

Couple bloom tulips first in Bangladesh

SHYKH SERAJ

During the mid-80s, I got engaged with Bangladesh Television's agricultural documentary programme Mati O Manush (Soil & People). During that time, I met a Belgian named Jean Paul Perrin, who came to Bangladesh through an NGO and had a bond with floriculture or flower farming. He worked on gerbera flower back in 1988 and also worked on chrysanthemum and carnation flowers. He was successful in some of them. He also tried to cultivate tulip, the most acclaimed ornamental flower. Jean even showed me a bulb of tulip which was the first tulip bulb I had ever seen. But the flower did not bloom that time and he could not become successful in growing tulip in Bangladesh. I had been fortunate enough to visit Keukenhof of The Netherlands back in May, 2015. For the very first time, I could see tulip and had the idea how its magnificent field would look like.

A few days back, I went to Kewa village located in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila. Today, I will tell my dear readers an outstanding story of a young entrepreneur couple. They are involved with floriculture and flower farming for about 15 years. They have managed to bloom Tulip on Bangladeshi soil for the very first time. When I first heard this, it sounded unbelievable. So many projects, so many people have tried to make it happen from time to time but no one succeeded. But this young duo hasn't only been able to grow tulip, but has successfully managed to grow capsicum, gladiolus, gerbera, China rose and many other flower varieties. Delwar Hossain along with his wife Shelly Hossain made this miracle happen a month back.

I don't know where Jean Paul Perrin lives now as I don't have any contacts with him. But



Shykh Seraj talks with Delwar Hossain and Shelly Hossain at their tulip orchard at Kewa village in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

Shykh Seraj is Bangladesh's pioneer development journalist. He received country's two highest civilian honours, Swadhinata Puroshkar and Ekushey Padak, respectively. He is a BIDS, Ashoka and Bangla Academy Fellow. He also received highest award for agricultural journalism from the United Nations, FAO A.H. Boerma Award, Gusi Peace Prize (Philippines) and many other prestigious accolades at home and abroad. At Channel i, he's the Founder Director and Head of News. He's also Director and Host of Channel i's popular agro-documentary, Hridoye Mati O Manush.



I want to let him know that, "Dear friend, your dream has come true in the land of Bangladesh. Your mission has been accomplished by a young Bangladeshi couple Delwar and Shelly." "When did it first bloom?"

"A month back." One morning, Delwar came to his European orchard and saw something red is blooming. Then he took a picture of it and sent it to his wife, Shelly. She forwarded the photo to The Netherlands. They both knew it was tulip but was later confirmed that yes the couple made the impossible, possible. They grew tulip.

Back in 2017, the duo received a short training from a Dutch flower company named Royal Van Zanten in The Netherlands. They returned with 60,000 bulbs of liliium and other agricultural tools. Over the years they have remained in touch with the organisation, as part of which they received 1,000 tulip bulbs for free.

I asked Delwar and Shelly, whether they have any plans to sell the tulips they grew.

"No, we don't want to sell. At least two or three people have called us from Gulshan asking whether we would sell those. But our

point is everything cannot be measured by money," replied Delwar.

"People from our region are coming here, seeing tulips, taking selfies; not everyone can afford to visit Kashmir or The Netherlands to enjoy this view. It is a great pleasure to us," added Shelly.

"If everything goes fine, we have plans to sell next season," both said with a wide smile on their faces.

They have kept the tulips under net house. The couple say it would have been better if they could mix urea with some more fertilizers and pour the liquid mix into the flowers, but instead they are giving the inputs directly. They look forward to get water soluble fertilizer. The agriculture officers have already confirmed that they have a very good soil to grow tulips here. Delwar and Shelly believe more tulips can be grown in the colder regions like the northern district of the country. They are trying to grow tulips in a larger shade so that they can sell it next year. The market price for each tulip would be around Tk 70 (USD 0.82) per flower.

Shelly looks after the international communication. She has seen a great possibility

in this commercial flower production project. The couple is very serious about learning the language skills which will soon deliver them even better news in the near future.

"My background and studies tell me to go for teaching profession, but all my passion and my world is bonded with Delwar and this beautiful flower orchard," says Shelly.

"The most important fact is both of us love nature, trees, flowers and farming. We have been married for the past 14 years and anything you love, won't disappoint you," believes Delwar.

"My father was a traditional farmer and it was in my blood to carry on with the heritage of profession," says Delwar.

"Flowers always make me feel good. So, at first I bought gladiolus bulbs, worth Tk 4,000 (USD 47.05), knowing that I would be able to sell each flower at Tk 15 (USD 0.17)," Delwar added.

"Then I bought 20,000 bulbs from Sher Ali Sardar, a flower farmer from Jashore's Godkhali. I have sold almost 35,000 sticks of flowers at Tk 24 per stick and earned around Tk 8,40,000 (USD 9881) from gladiolus.

The obstacle they have is the bulb price goes up to Tk 12 (USD 0.14), which is caused by the quarantine cost of up to Tk 2 (USD 0.02) for each bulb and there is also 10 percent tax included for each bulb.

Dear readers, with the initiative of this loving and caring couple, tulip has bloomed for the first time in Bangladesh. To keep going with the rhythm of life, they want to strengthen this bond with flowers. Local demand is currently being met by importing flower from The Netherlands, China, India and other countries. Initiatives could be taken to cultivate tulips in northern districts, considering low temperature there in the winter season. I believe, tulip will spread all over the country by this couple and by many others following their footsteps. One day, our country will have a flower paradise like Keukenhof. Belated warmest greetings of Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day. Advanced deepest respect for the Language Martyrs on International Mother Language Day, the day also marks another glorious occasion as the illustrious agricultural TV programme Hridoye Mati O Manush is going to step into its 17th year.

We are victims of political vindictiveness

Owners came up with the allegation after their structures near the Dhamai river were demolished in an eviction drive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A group of locals, whose structures near the Dhamai river in Barlekha upazila were demolished by local administration, alleged that they have been victims of political vindictiveness.

Locals claimed that their properties were not illegal, and therefore, the structures should not be demolished.

Wishing anonymity, a resident of Sonatola village said as most of the people in the area are BNP supporters, some influential locals convinced the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) to conduct the eviction drive.

Later, the eviction drive had triggered resentment among the locals.

The villagers said excavation of the river has recently begun.

On February 13, the upazila administration and local union parishad jointly conducted the drive without prior notices, causing huge loss to locals, said Mortuz Ali, a grocer of the area, adding that his shop was also demolished.

"During the drive, we tried to talk to the officers but they did not listen to us," he said.

Mortuz claims to have lost more than Tk 5 lakh in the drive.

Around 50 structures which included houses and shops in Sonatola Bridge area were demolished during the eviction drive, said locals, adding that UNO Md



A man stands beside his house near the Dhamai river in Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila. A portion of the house has been demolished in an eviction drive recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Shamim Al Imran and Barlekha Union Parishad (UIP) Chairman Siraj Uddin were present at the time.

Angered by the incident, locals then seized the excavators used in digging the river. On information, Barlekha Upazila Parishad Chairman Shueb Ahmed and Vice Chairman Taj Uddin rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Another resident Shelly Begum claimed that although her property

was legal, the local administration demolished the boundary wall of her house without issuing a prior notice.

"We always vote for AL-backed candidates, but some local influential persons branded us as BNP supporters. They had planned to destroy our own land," she said.

Contacted, the UNO said those structures demolished were illegal. During the drive, no one claimed ownership of the structures.

3 to die for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A court here on Tuesday sentenced three people to death and another to life term imprisonment for killing a man over a disputed pond in Birampur upazila in 2011.

The convicts are Moslem, 55, Mostafizur, 35, and Mamunur, 37, of Phulbari upazila.

According to the prosecution, there had been a dispute between the convicts and Wakil Mondal over the ownership of a disputed pond.

As a sequel, the convicts killed Wakil on June 25, 2011.

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