

# Beauty and bounty together

Flower cultivation a good business in Rangpur: Young man earns Tk 1.5 lakh a year

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

"Flower cultivation is no longer a hobby, it is a good business," said Ershadul Bari who earns about Tk 1,50,000 a year from this.

He cultivates different kinds of flower at Dohiganj village in the Sadar upzila round the year.

But Momota Begum of Poul Para in Rangpur town is doing something exceptional. She cultivates rose in tubs on the rooftop.

"I earn about Tk 3000 a month", she told this correspondent. The local Agriculture Extension Department helped her in growing flower.

In the last few years, a good number of youths have taken to commercial cultivation of flower. The number is increasing as the demand for flower in the town and adjoining areas is rising day by day.

About 30 enterprising youths set up a flower market in Rangpur police line area three years back. They are doing good business now and have employed about 20 people in their shops.

The traders in the market said people of different classes from different corners of the district and beyond come to the market to buy flowers for different purposes.

Business was bad in the first year. It is good now.

Flower trader Moktar-ur Rahman

said, "I was very disappointed to see the loss in the first year.

"We started earning profit from the second year."

Aminul Islam, another trader said, "Now I sell flowers worth about Tk 2000 a day and earn a profit of about Tk 500 after meeting all expenses."

The cultivators supply flowers to other districts also.

Farmer Sheik Abbas of Mahiganj says flower cultivation is more profitable than other agricultural crops.

But the traders still have to purchase some varieties of flower from other districts.

Trader Shahidul Islam said he has to purchase Rajanigandha from Jessore, where it is grown in huge quantities.

Both the traders and growers said more people will take to flower cultivation as a profession as it is more profitable and less risky.

Different varieties of flowers like rose, rajanigandha, gandha, Coloured Lily, bokul, gandhoraj are grown commercially in the district.

Some customers this correspondent talked to said prices of flowers are still very high. A piece of rose is sold at Tk 4 to 5, a Rajanigandha stick at Tk 3 to 4 and a Lily at Tk 5 to 7. The prices should be lesser, they said.



Tota Mia nursing rose garden at Dahoganj village in Rangpur Sadar upazila, snapped on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR

# Can Bangla Bhai evade PM's arrest order?

Rajshahi DIG says manhunt on but he is 'really hiding'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Is Bangla Bhai, the so-called 'operations commander' of dreaded Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB), powerful enough to evade arrest despite the Prime Minister's order to nab him?

Many people in Rajshahi region say so.

"The Prime Minister got the right message about the vigilante operation (by JMJB) and she rightly ordered his arrest, but the interested quarters stood against," said a BNP leader at Bhawaniganj seeking anonymity.

He is backed by influential leaders of the ruling alliance, he said. Many villagers in different areas this correspondent talked to said the situation has not changed since the law enforcers launched a manhunt for him.

Rather, the colour of "terrorists" has changed.

"Instead of BPCP cadres, JMJB men are now collecting toll, kidnapping people for ransom and grabbing cropland and ponds", said a school-teacher at Bhawaniganj.

"JMJB men now include many notorious BPCP activists who surrendered to it (JMJB)", a solvent villager at Taherpur said.

"We can't allow Bangla Bhai in a democratic country where there are forces to maintain law and order," said a businessman at Atrai in Naogaon.

"Whoever Bangla Bhai may be and whatever be his activity, he should be arrested since the Prime Minister ordered so...It will be damaging for both the Prime Minister and her party because her order is going unheeded," said a university student and BNP supporter at Bagmara.

Locals alleged that Bangla Bhai men are active in the areas even after the arrest order by the Prime Minister.

"He stayed at a Bhawaniganj clinic for several days. Police, instead of arresting him, asked him to leave the place following media reports," said a source there. The administration allowed him to go into hiding following pressure from some influential quarters in the ruling alliance, they claimed.

Speculations on his hideout, the quarters supporting him and possibilities of a comeback to lead 'vigilante operations' are discussed by people in every village and market in the region.

People in Rajshahi and Naogaon villages who suffered due to atrocities by JMJB and BPCP want arrest of all activists of the two illegal organisa-

tions. JMJB activists are blamed for killing 15 people and kidnapping over 50 since April 1. An unspecified number of people were maimed due to torture by them, according to different sources and media reports.

Talking to The daily Star Rajshahi Range DIG Noor Muhammad however said, "Police in Rajshahi division are applying their best methods to nab the underground assailant. I ordered his arrest at first sight, but he really went into hiding".

Once cornered by police in early July, Bangla Bhai told some newsmen over phone that he was going to name his patronisers within three days.

Senior police officials think that Bangla Bhai did so to regain support of the influential ruling party men who apparently turned against him for the time being and asked him to go into hiding.

SNAPS

3 more check posts on Dhaka-Ctg highway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two check posts will be set up at Faujderhat and Daudkandi on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway and another near Bhairob bridge to check highway robbery.

Video cameras may also be installed at the check posts if required.

The decision was taken at a meeting of 10 Police Superintendents in the region, held at the office of Comilla SP on Saturday, police sources here said yesterday. Chittagong Division DIG Abdus Satter chaired the meeting, also attended by representatives of transport owners and workers.

Several other proposals were also discussed at the meeting.

The proposals include release of the transport workers within two weeks if their involvement in robber is not proved and returning the attacked vehicles to owners within 72 hours.

# Train services resume in Gaibandha, Kurigram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Rail communication in Trimohoni Balashi ghat section in Gaibandha and Parvatipur-Ramna section in Kurigram was restored yesterday after renovation of flood-damaged tracks.

The Trimohoni Balashi section was opened for movement of goods wagons and Parvatipur-Ramna section for passenger trains after trial run on Sunday.

The recent deluge badly affected the Balashi ghat yard and all the five tracks up to Trimohoni. The water removed soil underneath about 1000 feet stretch of the tracks, leaving those virtually hanging and creating a veritable tributary of the mighty Brahmaputra. A temporary bridge has

been set up on the 1000 feet stretch near the Balashi ghat yard.

The flood also badly damaged about 30 kms of the track between Kurigram and Ramna.

"We completed the bridge within a week and made a successful trial run on Sunday," said Lalmonirhat Railway Divisional Engineer Shajaha Ali.

"We passed the 422 Down local train through the renovated Kurigram-Ramna section today (Monday)," said Divisional Railway Manager Emdadul Huq.

"Railway personnel worked round the clock to restore the rail communication", he added.

The disruption in rail communication made by the deluge had kept three barges loaded with wagons stranded on the Brahmaputra for over

three weeks.

"We unloaded 67 wagons carrying fuel, food grains and fertiliser bound for northern districts from two barges yesterday", said an official in charge of barges.

The remaining two barges with about 65 loaded wagons, bound for Bahadurabad ghat, are still stranded on the Brahmaputra as the Dewanganj-Bahadurabad section is yet to be reopened for traffic, he said.

Renovation of Dewanganj-Bahadurabad section is going on and is expected to be reopened by the end of this month, said railway sources.



PHOTO: STAR

Manikganj Awami League formed a human chain in the town yesterday to press the demand for execution of the Bangabandhu murder verdict.

# 10 hurt in AL factional clash in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

At least 10 Awami League (AL) leaders and activists were injured in a factional clash in the party's Assassuni thana unit on Sunday.

The injured persons are Noor Mohammad, former Chairman of Sree Ula Union Parishad (UP), Rafiqul Islam and Alamgir. They were admitted to hospitals in Satkhira and Assassuni.

Police said, an AL activist, Alamgir was beaten by other party men for creating obstacles while cooking food in front of Ekota Club in Assassuni while observing the mourning day programme. After the incident, two groups locked in clash.

Later, Chhatra League (BCL) and Sechchha Sebok League leaders and activists led by Shawkat, Swapan and Muktar attacked Assassuni thana leader Noor Mohammad and Rafiqul Islam. It was a sequel to a rivalry created during Assassuni thana AL council, according to party sources.

# Hefty gains from guava

Once jobless Zafar earns Tk 2.5 lakh annually from his 2-acre garden: Others encouraged

HOSSAIN SERAJ, Magura

Once jobless Zafar is now an affluent farmer.

He earns around Tk two lakh annually from his two-acre guava garden in Harmapur village in Magura Sadar upazila. The land remained fallow earlier.

His success has inspired others in nearby Ichchakhada, Uttara Noapara, Hazrapur, Mithapur and Nandalalpur villages, who have raised guava gardens on a total of about 400 acres.

His success is a topic of discussion for many villagers and officials in Magura.

District agriculture and horticulture officials often visit his guava garden now and tell others to follow the example.

Thirty-five year old Zafar always remains busy nursing his garden that has brought him fortune from poverty.

Zafar's family had hard times earlier. With little education, Zafar did many odd jobs to maintain his family with one son, old parents and a younger brother.

Fortune smiled on them after he met Agriculture Extension Department (AED) Block Supervisor Abdur Rashid in 1993.

Inspired by him, Zafar planted guava plants on their 50 decimal fallow high land in the village.

He could not imagine that some day this would bring fortune.

"Being influenced by Abdur Rashid, I gave more time and

labour to nurse the plants," a smiling Zafar told this correspondent during a recent visit to his garden.

As the plants grew, other AED officials from Magura visited his garden and promised assistance. He expanded his garden to two acres. The number of plants grew to around 400.

"In 1995, I learned about Tk 50,000. The total cost was about Tk 10", Zafar said.

"Plucking increased many times after two years as the plants grew.

In 1997, I learned about Tk two lakh. It was beyond my imagination," an all smiles Zafar said.

"On an average, I earn about Tk 2.5 lakh a year now. Each plant yields 150 maunds of guava in a season".

Guava cultivation needs small investment but the return is big.

Now is the peak season for harvest. Traders from Sylhet, Faridpur, Dhaka, Madaripur and Barisal come to the area almost every day. At least two truckloads of guava are supplied from the gardens in the area every day now, farmers said.

Zafar has not forgotten his social responsibility. He has set up a kindergarten school at his village at his own cost to educate children. At least 300 students study at the school.



PHOTO: STAR

Zafar along with labourers plucking guava. The photo was taken on Friday.

# The Daily Star - StanChart relief operation in Shahjadpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star and the Standard Chartered Bank jointly distributed relief materials among 1700 flood and erosion affected families in two villages in remote Kojuri union in Shahjadpur upazila of Sirajganj district on Saturday.

Each package given to a family contained 10 kg rice, one kg salt, one kg lentil, half a litre of edible oil, nutritious biscuits and some or saline packets.

One team led by the daily's Special Correspondent Morshed Ali Khan distributed the relief materials among about 800 families in Bhatpara village. The other team led by the Standard Chartered Bank's Acting Chief Executive Officer, SAA Masrur and Head of Cash and Trade Products Omar Faruque distributed food and clothing among victims in Kojuri village. These were distributed on Thudia College ground in the village.

Lawmaker from the area Major (ret'd) Manzur Quader welcomed the relief teams in the area when they reached there in the morning.

Earlier on Thursday and Friday, local Union Parishad Chairman Golam Rasul Peter and other UP members assisted an advance team in door-to-door distribution of relief cards among the affected people for smooth distribution of the goods.

The entire Kojuri union with a population of 46,000 was under ten feet water for over a month during the deluge.

Nine villages of the UP have been completely devoured by the Jamuna, leaving thousands without homes. These people, mainly members of the weaver's community, have taken shelter on the Bhatpara embankment.

During the relief distribution, a good number of officials from the Standard Chartered Bank and The Daily Star were engaged in crowd control and maintaining order. The local administrations in Shahjaptur and Sirajganj provided other support for smooth distribution.



PHOTO: STAR

Flood affected people with relief packages (left) distributed by Standard Chartered Bank Acting Chief Executive Officer SAA Masrur and The Daily Star team (middle) and a long queue for relief (right). The photos were taken from Thudia College ground in Kojuri on Saturday.