



Villagers process harvested onion at a field in Mujibnagar upazila of Meherpur.

PHOTO: STAR

## Sukhsagar onion brings smile to Mujibnagar farmers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Hundreds of farmers in Mujibnagar upazila of Meherpur are all smiles as they have started harvesting Sukhsagar, an early variety of Indian onion.

Good yield and fair price of the item this year has come as a boon to them, especially against the backdrop of losses in last couple of years.

The high yielding variety of Indian onion came to popular use in the area a few years ago and it has been cultivated on around 1,000 acres of land in Mujibnagar this season, said upazila agriculture officials.

Saplings are collected from different markets in border areas and planted in mid-December, local farmers said.

Alamin Hossain of Sonapur Colonipara in Mujibnagar upazila cultivated Sukhsagar onion on two bighas of land this season. On Friday afternoon, he was seen nursing his onion field

near his house. "The yield of Sukhsagar onion is 80 to 100 maunds per bigha whereas the yield of indigenous varieties is 50 to 60 maunds. The cultivation cost including that for seeds, seedlings, sowing and plantation, irrigation, and fertilisers is Tk 30,000 to Tk 35,000 for a bigha," he said.

"At present, Sukhsagar onion is selling at Tk 2500 to Tk 2700 maund and so, I am expecting good profit," said a smiling Alamin.

Jahirul Biswas of Shibpur village, who cultivated the variety of onion on his three bighas of land, is also hopeful of a good earning.

This correspondent found farmers in groups guarding their onion fields at night to check possible theft.

Meanwhile, several farmers expressed apprehension that onion price may see a sudden drop if the government imports onion from India, especially during the harvesting period.

It happened in previous years, they said.

"If fair price is ensured, the farmers of Mujibnagar will cultivate this onion next time. Its cultivation can be spread in other areas too," said primary teacher Feroz Ahmed, who also grows onion in Sonapur village.

Local consumers are also opting for this variety of onion as it is selling at Tk 60 to 70 a kg in the retail market, which is much lower than other varieties, he said.

Mosharruf Hossain, additional deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension, Meherpur, said, "This variety of onion grows well in the area due to good amount of moisture in the soil.

However, it cannot be preserved for long due to the high water content." The agriculture department is working with the Ministry of Commerce to ensure that onion is not imported during this season, he added.

## Tree looters fell 500 eucalyptus trees in Gaibandha

Hundred other roadside trees cut down in Sunamganj

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Around 600 roadside trees have been illegally felled in Gaibandha and Sunamganj during the last several days.

Unscrupulous people at Uttar Dumurgachha village in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha felled a good number of roadside trees without any permission from competent authorities, reports our Gaibandha correspondent.

Defying protest from villagers, labourers employed by influential people felled about 500 eucalyptus trees along a one-kilometre rural road at Uttar Dumurgachha in three days till Monday, locals said.

Over a decade ago, a youth organisation named Dumurgachha Adarsha Jubo Sangha planted saplings of eucalyptus trees along the one-kilometre road, they said.

"The organisation became defunct a few years ago. Recently its former president Razibur Rahman Mondol sold all the now mature trees to timber trader Mottaleb Hossain for Tk 4 lakh. Then Mottaleb employed labourers for felling the trees," said Mahbub Hossain Majnu, a former member of the organisation.

Asked about the matter, Razibur Rahman said he ordered workers to cut down the trees after consultation with Abdul Kader Proddhan, chairman of local Nakai union parishad (UP).

The UP chairman, on the other hand, said, "None consulted with me before felling the trees. Village police have been deployed on the spot, so that miscreants

cannot remove the logs of felled trees."

Ramkrishna Barman, upazila nirbahi officer of Gobindaganj, said he sent officials to stop tree felling and ordered keeping the seized logs at the premise of union parishad.

Action is being taken against the culprits, he added.

Our Moulvibazar Correspondent reports: Criminals looted around 100 trees beside Tahirpur-Anwarpur road in Tahirpur upazila of Sunamganj during the last three days.

Gangs felled the roadside trees in broad daylight and took away the logs on pushcarts and rickshaw-vans, said locals.

Mofiz Mia, a resident of Anwarpur area, said the upazila administration had planted a good number of mango, mahogany and rain trees beside the five-kilometre road 15 years ago.

"When we asked the tree fellers why they were doing it, they replied that the forest department gave permission for it," said Monir Mia, a resident of Huseenpur village.

Birendra Kishore, beat officer at Tahirpur forest office, said, "I did not give the permission. We only marked some mature trees."

Abdul Karim Kim, executive member of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon, said it is unfortunate that a section of government officials are directly or indirectly encouraging felling of trees, killing of animals and destruction of forests.

Bijen Banerjee, upazila nirbahi officer of Tahirpur, said, "I do not know about the tree looting. I will take action after investigation."



Illegally felled trees lie beside the road at Uttar Dumurgacha village in Gobindaganj upazila of Gaibandha.

PHOTO: KM REZAUL HOQUE



PICTURE TELLS THE TALE: The children's park, meant for the wards of Bangladesh Railway employees in Lalmonirhat, hardly serves the purpose as the set-up in Station Road area of the district town remains in an awful state for years. Various items installed there for entertainment of children have already got damaged or disappeared altogether amid lack of maintenance while an open stage, set up at a corner of the park for arrangement of cultural functions, is no longer of any use. PHOTO: SDILIP ROY

## Pregnant woman strangles daughter, kills self in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A pregnant woman allegedly took her own life after killing her four-year-old daughter at Shikarpur village in Sarsha upazila of Jashore district on Sunday evening.

The deceased were identified as Julekha Khatun, 28, wife of Al Mamun of the village, and her daughter Amena Khatun.

Julekha was six months pregnant, said family members.

Law enforcers arrested two women in connection with the incident.

The arrestees are one Julie Begum, 25, and her mother Rahela Begum, 50, of the same upazila, said police.

Julekha's father Tariqul Islam said a gold chain of Alauddin's daughter Julie Begum of Ramchandrapur village was stolen five

months ago.

On Sunday, Julekha's daughter Amena went to Alauddin's shop at Shikarpur to buy some chocolates. At the time, Julie took away a gold chain from Amena's throat.

Later, Julie came to Julekha's house with the gold chain and locked in an altercation with the latter. At one stage of altercation, Julie termed Julekha as a gold chain thief.

Julekha then took her life by hanging herself from the ceiling of the room after strangling Amena.

Julekha's husband Al Mamun said his mother-in-law gifted the gold chain.

On information, the law enforcers rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies and sent those to Jashore General Hospital for autopsy, said Assistant Superintendent of Police Jewel Imran of Navaran Circle in Jashore.

## Netrakona haor people face river erosion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Erosion by the Dhanu river has rendered many families homeless at Panchhat Charpara village in Khaliyajury upazila of Netrakona in the last three years.

The river devoured a number of houses and vast tract of cropland in the haor area during the period, said villagers.

Ataur Rahman, chairman of Gazipur union parishad (UP), said the river is flowing beside Panchhat Charpara village. Around 70 houses of the village went into the river in the last three years. Of the dwellings, 25 were devoured this year.

Around 400 ultra-poor people has faced river erosion till now, said the chairman.

He feared that if the erosion is not checked

immediately, the entire village will go into the river within few years.

An application was submitted to the Ministry of Shipping in August last year for immediate step to stop river erosion using 'lope cut' in the erosion-prone areas and constructing a dam alongside the river but no step is taken yet, said the chairman.

The river erosion takes its serious turn during the rainy season due to onrush of hilly waters coming from across the border, he said.

Hundreds of engine-run boats ply through the river for different destinations and waves created from the plying of boats, said the UP chairman, adding that it is one of the main reasons for the erosion.

Md Abdul Khaleque, former member of Gazipur union parishad, said he lost

his homestead on 10-decimal of land and cropland due to river erosion last year. He along with his family members are now living on land of a villager.

Dulal Mia, a farmer of the area, said his only homestead was devoured by the river. He is now staying at a relative's house of the village with his family members.

Contacted, Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) AHM Ariful Islam said he visited the affected village recently.

There is a plan to rehabilitate the erosion-hit people to a proposed government's "Ashrayan and Guchhugram Project" in the union on priority basis, said the UNO.

They have already informed the higher authorities to take immediate steps in this regard, he said.



The Dhanu river has recently devoured homesteads and croplands at Panchhat Charpara village in Netrakona's Khaliyajury upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED