

Once jobless youth now a millionaire farmer

Lokman owns a 15-acre nursery, fishery project

AMANUR AMAN, back from Padmapukur, Jhenidah

Kushtia: Once jobless Lokman is now a millionaire and employs about 50 people.

He earned the fortune in only seven years from a nursery. Starting with only one acre, his Simanta Nursery on about 15 acres is the biggest one in the entire southwest region.

He plans to expand it to 30 acres by January this year.

Lokman Hossain had passed HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) examination in 1988. As usual, unemployed Lokman became a burden on his father Taslim Uddin.

The family planned to send him to Middle East for any odd job and arranged Tk one lakh for this. This was in 1995.

But Lokman was unwilling to go abroad on any odd job. He had great ideas in his mind— to do something creative that would benefit him and the people.

He decided to set up a nursery and told his parents to give him the money they arranged for sending him abroad.

Finding Lokman determined, they agreed reluctantly.

Young Lokman went to his sister-in-law Golam Mstafa who had a nursery in Jhumhpur in Jessore to earn experience.

Finally, young Lokman set up a nursery on one acre of leased land at his Padmapukur village in bordering Mohespur upazila in Jhenidah district in 1996. He had to fight many odds, from his family and neighbours.

Now his nursery is famous for all types of saplings of timber and fruit trees.

"I earned about Tk 45,000 in the first year when the total expenditure was around Tk 15,000.

"I expanded the nursery to five acres next year," Lokman told this correspondent during a recent visit to his nursery.

Lokman says he is making a significant contribution by replacing traditional fruit trees in the area with good and high yielding varieties.

He supplies mango saplings of Himsagar, Langra, Gopal Bhog, Fazli, Amropali and Maallika, and also of different timber and flower plants.

Saplings are also supplied to Dhaka, Sylhet, Chittagong, Barisal, Faridpur and other districts.

In the current tree plantation season, he earned over Tk 12 lakh, from sale of over 2.5 lakh saplings, a proud Lokman said. Profit is higher

from mango saplings, each selling at over Tk 50.

Sales rallied around this figure last year and the year before. This correspondent saw two truckloads of saplings ready to leave Dhaka.

Lokman said truckloads of mango saplings are supplied to far away districts like Comilla and Noakhali also.

Lokman also has provided employment to over 50 youths.

By his time, Lokman has bought four acres of cropland by the profit and dug a two-care pond for fish farming.

Many in his village and surrounding areas are now encouraged by his success, Lokman said.

NEWS ON CORRUPTION

Threat to journalist protested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Journalists at a meeting in Meherpur on Friday protested the threat to a local newsmen by a ruling party leader for publishing a news on alleged corruption.

A news on alleged corruption by Gangni upazila freedom fighter commander Samsul Alam Sonu was published in Dhaka-based daily Khobor on August 30.

Sonu, accompanied by some people, went to Jatya Sangbadik Samity (JSS) office at Meherpur on Friday and threatened Amirul Islam with death. The journalist filed a general dairy with Gangni police station.

Later on the day, the journalists held a protest meeting and demanded security of newsmen in their professional work.

JSS Meherpur unit president and The Bangladesh Observer correspondent Rafiqul Alam chaired the meeting, addressed by correspondents of national dailies, news agencies and the electronic media.

PIRGACHHA HINDU HOUSES ARSONED

14 accused out of net, victims threatened

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Police are yet to nab 14 of the culprits accused in the August 23 arson on houses of Hindu families in Adom Sarkerpara in Pargachha upzila.

Eighteen houses belonging to eight families were torched in the incident.

The affected families now feel insecure as the attackers are now threatening of retaliation, sources claimed.

Leaders of several humanitarian and human rights organisations visited the affected families, met police and the administration and urged officials to track down the culprits.

A number of delegates from humanitarian bodies, led by Mallick Shudhansu of HRCBF of Khulna, visited the affected families on Friday and distributed money and relief goods for their rehabilitation.

General Secretary of Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Cristian Oikkyo Parishad (BBHCOP) Dr Nimchandra Bhounic along with some of its central leaders also visited the families on Friday.

Later at a press conference at Rangpur Press Club, Bhounic urged the local administration to take action against the culprits responsible for the barbarous attack.

Police arrested seven of the accused since August 23.

Local people caught three of them on the day when they were looting seven cows after the arson.

Police arrested four more accused from different areas in Rangpur district. The rest 14 accused are absconding, said a police official in Pargachha.

The Officer-in-charge of Pargachha thana told The Daily Star that search is going on to nab the 14 accused.

Quoting the affected families, Dr. Nimchandra told the press conference that the Hindu families feel insecure as the culprits are threatening them from their hideouts.

Work resumes at Uttara EPZ

Additional police deployed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Industrial units in the Uttara EPZ (Export Processing Zone) here resumed operation on Saturday morning after suspension of work for a day.

Additional police forces were deployed as normalcy is yet to be restored in the EPZ area.

The work was stopped following an incident in which Sohela, a worker of Uttara Sweater Manufacturing Company was beaten by security guards and detained.

At 6 am when the night shift ended, about 400 workers went to the Ansar barrack and demanded Sohela's release. At this, a clash ensued, injuring at least 10 persons including one-Mosharrar-hit with bullet. He was taken to Rangpur Medical College

Hospital (RMCH), following deterioration of his condition.

At about 6.45 am, the ASP circle of Nilphamari and NDC (Magistrate) reached the spot and but Sohela was not freed. Then the workers erected barricade on the Nilphamari-Syedpur Highway for an hour. They released Sohela.

Three Ansars named Emdadul, Lavlu Mia and Moinul Haque were closed.

The Deputy Commissioner (DC) and the Superintendent of Police (SP) visited the spot on Friday noon and assured justice to the workers.

A case was filed by the Uttara EPZ authorities on Friday.

When this correspondent approached the Uttara Sweater Manufacturing Company authorities for comments about the incident, they denied to make any comment.



Relatives taking care of a patient on the floor of Patuakhali General Hospital in absence of health assistants.

PHOTO: STAR

Healthcare goes haywire

62 out of 111 posts of doctors vacant in 8 Patuakhali hospitals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Patients are being deprived of healthcare facilities here due to dearth of physicians in Patuakhali General Hospital and seven upazila health complexes, each consisting of 31 beds.

Sources in the Civil Surgeon (CS) office told this correspondent, 62 out of 111 posts of physicians are lying vacant in the eight hospitals.

The vacant posts in Patuakhali General Hospital are: Senior Consultant (surgery), Child and ENT Specialists, Junior Eye and Orthopaedic Consultants, Patho-logist, Radiologist, Anaesthetist and Gynaecologist. Three out of seven medical officers and three out of four emergency medical officers are also vacant here.

Patients have to collect

blood at higher rate through brokers as there is no blood bank in the hospital.

On average, 150 patients stay on the floor in different wards of the hospital in an unhygienic condition due to shortage of bed.

In Dashmina Upazila Health Complex, there are only two doctors instead of nine doctors. The quality of diet is not satisfactory, although an amount of Tk 30 is sanctioned for daily diet of each patient.

There is no doctor in the health sub-centres here. The sub-centres are at Labukhali in Dumki upazila and Boga in Bauphal upazila, Mahishkata, Chailla and Chalita-bunia in Mirjaganj upazila, Mohipur Health Sub-centre in Kalapara upazila, Ulania, Chalitabunia, Char Biswas and Khorizama in Galachipa upazila and Knakdia, Kalisurya in Bauphal upazila. Health

assistants render medical treatment to patients coming from different areas.

Tk 3.75 lakh loans for goat rearing

BSS, Faridpur

At least 66 cheques amounting to Tk 3.75 lakh were handed over to distressed people for goat rearing recently.

The interest-free loans were distributed as part of the poverty alleviation programme of Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia.

Deputy Commissioner of Faridpur M Nasiruddin gave away the cheques at a meeting organised by the Livestock Department. District Livestock Officer Narayan Chandra Roy presided over the meeting while Police Superintendent MA Jaill addressed it.

20 custodial deaths in SW region in 3 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Twenty 'criminals' died in police custody in the south-western region from May 20 to August 30 this year.

However, police said they were killed in crossfire.

Abdur Rashid alias Tapu, divisional chief of M-L faction of outlawed Furbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) was killed in a crossfire at Fakirhat upazila in Bagerhat on May 20.

On May 23, PBCP (J) cadres Minarul and Shaban were killed in crossfire at Alamdanga upazila in Chuadanga.

On May 27, a PBCP (Janajuddho) armed cadre was killed in crossfire in Bagerhat town.

On May 28, bomber Abdur Rahman Chhoton was killed in crossfire at Skid Ghat in Khulna thana.

PBCP (J) armed cadre Arif died in an encounter with police on June 5 at Damurhuda upazila in Chuadanga.

On June 10, armed cadre of PBCP (M-L) Raja Chowdhury was killed in crossfire in Roosevelt jetty area in Khalishpur thana.

Pasha, a dreaded criminal of PBCP (J) was killed in crossfire in Kushtia town.

On June 26, Arab Ali, a ring-leader of outlawed Sramajibi Mukti Andolon was killed in an encounter at Shaikupa upazila in Jhenidah. Sirajul Islam alias Shalim, ring-leader of outlawed Biplobi Communist Party was killed in crossfire at Kalabaria in Mirpur upazila, Kushtia.

On June 30, two extremists of PBCP (J), Ujjal and Shahin were killed in crossfire at Atharo Khan village in Alamdanga upazila, Chuadanga.

On July 10, PBCP (J) extremist Minhaj died in encounter with police at Kutipara in Kushtia town.

PBCP (J) armed cadre Khair was killed in crossfire at Alamdanga upazila, Chuadanga on August 13.

On August 22, Babu Molla, armed cadre of PBCP (M-L) was

killed in encounter with police at Mollarhat upazila in Bagerhat.

On August 20, Dr Altaf and Rashed Goldar of PBCP (Janajuddho) were killed in crossfire at Malot village in Paikgacha upazila, Khulna.

On August 27, Hasan Imam of PBCP-Janajuddho was killed in crossfire at Rampal upazila in Bagerhat.

On August 30, listed criminal Asaduzzaman Litu died in armed encounter with police.

Wife stabbed to death in Fulbari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A housewife was killed by her husband at Kushmil village in Fulbaria upazila in Mymensingh district on Friday.

Police said Kurshad Alam stabbed his 18 year-old wife Fatama Begum to death following a family feud. Police arrested Alam and lodged a case.



Farjana Balu Shilpi receiving a crest from the President of Sathkhira District Women's Sports Association, Salma Elias, at the reception.

PHOTO: STAR

SAARC CAROM COMPETITION

Reception to winner Sathkhira girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkhira

A reception was accorded to Farjana Balu Shilpi, who emerged third in the SAARC Carom Competition (mixed double) held in New Delhi in July this year.

Sathkhira District Mahila Krira Sangstha, women's sports association, on Thursday accorded the reception, held at Sathkhira Sports Association Auditorium.

With Salma Elias, President of Sathkhira District Mahila Sports

Association in the chair, the occasion was addressed, among others, by Hosne Ara Ahmed, advocate Ferdousi Ara Luci, Jelena Chowdhury, Rifat Amin, advocate Farida Akhtar Banu, Dolly Sultana and Shamim Ara Nargis.

In her reply, Farzana Shilpi lamented that Sathkhira District Sports Association and Mahila Krira Sangstha did not encourage her to participate in the carom competition in 2002. She lauded Ansar and VDP for sponsoring in the meet.

Rab nabs arms trader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) arrested an alleged arms trader and recovered a some firearms along with ammunition from his house on Friday.

Rab source said a team led by its Khulna Divisional ASP (Additional Police superintendent) ARM Alif raided the house of Alhaj Mahiuddin at Baragangdia in Daulatpur upazila in the evening and recovered one foreign-made pistol, a revolver, two 2.2 rifles, and 43 bullets.

Rab arrested Mahiuddin, an Awami League leader and his son Rakibul Islam Razib.

Police said Mahiuddin was involved in crimes including arms trading in border areas. He was also arrested twice earlier and accused in four arms cases, filed with Daulatpur thana.

Two killed in B'baria road mishap

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Two persons were killed and seven injured when a Maxi human hauler fell into Lohor river by breaking the railing of a bridge at Budhumi in the Sadar upazila on Friday.

The victims are Sukkur Ali of Hazpur village in Bahubal upazila, Habiganj and Musa Mia of the same village. The bodies were recovered from the river yesterday.

The maxi was going to Sayestaganj from Mymensingh.

Seven out of nine passengers swam ashore although they sustained serious injuries. Four of them were admitted to the nearby hospital and three were given fist aid.

Later, police found the two floating bodies and recovered them.

SNAPS

DANIDA team visits Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A three-member DANIDA team visited its media-related project here on Friday. They visited the Mass-line Media Sub-centre here where journalists working in various local and national dailies are being trained. The centre also organises seminars on local important issues and publishes a fortnightly publication named Methobarta. The team exchanged views with the MMC officials. The team members include DANIDA Consultant Morten Gobel Polsen, Mirja Najmul Huda and Programme Officer of the Royal Danish Embassy, Asaduzzaman.

Wife killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A husband killed his wife at Gobindapur village in Mirpur upazila on Friday night. Rezaul and Asia were married four years back. Since then Asia tried to desist her husband from taking drug, but in vain. On Friday night, Rezaul stabbed her while she was asleep. Critically injured Asia was taken to Kushtia General Hospital where she died soon after admission. A case was filed with Mirpur police but the killer husband is absconding, police said.



PHOTO: STAR

Arrested Mahiuddin and his son along with recovered firearms.

RETU enters 2nd year amid festivity

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Rajshahi Engineering and Technology University observed its first founding anniversary on September 1 with great enthusiasm and day-long programmes.

It was unique for the city dwellers to see a colourful horse carriage procession in the morning, led by dignitaries including Mayor Mizanur Rahman Minu MP and Ruet Vice-

chancellor Dr AAFM Anwarul Haque. Several hundred teachers and students followed them, carrying fastoons and banners. Crowds lined up on roadsides greeted them.

This was followed by a discussion at Ruet auditorium on development of the university and future plans. Ruet teachers' association president Dr. Shirajul Karim Chowdhury, Officers' Samity President Dr Sheikh Md Nizamuddoula were among others

who took part in the discussion. Teachers and students also held cultural functions and competitions on the campus to mark the occasion.

Set up in 1964 on 150 acres of land, the then Rajshahi Engineering College was upgraded Bangladesh Institute of Technology in 1986 and to the Rajshahi Engineering and Technology University on September 1 last year.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of RUET brought out a colourful procession in Rajshahi city marking its first founding anniversary.