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Bangladesh's gulistan

Flowers give Panisara people a living

By Reaz Ahmad, back from Jessore

The day dawns with birds chirping and tuberose blooming at Panisara, a serene countryside some 25 km west of Jessore town.

Tuberose and gladiolus grow in plenty at Panisara. Besides, people of the area also grow various types of rose as well as marigold and hedge-plant.

The lucrative flower production on a commercial basis is now spreading also to some other areas in Jhikargacha, Sharsha, and Monirampur thanas of Jessore and part of Chuadanga.

"But what makes Panisara an exception is that it is increasingly being known as flower garden of the country," a local public leader said. Of some

5000 acres of land under flower cultivation in the area, around 4000 acres are at Panisara, according to official statistics.

During a visit to the area, a number of local people told this correspondent that all of them were directly or indirectly involved in flower cultivation and trade. The entire area from Gotkhali bazaar on Jessore-Benapole highway to Panisara has virtually become flower lovers' paradise.

During the peak season, Panisara flower growers sell about 250 bundles of tuberose per day at Gotkhali bazaar. Each bundle contains up to 3,000 sticks of tuberose. The flowers find their way into flower markets in the capital

and from there these are supplied to markets in Chittagong, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Bogra, Khulna and some other districts.

Sirajul Islam Dhali, a tuberose cultivator, recalled that the process was initiated by one Sher Ali almost two decades back. Ali also established marketing channel.

Today, Panisara people can sell flowers worth about Tk four lakh a day. But we had bad times in the past. Traders in Dhaka used to cheat us, make payments late and in small instalments. Now we sell flower on cash payment", said Mujibur Rahman, a young flower trader from the area.

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia led some 500 vehicles carrying her party's leaders, MPs, and activists on a one day "mini-road march" from Dhaka to Bhalbar yesterday to protest the government's decision to give transit to India.

Vowing to resist the move, she called upon the people to join the August 30 mass procession in Dhaka and sit-in demonstration in front of the Secretariat on September 12.

Khaleda, also the leader of the opposition in parliament, began the march from Shaheed

Faruque Road at Jatrabari at 11 am after addressing a huge gathering.

She then proceeded to address meetings in Nawapara, Jamdani Palli at Tarabu, Rupganj thana and Bagburi, Araiha thana in Narayanganj district, Madhabdi, Panchdona, Palash thana, Itakhola, Bazar, Shibpur thana, Barichabazar, Belabo thana and Nilkhuti, Ralpara thana in Narshigdi district and ended the march with a public meeting at Bhalbar stadium in Kishoreganj district.

From Jatrabari to Bhalbar, tens of thousands of people from far flung areas spontaneously assembled in the meeting spots and road sides to cheer the former prime minister with the sheaf of paddy -- the election symbol of BNP -- in hand. She replied by waving back to them.

A large number of gates were erected from Kanchpur bridge to Bhalbar. The gates were inscribed with slogans greeting the marchers and protesting the transit move. Supporters ev-

erywhere chanted slogans against the government and its move to give transit facility to India.

The opposition leader alleged that the government in its last three years' rule did not keep a single pre-election commitment to the people. But it is implementing one after another all the pledges it gave to India.

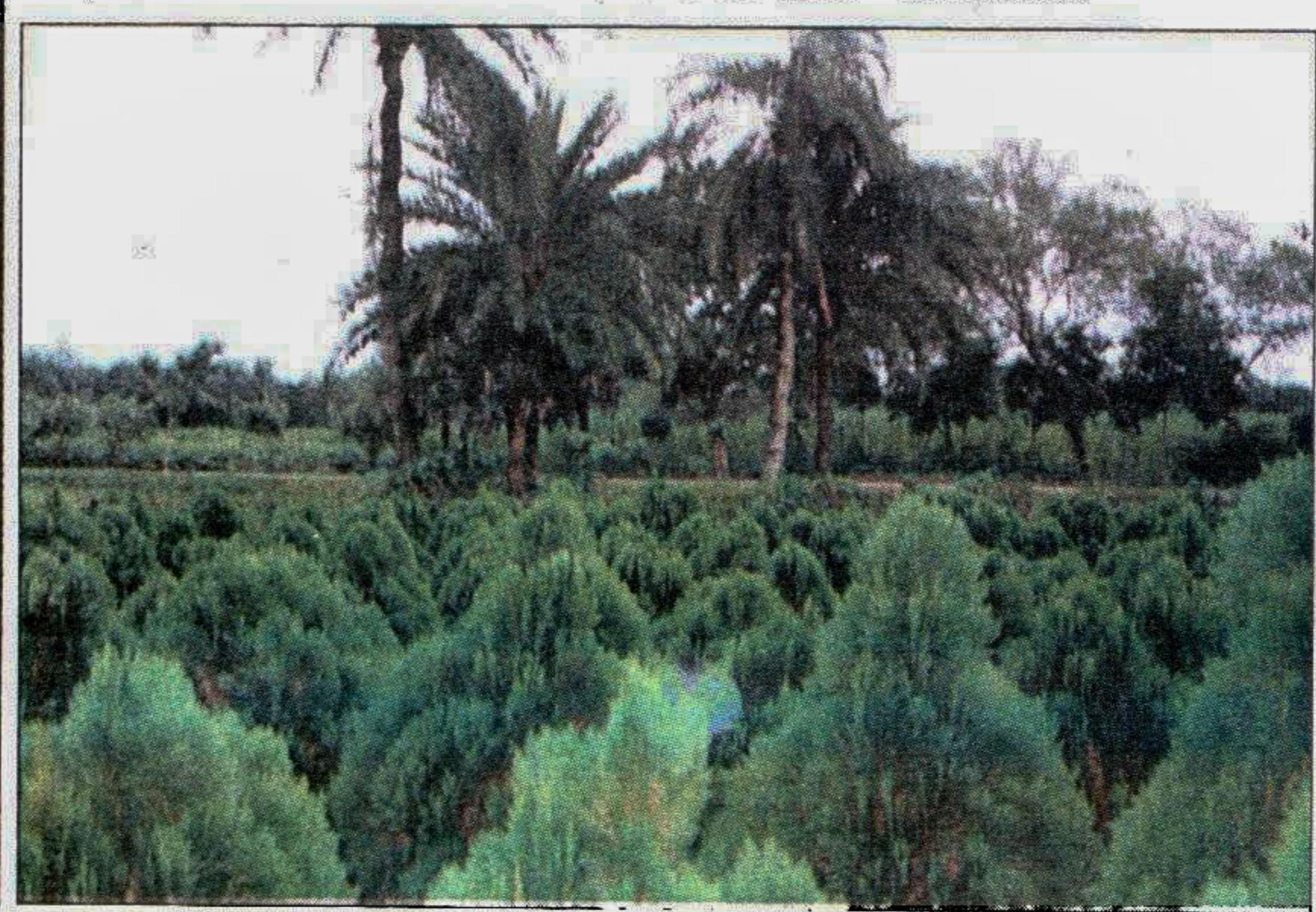
The BNP chief said the AL will ultimately give corridor to its masters on the pretext of transit or transhipment. She

expressed the determination to resist the government move even at the cost of life.

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"We can't allow India to tranship its troops and

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Tamarisk turns a green Panisara even greener

Star photo: Reaz Ahmed

Kamal snubs Khaleda's CHT formula

Eminent jurist and leader of Gano Forum Dr Kamal Hossain yesterday opposed the demand of Opposition leader and BNP Chairperson Begum Khaleda Zia to rehabilitate the slum dwellers in Chittagong Hill Tracts.

"This demand in no way can be supported," Dr Kamal said in an interview with Bangladeshi Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

Stressing the need for construction of planned housing for the slum dwellers under a city plan, the Gano Forum leader said that the attitude of utilising the poorer people as tools of politics and power must be avoided.

It will not be proper to do or say something that might disrupt peace process in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Dr Kamal said, adding that the people of the

country expect tolerance from all quarters for establishing peaceful atmosphere in the hill areas.

He said the 'settler issue' as initiated by late President Ziaur Rahman was a major cause for creation of unrest in the Chittagong Hill Tracts in post-1975 period.

Dr Kamal suggested discussion on the existing political differences on this issue for resolving the problems. But to aggravate the problem instead of resolving it cannot be expected, he added.

Refuting the allegations that he was exploiting the slum dweller issue for political purposes by taking stand against the eviction of slum dwellers, he said his politics was not aimed at capitalising the helplessness of the poorer section of any.

Terming slum as a problem of the city, Dr Kamal underscored the need for forging national consensus to find out proper ways to solve the problem.

He advocated the idea of creating 'satellite town' in the suburbs of Dhaka city under a master plan to build the capital for all.

Referring to the verdict of the High Court on the eviction of slum dwellers, Dr Kamal said all concerned should abide by the verdict of the court.

To an another question whether a section of NGOs work on slums, he said the NGOs carry out their activities with the approval of the government. So, it is the responsibilities of the government to look into the irregularities of the NGOs, if any.

They used firearms and exploded crackers during the clash that continued for about seven hours.

On receipt of information, the OC of Ashuganj thana along with a police team rushed to the spot. Failing to bring the situation under control, he sought reinforcement from district headquarters.

The Additional District Magistrate and Additional Police Super reached the spot with a huge contingent of police.

At one stage the clashing groups attacked the policemen, injuring 31 including an ASP (Circle).

Police fired blank shots and tear gas shells to disperse the clashing groups.

The injured were admitted to Brahmanbaria, Ashuganj and Bhalbar hospitals.

The bodies were sent to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

No case was filed till filing of this report at 9 pm today.

Certain US-bound garment shipment may get stuck

By Rafiq Hasan

The US government may impose a temporary embargo on export of garments under categories 347/348, 352/652 and 647/648 when their quotas for the current year will be fulfilled, possibly by next month.

The restriction will be in force till the next quota year begins in January 2000, sources in the Export Promotion Bureau (EPB) and the Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) said.

Trousers and shorts are exported under category 347/348, under category 352/652 and trousers under category 647/648.

Quota fulfilment rates for these categories were very good this year because of good demand in the US market. Till August 18, the fulfilment rate was 76 per cent for category 347/348, 69 per cent for 352/652 and 70 per cent for category 647/648.

Because of high demand, the quota under category 347/348 was raised in the middle of this year by re-adjusting it with other categories having lower demand.

Exporters will suffer if a temporary embargo is imposed by the US government on these categories, BGMEA Vice-president Nurul Huque Sikdar said.

The apparels which have already been shipped will not be allowed to enter the US market till the next quota year begins, he said. "This will cause great loss to the exporters because they will have to wait for several months to sell those," he added.

Never said the situation is "not alarming" for Bangladesh because it may face embargo on export

of garments under one category only. The US government has already imposed embargo on export of three categories of garments from India and one category from Sri Lanka, he added.

Bangladesh faced a temporary embargo on export under categories 634 and 340 in October last year as their quotas were fulfilled. Coats were exported under category 634 and shirts under category 340.

When contacted, Abdur Razzaq, Director General of EPB's Textile Cell, said some unscrupulous traders may have exported garments forging visa documents. Investigation is going on to detect the garments companies involved in the forgery, he said. No EPB official was found involved in the forgery, he said.

When asked, a BGMEA official said there is no possibility of a US embargo on garments export from Bangladesh because of visa forgery.

Bangladesh is going to participate in introduction of an Electronic Visa Information Delivery System (LEVIS) in the US customs very soon to detect forgery and stop it, he said.

Earlier, EPB suspended activities of 21 garment factories after those were found involved in forging 106 export visas in the last two years. About 12 lakh pieces of apparels were exported by using the forged visas.

The accident occurred about 30 kilometers (18 miles) off Devaragere town, the United News of India (UNI) and Press Trust of India (PTI) said.

UNI said six bodies had been recovered so far from the tank. The victims were Hindu pilgrims who were returning to Devanagere after offering prayers at a local temple.

Ninety-four people were killed at the same region of Karnataka on June 7 when a bus packed with 150 people veered off a bridge and rolled into a reservoir after one of its tyres burst.

Foreign ship catches fire

From Staff Correspondent CHITTAGONG, Aug 26: A foreign vessel caught fire this morning at Jetty No 11 of Chittagong Port, port and fire brigade sources said.

Khaleda continues anti-transit campaign

By Reazul Karim

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia led some 500 vehicles carrying her party's leaders, MPs, and activists on a one day "mini-road march" from Dhaka to Bhalbar yesterday to protest the government's decision to give transit to India.

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Kader Siddiqui vows to fight AL 'cancer'

'I don't take initiative without being sure of success'

By Nazmul Ashraf

Rebel Awami League leader Kader Siddiqui, MP has vowed to "free his party from cancer, make it pro-people and truly democratic".

He says the current AL led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is "no longer acceptable to the people, which has deviated from its ideals and is in the grip of anti-liberation forces and the killers of Bangabandhu".

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, the valiant freedom fighter described his move to reorganise the AL as a step to stop the rise of anti-Liberation forces in the country. "Neither Sheikh Hasina, nor Khaleda Zia or H M Ershad, who now lead the nation, had any con-

tribution to the liberation of the country," said Siddiqui, who was among the few civilians to be awarded the second highest military award -- *Bir Uttam* -- for his valiant role in the War of Liberation.

"I don't take any initiative without being sure of its success. Maybe, I'll not be able to see the success in my lifetime but others will definitely do," a confident Siddiqui said.

Disclosing his plan to this paper, he said he would first resign from the Jatiya Sangsads from where he was elected on a ticket from the "illegal" leadership of AL.

"My resignation may take

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Two killed, 200 hurt in B'baria clash

From Our Correspondent

BRAHMANBARIA, Aug 26: Two persons were killed and at least 200 people including 31 policemen were injured during a gunfight between two rival groups of villagers in the sadar thana last night.

The dead were identified as Farid Mia, a school student of village Shuhagpur and Sabur Mia, a rickshawpuller of village Charchatla.

Farid succumbed to bullet injuries on way to the sadar hospital while Sabur was chopped to death during the clash.

According to police and witnesses, the clash was sequel to an altercation between the villagers over a football match that was held five days ago.

About one thousand people of two villages -- Charchatla and Shuhagpur -- were locked in clashes that began yesterday evening.

They used firearms and exploded crackers during the clash that continued for about seven hours.

On receipt of information, the OC of Ashuganj thana along with a police team rushed to the spot. Failing to bring the situation under control, he sought reinforcement from district headquarters.

The Additional District Magistrate and Additional Police Super reached the spot with a huge contingent of police.

At one stage the clashing groups attacked the policemen, injuring 31 including an ASP (Circle).

Police fired blank shots and tear gas