



Bunches of green mango (left) and lichi's yet to mature on trees in Dinajpur. Farmers expect good yield of the sweet seasonal fruits this year.

PHOTO: STAR

# Mango, lichi to be plentiful!

## Good yield expected in greater Dinajpur this year: Commercial cultivation on rise

A CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A good yield of mango and lichi is expected in grater Dinajpur district this year.

Farmers and agriculture officials said this is an on-year for the sweet seasonal fruits and they are expecting bumper production if the gardens are not affected by nor'wester.

Raising of mango and lichi gardens increased in the area in the last few years following farmers' training and motivation by the Agriculture Extension Department (AED) under its North-West Crop Diversification Project.

This can open up great prospects for farmers and earn good amounts of foreign exchange for the country if commercial cultivation can be increased, AED officials told this correspondent.

This year, though slightly delayed, the budding was profuse in most of the mango and lichi trees in Dinajpur, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh. Mango buds were not affected as the winter and fog were normal.

Nur Hossain, owns a 20-bigha mango garden in the Sadar upazila. "All the trees are now full of small green mangoes and there will be a very good harvest if these

are not affected by nor'wester", he told this correspondent with a delighted mood. The weather is favourable this year, he said.

The climate of Dinajpur, Panchagarh, Thakurgaon are suitable for cultivation of good quality mango and lichi, he added.

AED sources said there about 3,300 hectares of mango gardens in Dinajpur and the prospect is bright in most of the gardens this year.

Akbar Hossain of Birol village in Dinajpur Sadar said raising a mango garden in high lands is more profitable than other crops.

Good quality mangoes like Lengra, Gopalbhog, Fazli, Ranipachand are grown in these gardens, which bring money four to five times than from crops like wheat, jute, sugarcane and vegetables.

Commercial litchi farming, especially that of Bedana variety, is increasing in Dinajpur as more and more farmers are switching over to this seasonal fruit from other traditional crops.

The soil and climate of the area are very suitable for mango and lichi, agriculturists and farmers said. Moreover their high prices attract farmers.

The Deputy Director of

Dinajpur AED said Banglaadeshi lichi has good market in the Middle East. A small quantity was exported to Dubai last year by two NGOs BRAC and Proshika. The export may will be higher this year, he said.

Dinajpur Sadar, Biral, Kaharol and Khanshama upazilas are now known for litchi cultivation, which has now increased to 882 hectares from 543 hectares three years ago, they said.

Of the total gardens, 500 hectares are in Biral and 120 in the Sadar upazila. Small gardens are there also in Birganj, Bochaganj, Khanshama, Kaharol, Phulbari, Parbatipur, Chirirbandar, Nawabganj, Hakimpur, Birampur and Ghoraghat.

Sources in AED's Horticulture Department said about 68 per cent litchi gardens in Dinajpur are of Bombai variety, 30 per cent Madraji variety and the rest are of Bedana variety.

Farmers in the area earlier cultivated sugarcane on high lands. Lichi farming increased due to motivation by the DAE. A garden lasts for at least 50 year and the production cost is also negligible, farmers said.

Sugarcane on one acre earns a farmer Tk 15,000 a year at best

while lichi can earn up to Tk two lakh, they said.

About 2,400 farmers have so far been trained in lichi farming since the North-West Crop Diversification Project was launched in the area, AED officials said.

Horticulturist Khairul Islam of DAE in Dinajpur said training on lichi farming and campaign has opened up a new horizon for farmers in Dinajpur

Some litchi garden owners in Masimpur village in the Sadar upazila said there is no major risk except rainfall during the pick harvesting period.

But there is a problem. At times, bulk quantities are damaged due to lack of storage facility, they said.

The DAE officials said they submitted a proposal for setting up a specialised cold storage in the area, but nothing has been done so far.

Planned litchi farming can bring affluence for farmers in a greater Dinajpur and also earn foreign exchange for the country, they said.

## A noble initiative

Free English coaching for B'baria school students

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Brahmanbaria Kishur Kantha Reades' Forum in the town has taken an initiative to encourage students to learn English. They are teaching students English for free.

Yesterday, the Forum organised a day-long programme styled 'English Academic TS', held at Bahmanbaria Ideal High Academy.

Seventy-five students of class six to nine from different schools in the town and nearby villages attended it.

The Forum will hold such programmes every weekend at different schools in the town alternately.

The sessions were presided over by Md Ataur Rahman Sarker. The teachers were Prof Md Fayzul Karim of Nasir Nagar Degree College and The Daily Star Correspondent Sheikh Shahidul Islam, vice-president of Brahmanbaria Press Club.

Among others, Md Sirajul Islam, chairman of Al-Falah Hospital; teacher Md Manurul Islam; Md Mizanur Rahman; Karim Rana; Md Zamal Uddin; Md Islam Uddin Sarker; Md Shuhrabur Rahman; Ruhul Amin and Md Hanir Hossain spoke on the occasion. During English learning session, two trainees taught students English and discussed on four skills of learning English.

The programme included a quiz competition.

## Crematorium, temple land grabbed in Satkhira

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A century-old crematorium and a Hindu temple were captured by land grabbers at Jahowdang in Sadar upazila on March 29.

Land grabbers occupied the Hindu property by hanging a signboard of mass graveyard. The General Secretary (GS) of Jahowdang crematorium committee, Biswanath Ghosh disclosed this at a press conference held at Jhhowdanga bazaar on Tuesday.

In a written statement he told newsmen that former landlord Maindra Nath Nandi had donated 1.66 acres of land for the crematorium in 1927. A temple was also built there for worshipping goddess Kali.

At present, members of the Hindu community are passing their days in great panic due to land grabbers' threat. They are threatening Hindus of dire consequences if they pull down the signboard of the mass graveyard, Biswanath told the press conference.

Members of the Hindu community have sought Prime Minister's intervention to resolve the crisis.

## Surf Excel Inter-school Contest in Khulna May 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Surf Excel Inter-school Creativity Contest for Children will be held here on May 6.

Unilever Bangladesh Limited (UBL) will organise the competition aimed at bringing out the latent talent of children.

Each school will participate in junior and senior groups.

UBL organised a meeting at a local hotel on April 10. Teachers of different schools in the city attended the meeting. The meeting apprised school teachers about children's participation in the competition. Different aspects of the competition were also explained in the meeting. Khulna Civil Surgeon Dr Hama Jamal was present as the chief guest.

Among others, Developmental Paediatrician of Dhaka Shishu Hospital Dr Farzana Islam, TV personality and physician Dr Abdun Noor Tushar and UBL officials addressed the meeting.

## Random sand lifting a threat to Kuakata beach, dam

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Indiscriminate sand lifting from Kuakata beach in the name of development project in violation of an order by the Kuakata Deputy Commissioner and ignoring protests by environmentalists is damaging the beach environment and threatening the protection embankment.

Sand is being lifted by a large number of trucks from areas close to the main embankment near the Adarsha Gram project to develop low lying lands in Keranipara area.

Sources alleged that a woman member of Latachapli Union Parishad and her husband are behind the sand lifting. The sand is being used for raising the height of land for construction of hotels and

shops, it is alleged.

Local influentials are buying the sand at Tk 400 per truck to develop and grab lands, sources in the area alleged. Signboards for proposed hotels and shopping malls have already been hung.

Some local people brought the matter to the Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner, who visited the area on April 4 and ordered Kalapara UNO (Upazila Nirbahi Officer) to stop the sand lifting.

Accordingly, the UNO visited the spot on that day and stopped it.

But on April 12, UNO Abdul Barek, local Tahsildar (land revenue official) Chan Mia and local officials of Water Development Board visited the spot. Sand lifting resumed a day after their visit.

This has created a tension in the

area. Bokul Jaan Begum, resident of the area, was assaulted allegedly by sand lifters when she tried to resist it on Wednesday.

She was also threatened by the woman Union Parishad member and her husband threatened if she created any obstacle to the sand lifting, sources there said. When contacted over mobile phone, Patuakhali DC Proshanta Bhushan Barua said he will look into the matter and advised this correspondent to contact the local UNO.

UNO Abdul Barek, when contacted said, "Yes, I visited the spot on Tuesday and gave permission for sand collection from the beach because it is a development project."

PROBE INTO GAIBANDHA POSTAL SCAM RESUMES

## Defalcation of Tk 1 cr detected

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Probe into the embezzlement of depositor's money at Gaibandha Post Office resumed on Thursday.

Sources in the probe team said the embezzled amount may touch Tk one crore and more postal employees other than the six accused could be involved in the scam.

But they were tight lipped, not to disclose details.

The five-member probe team is lead by Amanullah Majumder, Assistant Post Master General.

"We are scanning all papers and documents including those on postal certificates and money order", said Majumder.

"It's a deep rooted scam ever detected in the history of postal department."

"We will check all financial irregularities in Gaibandha Postal Department", he said.

An organised gang was involved in misappropriation of funds through forgery of saving accounts, repeated sale of same savings certificates and withdrawal of cash by preparing fake money orders, he said.

The six accused persons are

absconding soon after the first probe team led by Postal Department Director Abdur Rashid began investigation on April 4. They even did not hand over charges prior to fleeing, said Amjad Hossain, Post Master of Gaibandha Post Office.

Postal authorities suspect the culprits might have damaged many important documents to destroy witnesses.

"No matter, we will be able to trace out all irregularities, but police co-operation is needed to make it a success", said another probe team member.

Police yet to nab any of six culprits involved in the scam though a case was filed on April 7.

Many of the depositors are now asking the postal officials whether the passbooks given to them are genuine or fake.

The Post Master assured the customers that they need not be worried about their savings.

Police said they are on a manhunt for the accused persons but their houses are locked. They fled away with their families, said police.

## Two farmers rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police rescued two farmers and arrested an abductor from village Kalyanpur in Gangni upazila in Meherpur on Thursday. The arrested abductor is Bhugol Ali.

According to police, a gang of criminals abducted the farmers, Abul Kasem, 38, and Saidur Rahman, 36, from a paddy field in Gangni on Tuesday night. At that time they were irrigating their field.

After abduction, the gang demanded Tk 3 lakh as ransom for their release.

## Theft at Patuakhali Sub-Registry office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Criminals looted important documents of Patuakhali Sub-Registry Office in the early hours of Tuesday. They ransacked 12 almirahs and furniture of the office.

According to Registrar Abdus Samad, a gang of criminals numbering seven attacked the office at about 3.30 am. They tied the two night guards and entered the office rooms by breaking open the locks and looted the documents.

Both the night guards, Nurul Islam and Zakir Hossain, were admitted to Patuakhali hospital as they were injured by the criminals.

## New Year fanfare in Garo foothills

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Indigenous people in Durgapur and Kalmakanda in Netrakona district, Madhupur in Tangail and Nalitabari, Jinaigati and Shreebardi in Sherpur district observed the Pahela Baishakh through various colourful programmes and fanfare.

In Netrakona, Garo, Hajong, Koch and Boni ethnic tribes organised various programs on the occasion. The programmes began with a colorful rally in Durgapur town, participated by a large number of indigenous people and Bangalees.

Birishiri Tribal Cultural Academy in Durgapur arranged a day-long cultural programme, including traditional songs and dance. Netrakona district and session Judge Mahammad Shaha Alam Mia, Senior Assistant Judge Faruk Ahmed and Durgapur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mojamal Haque, Assistant Director of Birishiri Cultural Academy Uttam Richil and journalists attended the cultural programme.

In Modhupur of Tangail, indige-



PHOTO: STAR

Garos people presenting their traditional dance at a programme marking New Year celebrations on the premises of Birishiri Tribal Cultural Academy in Netrakona.

nous people celebrated Boishabi fair and a day-long cultural program were the main attractions. A big colourful rally was brought out in Modhupur town. The cultural program was held at Dokola. Boishabi fairs were held at Dokola and Agrakuri in the upazila.

In Sherpur district, all indigenous

communities in Jinaigati, Nalitabari and Shreebardi upazilas celebrated the occasion with various programmes. They brought out colorful rallies in Jinaigati, Nalitabari, Shreebardi upazila headquarters and in at Sherpur town. Cultural programmes were also held in other areas of the district.

## Self help is the best help

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

People of Baliadah, a remote village in Tala upazila, have set a good example. They are voluntarily reconstructing the damaged Baliadah-Madra road.

People of all walks of life from Baliadah, Dohar, Madra and six other villages, including teachers, students and youths, are working together to rebuild the kutcha road for movement of people and protect IRRi-Boro crops from possible flood.

The road was badly damaged by floods in 2003.

Though an important road in the area, neither the authorities nor the local government took any move to rebuild it despite repeated appeals by people.

The initiative to reconstruct the road was taken by a youth- Shah Newasz Biswas- of Baliadah village.

He mobilised the people in the noble work. Responding to his call, people began the work on April 10.

People from other villages in the area will also join soon, the villagers said.

Shah Newaz is supervising the work. Those who can not do physical labour are donating money and materials.



PHOTO: STAR

Artistes and cultural activists light candles at Chittagong Shilpakala Academy yesterday to protest fundamentalists' attack on Pahela Baishakh programmes (left) and a procession by Fine Arts students on Rajshahi University campus welcoming the New Year.