

# Ban flower import, patronise export

## Commercial cultivation by 5000 Jessore farmers: No govt step to export: Market glut from import, smuggling

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Twenty years ago, seeing bundles of flowers flowing into the country from across the border, young Sher Ali Sarder had cultivated 'rajanigandha' (tube rose) on half a bigha of land in Panishara village in Jhikargachha upazila.

The silent revolution he initiated with hard labour has borne fruit over the years without any government help whatsoever.

Commercial flower cultivation is now a profitable occupation for over 5000 farmers in Jessore district alone.

Spreading from Jhikargachha and Sarsha upazilas in Jessore, different flowers are being cultivated commercially also in neighbouring districts including Rajshahi and Rangpur, engaging over three lakh people in related trade and opening up export potential.

But the flow of flowers from across the border has not stopped. It is now threatening the viable agri-subsector while the government is still unconcerned.

Farmers and traders this correspondent talked to in Jessore are now one in their voice: Stop import and smuggling, promote export.

Bangladeshi flowers have good export potential in Middle East and

Europe. It can be a good forex earner like frozen food, vegetables and garments if the government gives a little attention, they claim.

Flower cultivation and trade mainly attract young people.

A least Tk one lakh can be earned by growing flowers on one bigha (33 decimals) of land in each season.

But at times growers incur heavy losses due to glut in the market from import and smuggling from India ahead of important national celebrations like the International Mother Language Day on February 21, Pahela Baishakh (Bangla New Year), English New Year, Eid and Valentine's Day.

Sher Ali had started with bare hands and without any experience and knowledge.

"I had gone to the Upazila Agriculture Officer and the Block Supervisor (of Agriculture Extension Department) for advice. But they were like me, knowing nothing about flower cultivation".

"After 20 years, the situation is the same now.

"Agriculture officials are of no use. Government does not feel the necessity to train officials and farmers in flower cultivation", he said while taking to this correspondent at Godkhali Bazar, a big flower market along the

JessoreBenapole.

Flower growers have learnt from experiment and experience, he said.

Fortune slined on Sher Ali when trading in indigenous flowers began in 1988.

He then encouraged others to cultivate flowers. Although he started with only 'rajanigandha', now all varieties of flowers including tube rose (pine rajanigandha), marigold, roses of various colours and other seasonal flowers are cultivation in the country.

A body styled Flower Farmers and Traders Association has been formed.

The Godkhali Bazar is now a big flower market where sellers and traders from far and near come early in the morning. About 85 per cent demand of flowers in the country is met up by farmers in Jessore.

Md. Shahjahan of Haria village in Jhaikargaetta said flower cultivation is more profitable than any other crop. In peak periods, marigold is sold at between Tk 300 and 400 per 1000. A flower grower can earn about Tk one lakh in a season from one bigha of land, he said.

Trader Akbor Ali of Baisha village under Navaran said he bought flowers for supply to markets in Dhaka and Chittagong. He said rose is sold at Tk 140 to 160 per 100 at wholesale market.

Md Ershad of the Association said flower growers in Jessore were the first to graft 'jhau' plant.

Despite such tremendous success, farmers do not get any assistance from the government, he said.

"Banning import and promoting export would be the greatest assistance", he said.

He said India exports flowers to several countries including Bangladesh. Farmers there get government patronisation, he claimed.

The growers and traders said some Dhaka-based traders import flowers from India on important national occasions. There is smuggling too.

The growers said they suffer for want of seeds and lack technical knowledge, marketing facilities and cold storage facilities for preservation during peak harvesting seasons.

Growers said they still do experiment in controlling pest attack.

Training agriculture officials on pest control will greatly help us, they said.

## Jubo League activist killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A Jubo League activist was chopped to death here on Saturday.

The victim, Yusuf Hossain, 30, was killed allegedly by the cadres of Rubel Bahini, loyal to city Jubo Dal Secretary Mahbub Alam Mehdi in Khaledabad refugee colony.

The killers cordoned his house, chased and caught him before the killing. Yusuf was rushed to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in a critical condition.

## 4 hurt as lawyers' rally attacked in Barisal

### Cracker hurled on lawyer's chamber

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A procession brought but by Barisal Bar Association in the city on Saturday protesting the attack on advocate Yusuf Hossain Humann in Dhaka was attacked by unidentified miscreants, leaving four injured.

Two of the injured-- advocates Rezaul Huq Milu and Kaium Hossain Ripon-- were admitted to a local clinic for treatment of head injuries they suffered from brick bats hurled on the procession when it reached the Sadar Road intersection.

Awami League leader and Supreme Court lawyer Yusuf Hossain Humann was elected president of Barisal Bar Association thrice.

The processionists blamed ruling party men for the attack.

In another incident, a cracker exploded in front of the Hospital Road chamber of advocate Mohsin Montu, Special Public Prosecutor and BNP leader, Friday night. None was injured.

## Success story of a determined woman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhria

Life is now meaningful to Nilufa Begum, an abandoned housewife at Shetpur village in Assasuni upazila.

She has become solvent and self-reliant by dint of hard labour.

"I am solvent now. My dream is to educate my son up to masters level" a confident Nilufa said.

At the age of 16, she was married to one Jalal uddin. But her dreams were shattered as her husband demanded dowry which her poor father failed to pay. He used to torture her for dowry.

As days passed, she gave birth to two sons and a daughter. One day she was divorced for failing to give dowry.

"I could not think how to survive with my minor sons and daughter", she said, while talking to this correspondent.

She worked as a domestic help. "But I did not get lost".

ASA (Association for Social Advancement a major NGO) provide her with training and a loan of Tk 3,000 in 1997.

She bought a sewing machine and started making garments. She also employed two women at her tailoring shop.

She sold those to local market at cheaper rates. As days passed, her sales increased. She bought three milch cows.

Now she gets 12 kilograms of milk every day sells it at the local market for Tk 216.

She has also purchased 12 decimal land and built a pucca house. She has bought a mechanised trolley for her elder son Palash who is earning by driving it.

She got her only daughter married to a man of her choice last year with her savings.

# Lions share of travel tax pocketed at land port

## Nexus at Burimari

RAFIQUE SARKER back from Burimari, Lalmonirhat

**Rangpur:** Huge amounts from travel taxes collected at Burimari land port every day is being misappropriated allegedly by sections of immigration police, BDR and customs officials, depriving the state exchequer.

Only around one fourth of the travel tax collected every day is being deposited to the exchequer and the rest goes to pockets of the unscrupulous officials and immigration police, sources claimed.

According to immigration rules, a traveler from Bangladesh to India or any other South Asian country is to pay Tk 500 as travel tax.

Immigration police at the land port realise the tax from travelers. But in most cases they do not record it, it is alleged.

Some middlemen act as brokers. They advice travelers not deposit the tax money with banks. They

suggest travelers to pay it in cash to immigration police to evade "unnecessary harassment".

Those who pay are subjected to harassment, it is alleged.

Shahajahan Babu, an export-import businessman in Rangpur alleged that travelers who deposit travel tax with banks face hassle and harassment by immigration police.

Babon Proshad, another import and exporter in the district also alleged that immigration police kept him waiting for hours at an office at the port last month showing filmy reasons. The main cause of the harassment was that he deposited the tax money with a bank, he claimed.

Besides being deprived of revenue, the government is also being misled due to this corruption travelers and sources among officials said.

The number of travelers going to India, Bhutan and Nepal through Burimari land port has increased

five times in last four years but the government is not fully aware of it, a high official at Rangpur DBR Sector Command told this correspondent seeking unanimity.

This is also thwarting tight border vigilance by BDR. "As the immigration police at the port do not keep correct records, many of the wanted criminals are easily crossing the border to India," the BDR official said.

It was gathered from sources at Burimari land port that as per records, 1045 Bangladeshi travelers going to India paid travel tax last month. But the number of travelers from Bangladesh recorded with the Chegrabandha immigration check post in India in the same month was 3280.

Names of 2255 travelers from Bangladesh to India were not recorded at Burimari immigration check post.

# Initiative to revamp Syedpur Rly Workshop

## Govt move to modernise it, recruit 1,010 men after 21 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

The government has taken a bold initiative to revamp Syedpur Railway Workshop after an impasse of 21 years.

After a long ban on new recruitment, the government has taken a decision to appoint 1,010 new personnel in the workshop. Its modernisation is also imminent.

The decision was taken following a visit to the country's largest century-old railway workshop by Communications Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda in April this year. During his tour he inaugurated sophisticated super saloon railway coaches here. He

was amazed to see the skills of engineers and workers of the workshop. At once he declared that the government would take a programme to modernise the workshop. He further declared appointment of a foreign surveyor for a feasibility study.

New recruitment in the workshop was stopped in 1983 by the then government. Since then no government tried to change the situation although fake commitments were made time and again by running candidates during parliamentary elections.

However, the workshop authorities abolished the vacant posts created from retirements. In the process the workshop having a

manpower of 10,000 officers and employees gradually reduced to 2,500 personnel. Various workers' unions and conscious section in Nilphamari and Syedpur alleged that it was a ploy to shift the workshop elsewhere or transfer it to private sector. The situation raised great concern among skilled railway workers and citizens alike.

The decision to appoint new manpower in the workshop has created a great enthusiasm among local people.

# RUTA protests grenade attack

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Rajshahi University Teachers Association (Ruta) yesterday brought out a silent procession and held a rally on the campus to protest the grenade attack on Awami League (AL) rally in Dhaka on August 21.

The procession was led by Ruta President Prof Khalequzzamn.

Speakers at the rally held on the Senate building premises demanded an international probe

into the grenade attack, proper treatment of and compensation to the victims and punishment of the culprits.

The rally was addressed by, among others, Ruta Joint Secretary Sadekul Arefin Matin, Progressive Teachers Association Convener Prof Entajul Haque and former Ruta president Prof Sayen Uddin.

Meanwhile, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) also took out a procession and held a rally on the campus protesting the incident.

RU JCD President Motiar Rahman led the procession.

At the rally, JCD leaders said those who made the attack are enemies of the country, its people and democracy.

They said hartal will not stop acts of terrorism and establish peace in the country.

They urged Awami League to withdraw the hartal and indefinite strike in all educational institution in the country in the interest of students.

# Wheelchairs for disabled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Thirteen disabled persons on Thursday received wheel chairs, educational implements and economic assistance for medical treatment from a local NGO, Shaplaful Mahila Sangstha.

Patuakhali Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) SM Salim Reza handed over those at a simple ceremony held at Sadar Upazila Parishad auditorium.

Three wheelchairs were handed over to 3 disabled persons, medical aid amounting to Tk 10,000 were distributed to seven disabled persons and educational implements worth Tk 5,000 were given to three disabled persons as part of first phase of the Disabled Welfare Project.

Upazila Social Welfare Officer Motiur Rahman and Secretary of the Blind Welfare Sangstha Shaheb Ali were present at the distribution ceremony.



PHOTO: STAR

Three disabled persons on their new wheelchairs given by Shaplaful Mahila Sangstha.

# Diarrhoea: 2 killed, 500 attacked in Gopalganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Two children died of diarrhoea and 500 others were attacked with the disease in Gopalganj Sadar Upazila during last 10 days.

The dead victims are two-month-old Ridoy of Malenga village and four-month-old Oliullah of Bowtali village in Sadar upazila, according to hospital sources.

Acute scarcity of pure drinking water has been prevailing in the affected areas. Shortage of oral saline (IV) and other necessary drugs has aggravated the situation. Poor patients are the worst sufferers as they have to buy medicine in

open market at an exorbitant rate.

Shahadat Hossain Thakur of Gopalpur village in Sadar upazila, a guardian of a patient who is undergoing treatment at the Sadar hospital told The Daily Star, "A doctor handed over me a slip to bring medicine from outside, but a pharmacist told the medicines are available at the government hospital".

Dr Md Shahjahan, Civil Surgeon, Gopalganj told this correspondent the situation is under control as nine medical teams are working in areas and three camps have been opened.

## Corruption charge against Islampur UP chairman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A Union Parishad (UP) chairman faces corruption charge for selling relief materials in black market.

Islampur UP Chairman Joynal Abedin faces the charge following a case filed by Islampur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Nesar Ahmed. He filed the case after a complaint was lodged against him by nine members of the union.

The chairman sold six tonnes of rice in black market after lifting from the godown. The rice was sanctioned for distribution among distressed families.



PHOTO: STAR

Eye soothing scenes all around ... a field of marigold flowers (left) and grafted jhau plants at Panishara village in Gadhkhali in Jessore.

## SNAPS

### Grenade attack: Human chain in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A human chain was formed in front of Aswankumar Hall here on Saturday in protest against recent grenade attack on Awami League rally in the capital. Barisal Nagarik Parishad, a citizens' committee, organised the programme where different socio-political, cultural, non-governmental organisations took part. Participants stressed on national unity and called for united efforts of all citizens to uproot terrorism, corruption, anarchy and autocracy.

### Unnatural death of minor boy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A five-year-old boy faced unnatural death in Gournadi upazila on Saturday. Ill-fated Tuhin, son of Faruk Ukil of North Bijoypur area in Gournadi died when he came in touch with an electrified fence of a poultry farm in the neighbourhood. The firm's fence remained electrified at night without precautionary notice or any signboard. Its proprietor Harun Ukil was fined 30,000 taka which he paid to the victim's family as compensation following a negotiation with the elite. However, the body was buried without postmortem.

### 2,597 certificate cases in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

About 2,597 farmers here have been facing certificate cases for failure to repay agricultural loan. Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) filed 2,597 certificate cases against them to recover unrealised agricultural loan amounting to Tk 7 or 70 lakh and 55 thousand. The bank distributed agri-loan amounting to Tk 26 or 91 lakh 87 thousand through its 22 branches in seven upazilas till June 30 this year, according to the bank's Patuakhali Regional office. The bank recovered loan amounting to Tk 31 or 81 lakh and 95 thousand in last 2003-'04 fiscal and recovered Tk 80 lakh 89 thousand.

# Moulvibazar people hail govt decisions

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

People of Moulvibazar are celebrating upgradation of the district to 'A' category considering its economic prospects and geographical location and creation of a new upazila named Juri.

The government made the announcements at a meeting of the National Implementation Committee on Administrative Reorganisation (NICAR) on August 26 in Dhaka.

Juri upazila will comprise eight unions, four each taken from Kulaura and Baralekha upazilas, according to the district administration.

The unions are Jayfarnagar, Sagarnal, Fultala, Goalbari (take from Kulaura upazila) and Purbojuri, Paschimjuri, Dakshinbhug (South) and Sujanager (taken from Baralekha upazila).

After creation of Juri upazila, the number of unions in Kulaura upazila has decreased to 19 and

that in Baralkha upazila to eight.

With Juri, the number of upazilas in Moulvibazar district is now seven.

Different socio-cultural and political organisations hailed the government decision.

Moulvibazar district BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami, National Awami Party (NAP), Moulvibazar Press Club, Moulvibazar Journalists Association and the district unit of Bangladesh College Teachers Association hailed the government decisions.

Talking to this correspondent, Moulvibazar Pourasava Chairman and district BNP Secretary Fayzul Karim Mayun thanked Finance and Planning Minister M Saifur Rahman for the decisions. "It is because of him that the government took the decisions", he said. Now Moulvibazar will get more allocations for development, he added.

The Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD), ruling BNP's students' wing, brought out a procession in the town hailing the decisions.

BNP leaders including Mayun also joined the procession.

People also came out on streets in Juri and distributed sweets after hearing the news of creation of the new upazila.

Local BNP, Jamaat and Juri Traders Association brought separate processions.

A big public meeting was also held at Juri Bazar on Friday with district BNP Vice President Asad Uddin Badal in the chair. Leaders of different political parties and socio-cultural organisations spoke at the meeting, expressing gratitude to Saifur Rahman.

Meanwhile the people of Shamsernagar reiterated their demand for creation of a upazila there. Leaders of different political parties at Shamsernagar said a survey done by the government recommended creation of a upazila in Shamsernagar but the government is yet to take any decision in this regard.



PHOTO: STAR

A view of flood damaged rugged Chaker Bazar-Mohammadpur road in Sylhet Sadar upazila.