

Entrepreneurs planning to set up tea gardens in Panchagarh

Tk 100 cr export by 2010 expected

PANCHAGARH, Jan 5: A number of private entrepreneurs are planning to set up tea gardens in Tentulia upazila of the district with the expectation of exporting tea worth some Tk 100 crore by the year 2010, reports UNB.

They hope that with the establishment of all the planned tea gardens in the area job opportunities would be created for nearly 30,000 people.

Though tea is a cash crop of the country, its cultivation is confined to Sylhet and Chittagong Hill Tracts regions only.

Experts and agriculturists say climate of the district is favourable for tea plantation.

Besides, the local administration with the help of Agriculture Extension Department also submitted favourable reports to the government for setting up tea gardens in the region.

Soon after the independence in 1971, initiatives were taken for tea production in the region and a number of private companies took lease of land and loans from the government for the purpose. But due to reason not known, they later abandoned their initiatives.

Encouraged by favourable reports about tea production in the region, two private companies set up two tea gardens in Tentulia last year.

Tentulia Tea Company, a private enterprise of some 120-tea professionals, started planting tea saplings from April 2, 2000 at Mandulpara village in the upazila. Tea Board Chairman Brig Daniel Islam inaugurated the plantation programme.

Within four months of the inauguration of the first garden, another company Kazi and Kazi Tea Estate started its plantation at

Dahuk village in Tentulia in August last year.

The owner of the company and editor of the Ajker Kagoj, Kazi Shahed Ahmed inaugurated the plantation work.

The plants of the gardens by this time grew two feet high and the entrepreneurs said they expect production within next ten years.

Another private enterprise, Panchagarh Tea Company, also set up a nursery at Kaldaspara village of the upazila on a 10-acre plot for producing tea saplings. Manager of the company, Syed Fazle Rumi said they hope to produce 10 to 15 lakh saplings from the nursery peryear.

Besides, about a dozen other companies have also purchased lands and completed the preliminary works for setting up tea gardens in the upazila, officials said.

Inaugurating the plantation programme of Tentulia Tea Company, Tea Board Chairman Daniel Islam said the board would provide tea saplings to the private entrepreneurs free of cost for the first five years to encourage tea gardening in the region.

Besides, he said, loan amounting to Tk 1.5 lakh per hectare of tea plantation would also be provided to the entrepreneurs.

Official sources said the government has undertaken project to encourage small tea gardens to increase the country's export of tea.

Initially, the government sanctioned Tk 9 crore under the project to set up three tea processing factories, and three development and expansion centres in Panchagarh.

The European Union has expressed its willingness to provide financial support to the government for boosting tea production in the country.

Hatchery under attack in Satkhira

SATKHIRA, Jan 5: Armed terrorists attacked a hatchery at Parulia Bazar in Debhata upazila and exploded bombs leaving 10 people injured in Wednesday, reports UNB.

Police said the terrorists numbering about 500 ransacked the hatchery, owned by industrialist Abdul Jalil, as he refused to withdraw the case he filed against a group of them under Public Safety Act (PSA).

According to the case, the terrorists earlier torched a number of business institutions of Abdul Jalil burning down valuables worth about Tk 1 crore following a dispute over cutting a dam in the area on Oct 8 last year.

As the investigation officers submitted a chargesheet against nine of them on Nov 24, the terrorists created a pressure on Jalil to withdraw the case and they ransacked the hatchery when he refused to withdraw the case.

The people, including two policemen, were injured when they tried to resist them. Another case was filed after the incident.

UK donation for flood victims

JESSORE, Jan 5: Britain has provided Tk 12 crore to four NGOs for distribution among the flood affected people of southern-western districts, reports UNB.

The British Ambassador in Bangladesh Dr David Carter informed this while exchanging views with the local journalists here on Wednesday.

The envoy made a brief stop-over here on his way to Meherpur where he would visit Ballabpur Mission.

Dr Carter inquired about the post-flood situation of Jessore, Jhenidah, Meherpur, Chuadanga and Satkhira districts.

He also discussed the overall situation of universal primary education, healthcare facilities and other socio-economic issues of the region with the journalists.

College student stabbed to death in Rajshahi

From Our Correspondent RAJSHAHI, Jan 5: A college student was stabbed to death by a group of extortionists in the city last Sunday.

The victim was identified as Rezaul Hasan Ripon, 25, student of Philosophy Department of Dhaka College.

The hoodlums killed him following an altercation. When the miscreants demanded toll from a doctor at the physician's chamber at Ghoshpara Ripon, who was present during the time, resisted the extortionists.

Later as Ripon was returning home at Bilshimla, he was intercepted in Kalabagan area at about 8.30 pm and stabbed indiscriminately. He succumbed to injuries at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital at about 10 pm.

Police arrested two youths in connection with the killing.

Ripon is son of Afzal Hossain, deputy controller of Rajshahi Education Board.

Obituary

From Our Correspondent MOULVIBAZAR, Jan 5: Syed Abdul Matin, senior vice president of Bangladesh Awami League, Moulvibazar district unit and executive member of district unit of Muktiyoddha Sangsad (an organisation of freedom fighters) died at his residence in TB Hospital Road area in the town on December 18. He was 62.

He was suffering from cancer and other complications, family members said.

Late Matin joined the War of Liberation. He left behind wife, two sons and a host of relatives.

Netrakona border road needs to be developed

From Jahangir Alam

NETRAKONA, Jan 5: The 40-km border road is in bad shape. The road starts from Charuapara in Durgapur upazila and ends at Ramnathpur in Kalmakanda upazila. This road runs through the border belt of the district and is kutcha. The repression of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) in this area is very frequent. So this road is very important to preserve the independence and sovereignty of the country by resisting the repression of Indian BSF on the people.

But this road is quite unfit for plying of vehicles, even unfit for movement of pedestrians in the rainy season. The road is full of ditches. The road remains covered with knee-deep mud.

Smuggling has been increasing day by day along the road. BDR personnel can not move freely, specially in the rainy season.

The road is also important for the people of the border area. This is the only road for the people of the border area to go to Langura bazaar, Kalikapur

bazaar, Hat-Gobindapur bazaar, Baruakona bazaar, Panchgang, Moheshkhola bazaar and Durgapur upazila headquarters. These bazaars are very important for the people along this area.

Several lakhs of tons of paddy and other foodgrains are produced in the area every season.

This border road is the only means to carry these crops to elsewhere. There are a good number of ponds and water bodies on both sides of the road. Moreover, abundant fish is produced in these water bodies. This border road is the only road for transportation of fish.

Wholesalers cannot reach the farmers with their vehicles for miserable condition of the road.

Fishermen are forced to sale their produce to the middlemen. So they do not get profitable price of their produce.

Local people have urged the authorities concerned to take necessary steps to develop the border road for the greater interest of the country.

Hemp farming up in Jamalpur

JAMALPUR, Jan 5: Hemp growers have started cultivating the crop in the border villages of Dewanganj and in shoal areas of Bakshiganj upazila in the district, reports UNB.

Cultivation of the forbidden crop has increased allegedly under active cooperation of a section of village leaders and police who collect tolls from the growers.

UNB Correspondent, who visited more than a dozen villages, found hemp, locally known as ganja, being grown in most backyards and even on open fields.

Growers estimate that more than 100,000 plants were grown this year. A well-grown plant yields up to 4 kg of ganja while the lowest yield is 1 kg. Quality ganja is sold at Tk 7,000 per kg while the low grade at Tk 4,000.

Planted in the Bengali month of Baishakh, ganja is harvested in Poush-Magh.

Growers said in the '80s they used to cultivate hemp secretly in backyards and the plants were kept under hedges to hide them from public view. They did

not pay tolls to anyone in those days.

Gradually came the 'chowkidars', 'dafadars', members and chairmen of union parishads to collect tolls of Tk 5 to 10 for each plant. Now police joined in collecting money from the growers and total payment of tolls for each plant rose to Tk 300 in 3 installments from the time of plantation to harvest, it was alleged.

Extensive cultivation was found in village Bhatkhawa of Par-Rampur union in Dewanganj upazila. Growers said Tozammal Ali, who collected tolls, has patronised them. Tozammal acts as the chief coordinator in the upazila.

Kismat member of the union and his supporters tried in vain to dissuade people from planting of ganja. Instead, he has earned the wrath of Tozammal.

Of late, ambitious political leaders have appeared in the scene. They have been assuring unhindered plantation of hemp in exchange for vote in the general election due this year.

Seed crisis poised to hamper winter crop output in N dists

BOGRA, Jan 5: Acute seed crisis in 16 northern districts is poised to hamper the winter crop output this season after three consecutive bumper productions, reports UNB.

According to officials, Agricultural Extension Department had set a target to cultivate winter crops and vegetables on 3.15 lakh hectares of land.

But a large number of farmers in the region could not cultivate winter crops this season as BADC could only supply 35 per cent of seeds of the total demand.

Though Bogra, Gaibandha, Kurigram, Rangpur, Pabna, Sirajganj and Rajshahi are famous for green chili, the farmers in the districts could not bring all the targeted lands under chili cultivation this season.

As a result, prices of potato, chili and other winter crops and vegetables have shot up in the region where green chili was selling at Tk 16-20 per kg while potato at Tk 10-12 and other vegetables at Tk 8-10.

Sources at the Agriculture

Extension Department said potato farming in the northern districts, including Panchagarh, appears to suffer a setback due to the seed crisis caused by illegal hoarding and late monsoon flooding.

They said a programme was taken up to bring 3,010 hectares of land in Panchagarh under potato farming this season with an output target of 30,020 mt.

These days, farmers of the district prefer potato farming as they found the soil and weather here favourable for its cultivation.

According to the officials, an extensive programme was taken up to bring some 1.62 hectares of land in the 16 districts under potato cultivation this season, fixing the production target at 17.80 mt. But the chance is little for the farmers to achieve the target.

Market sources said the Diamond variety of potato seed is now selling at Tk 16 per kg. But most of the farmers could not collect it due to limited supply.



Believe it or not buds are visible in a mango tree in front of Wazir Ali High School in Jhenidah town which is quite unusual during the winter season.

---Star photo by Delwar Kabir

News snaps

Arsenic prevention project formed

KURIGRAM, Jan 5: As arsenic continues to contaminate groundwater, the government has taken up a project to protect the people of Rajapur upazila from arsenic-linked diseases, reports UNB.

Under the programme, arsenic prevention committees have been formed in each ward of the upazila in addition to supplying adequate kits. To detect arsenic, tubewells are also being tested in the upazila under the programme taken up under Bangladesh Arsenic Mitigation Water Supply Project of Local Government Engineering Department. Under the project, workshops and advocacy meetings are being arranged in the area to make the people aware about the adverse effects of arsenic. Officials said members of the arsenic prevention committees at ward level and field survey teams would be imparted training to tackle the arsenic menace. Meanwhile, nine such meetings and workshops were held in the upazila.

Loan for NGO members

SHARIATPUR, Jan 5: A Non-government Organisation (NGO) has taken up a scheme to disburse Tk 2 crore loans among its association members here under its poverty alleviation programme, reports UNB.

Apart from the credit program, the organization "RISDA Bangladesh" has a plan to set up more associations, enrolling members, purchasing shares and enhancing savings. In last fiscal year its local unit disbursed Tk 1.58 crore loans against its target of Tk 1.77 crore. The rate of disbursement was 89 per cent while the recovery rate was 69 per cent. During the period it achieved 74 per cent success in organizing associations and 83 per cent in enrolling members, the NGO officials said.

Bomb recovered

TANGAIL, Jan 5: A live bomb was recovered from Ashkepur areas in the town on Saturday, reports UNB.

A watch was fixed with the 250gm bomb, which is looking like a coconut. Police suspect that it might be a time bomb. Police recovered the bomb from Atpukurpur areas following a telephone call by an unidentified man in the morning. Police super visited the spot.

Clothes distributed

MANIKGANJ, Jan 5: Bangladesh-Thai Aluminium Company chairman distributed some 10,000 clothes among the destitute people in four upazilas of the district on Saturday, reports UNB.

Besides, Tk one lakh was also distributed among the distressed people of Ghior, Doulatpur, Satoria and Sadar upazilas. Jahid Saleq Swapan, a prominent businessman and chairman of the company distributed saree, lungi, winter clothes and money like previous other years.

UP chairman sued

SHERPUR, Jan 5: A case was filed against a Union Parishad (UP) chairman and a member in Sadar upazila for violating a teenage girl, reports UNB.

Police said in collusion with member Shahajahan Ali of Andhariapara and one Hazrat Ali of Raghunathpur Choghira village the chairman Bokul Mia of Kamaria UP took the 18-year-old girl at his residence in Nakla promising her a good job in a local hospital. The chairman confined the girl at his residence and violated her for two days and the girl was taken to Shahajan member's house who also raped her for another two days. Fortunately, the victim managed to flee from their hands after four days and disclosed the matter to her family members. The victim's father filed a case against the criminals on December 15 under the Women and Children Repression Act. Investigation officer of the case, Masud, said that in primary investigation he found the veracity of the criminal act. He said the incident would be confirmed after getting the medical report. Sadar OC Mirza Mobaidul Huq told UNB that they were trying to arrest the criminals who went into hiding.

New bank branch opens+

RAJBARI, Jan 5: Another branch of Employment Bank was opened here on Thursday, aiming to provide soft loans to unemployed youths so that they could undertake income-generating projects, reports UNB.

Environment and Forest Minister Syeda Sajeda Chowdhury inaugurated the bank. Speaking on the occasion, the minister said the government has taken up various programmes for poverty alleviation and created self-employment opportunities. Later, the minister inaugurated the newly introduced allowance programme for the distressed freedom fighters and distributed allowances among 261 freedom fighters.

Loadshedding hampers mill production

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 5: Erratic power supply in Kuliarchar upazila including the municipality areas has been hampering production in mills, factories and irrigation on crop fields, reports UNB.

Locals said power goes off five to six times a day incurring huge losses to mills and factories. The situation worsens after sundown when the supply of electricity is essential. Students, patients and traders are the worst sufferers. Town and its suburbs plunge into darkness for hours together at night giving rise to theft, burglary and other anti-social activities. The TV viewers are being deprived of enjoying programme. Fluctuation of voltage cause extensive damage to electronic goods like refrigerator, washing machine, camera, TV and VCR set. During the holy month of Ramadan, the fasting people suffered most due to loadshedding and erratic power supply.

Wheat farming gains popularity

PANCHAGARH, Jan 5: In a bid to increase wheat production local cultivators are showing more interest in farming the crop this season, reports UNB.

They are now busy for the cultivation of wheat along with the Boro crops, official sources said. A scheme has been taken up to bring 24,500 hectares of land under wheat farming with an output target of 56,350 metric tons this year, said Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources. Cultivating 26,000 hectares of land last year the farmers produced some 49,436 mts of wheat. A DAE official expressed the hope that the farmers would be able to achieve bumper production this season due to the extended irrigation facilities. He said new lands have been brought under irrigation network to boost production.

1,932 arrested in Comilla

COMILLA, Jan 5: Police in their drive arrested some 1,932 people on various charges and recovered firearms and explosives from different parts of the district in last one month, reports UNB.

Of the accused, 1,797 were wanted criminals and eight convicts, police said. They recovered two revolvers, nine pipe guns, one LG rifle, 17 spare parts, 2,100 chocolate bombs and 13 rounds of bullet during the drive. Besides, the law enforcers recovered a huge amount of contraband items worth about Tk 20 lakh during the period. The recovered goods include 4,372 bottles of Indian phensidyl, 18 bottles of liquor, 200 grams of hemp, 132 pieces saree, eight fake notes of Tk 500 denomination, 4,844 kgs of sugar and two microbuses. Eight cases were registered and 18 people were arrested in this connection.

Cattle lifting on rise

KISHOREGANJ, Jan 5: Cattle lifting is rampant in the district creating panic among the farmers, reports UNB.

Criminals lift cattle from one place and sell those to other place, the helpless farmers said. According to reports at least 50 cows have been lifted from Katyadi, Nikli, Karimganj, Hossainpur, Itna, Pakundia, Tarail and Sadar upazilas in the last fortnight. The cattle owners are passing sleepless night in their cowsheds. Cultivation is being hampered this season as the poor farmers have been facing difficulties for want of bullocks. Most of the farmers cannot afford to buy bullocks owing to their financial inability. Over 50 per cent growers here cultivate land on share basis due to shortage of bullocks. The farmers urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to check the rampant cattle lifting by some organised gangs.

Farmer killed by outlaws

PABNA, Jan 5: A farmer was killed by outlaws in Faridpur upazila here on Monday midnight, spreading panic in the area, reports UNB.

Police said the outlaws called Baki Billah Baki, 40, son of late Yasin Ali of Folia village in Atgharia upazila, out of his house on Sunday. His body was later on recovered from Baluaghata beel at Hadol union in the upazila early Tuesday. A case was filed.