical problem at Japan's Narita International Airport on October 29, delaying its departure for Dhaka.

Attacks on minorities rise when democracy falters: minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Attacks on religious and ethnic communities in Bangladesh have often followed setbacks to democracy, underscoring the need for an inclusive state where people of all faiths and backgrounds can live without fear, Liberation War Affairs Minister Ahmed Azam Khan said yesterday.

"Whenever democracy has stumbled, different communities have come under attack," he said.

He was speaking at a programme marking the 75th founding anniversary of the National Council of Churches in Bangladesh (NCCB) at the CBCB Auditorium in Mohammadpur.

He said the government, led by Prime Minister Tarique Rahman, wanted to build a state for people of all religions, ethnicities and communities.

MP Anna Minj praised the NCCB's 75-year role in promoting unity, and communal harmony.

Bijon Kanti Sarkar, special assistant to the prime minister on minority affairs, also spoke.

Koren Samuel Sunil Mankhin presided over the programme, while NCCB General Secretary Rev David Aniruddha Das was among the speakers.