

TK 100 CR JUTE PURCHASE SCAM IN KHULNA

2 bank managers suspended for 'connivance'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

Sarder Hasibur Rahman, Manager of Daulatpur branch of Sonali Bank and Mohammad Mizanur Rahman, its manager at Daulatpur College Road branch have been suspended for their alleged connivance in a big financial scandal involving Tk 100 crore for purchase of raw jute.

The suspension orders were issued Tuesday evening by Atiqur Rahman, the bank's General Manager at its Principal Office in Khulna City.

Kumar Ghose and Junior Principal Officer Farhad Hossain yesterday took over charges of the bank's Daulatpur branch and College Road branch respectively.

According to the General Manager, Messers Eastern Traders, AK Jute and Akunji Brothers are prominent jute traders in Daulatpur. They took Tk 100 crore as loan for purchasing raw jute.

A special team of senior officers sent from the bank's Dhaka head office earlier this month conducted inspection in godowns of the jute

traders.

The team submitted a report to Sonali Bank Managing Director Tahminul Islam saying that the jute traders did not purchase raw jute worth Tk 100 crore taken as loan for that. The traders submitted forged statements in connivance with the managers at the two branches.

In fact, they did not purchase raw jute even with half of the loan money, Sonali Bank sources said. Further investigation is going on.

Rare sympathy bears fruit

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

A teenaged domestic help secured junior scholarship in class five. This was possible because of the sympathetic attitude of her master's wife.

Kumari Chandana Rani, 11, daughter of Sunil Chandra of Dhapfhat Bazarpara village in Sadullapur Upazila, was engaged as a domestic help at the house of Raihan Islam five years back.

Seeing Rani's desire for education, Raihan's wife Laily Begum got her admitted to a nearby primary school and extended all possible cooperation to her.

Rani attended school after completing all household work in the morning. Laily Begum looked after Rani's education as she did for her children. Beyond the knowledge of her husband, she even gave her coaching at her leisure time.

Last year, Rani was selected from the school to appear at the junior scholarship examination in class five. She secured scholarship in general grade, announced recently.

The noble gesture by the house mistress and Rani's success is now a matter of discussion among many in Gaibandha town.

ACTION FOLLOWS ROBBERY AT ARMY CHIEF'S HOUSE

Golapganj OC closed, all cops to be withdrawn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Sylhet*

Golapganj thana Officer-in-charge Md Abul Quasem and Second Officer Md Yunus Miah were withdrawn and closed to the district police line Tuesday night in view of deterioration in law and order in the upazila in the past few weeks.

Rest of the men at the police station will also be transferred or withdrawn soon, police sources here said.

Replacements for the OC and the Second Officer were to reach the thana yesterday, but they did not reach there when the report was filed at about noon.

An uneasy calm is prevailing in Golapganj upazila as police went for "indiscriminate" arrest of people from villages in the upazila after the dacoity at the homestead of Army Chief Hasan Mashud Chowdhury on the night of April 16. This created a commotion in the area.

Police however arrested 31 people, seven of them suspects. They were taken on remand yesterday.

But local people claimed that the real culprits are yet to be nabbed.

The Sylhet Police

Superintendent has announced Tk 50,000 award for information leading to arrest of the culprits.

Moreover, police have restricted people's movement after 11 pm in the upazila headquarters and some other commercial places. Police patrol the villages at night.

Police officials from the district headquarters are visiting the villages almost every day since the dacoity.

On Tuesday, the SP joined an anti-crime meeting held at Dhakadakhshin Bazar, a commercial place in the upazila. Additional SP SA Faruqui, ASP (Sadar South) Sarder Raquibul Islam, Golapganj

Pourashava Chairman, a number of BNP leaders and UP Chairmen also spoke at the meeting.

Golapganj Pourashava Chairman Zakaria Ahmed Paplu told the Daily Star Tuesday afternoon that people of the upazila are virtually hostage to police.

"We are passing worst days as regards law and order. Incidents of theft and snatching increased in recent months while drugs were sold openly as miscreants were sheltered by police, he alleged.

Elderly Abdul Jilil Babu Miah, president of Golapganj Nagorik Committee, said law and order situation deteriorated in last few

months due to corruption by law enforcers. Innocent people were being nabbed in the name of arresting criminals after the dacoity in the army chief's village house.

General Secretary of the Nagorik Committee said, "We are planning agitation against the deteriorating law and order in the area".

Abdul Mannan, Convener of Golapganj Traders Association, alleged at the meeting that police did not take any action even after five incidents of robbery took place in the second week of April at villages near the police station.

Sour tomato in sultry summer

BARI's hybrid varieties becoming popular as farmers earn over one lakh taka from one bigha in just three months

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Bangladeshis will soon relish locally produced flavoury and slightly sour tomato in summer sultry days, thanks to the innovation by scientists of Bangladesh Agriculture research Institute (BARI) at Joydebpur. This will also open up a door to affluence for farmers.

A team of young scientists led by Senior Scientific Officer Shahabuddin has evolved four hybrid varieties of summer tomato, which have created great enthusiasm among farmers and local seed companies.

The varieties were cultivated at farmers' level at Dadpur village in Bagharpara upazila of Jessore district last summer under the direct supervision of Shahabuddin and his team.

Unbelievable though, the yield was around 125 maunds per bigha, which the farmers sold at between Tk 1500 and 200 per maund. They cultivated C-36 and C-55 hybrid varieties without applying hormone. The yield almost doubles if hormone is sprayed at flowering stage, which ensures 100 per cent fruiting.

Farmers Nurul Islam Mondol and Abdul Khalaq were overwhelmed with the success. Others in Dadpur village and nearby areas were bemused as earnings over Tk one lakh from one bigha of land in three months was unbelievable to them. They all are cramming for seeds this year.

A Daily Star correspondent visited Dadpur village along with the BARI team recently and talked to villagers.

To spread their cultivation, BARI is organising demonstration plots in Rajshahi, Bogra, Thakurgaon, Panchagarh, Comilla and in more areas in Jessore this year.

Some Bangladeshi seed companies have evinced keen interest to multiply the seeds. East West Seed, Supreme Seed, Omni Group and some others have sought samples.



STAR FILE PHOTO

BARI scientists helping farmers in nursing hybrid tomato plants at Dadpur village in Jessore

BARI will give them seeds in the coming winter for multiplication so that more seeds are available to farmers in the next summer, sources at BARI told The Daily Star. Seeds are grown in winter.

They said, they are also enthused by the response from farmers and seed companies and hope cultivation of hybrid summer tomato will spread to most areas of the country within years.

Both farmers in Jessore and BARI scientists said size, colour and taste of the summer varieties are like the winter varieties produced in the country. These are much superior to those now imported in summer.

But cultivation of the summer

varieties is costly. Special arrangements have to be made to protect the field from rain. The whole field has to be covered with white polythene sheds to allow plants to get sunlight and the land must be flood-free. There should be adequate drainage to allow rainwater to flow out.

Seedbeds have to be prepared in the first week of May and plants should be transplanted within 30 days. Harvest can be started after 85 days of transplantation.

The varieties are not virus resistant. Insecticides have to be applied at seven to 10 days' interval for about a month after transplantation from the seedbed.

The BARI has so far evolved

nine varieties of summer tomato.

These are BARI Tomamto-10 (Anupoma), BARI Tomato-13 (Sraboni), C-33, C-34, C-36, C-38, C-55, C-67 and C-88. Of these, C-36 and C-55 varieties can be grown with and without hormone. The rest need hormone at flowering stage and harvested can be started after 90 days of transplantation.

BARI scientists are now experimenting on how to make all the varieties cultivable without hormone and to make those resistant to virus, pest and rainwater, sources said.

Diarrhoea kills 5 in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

Diarrhoea claimed five lives in two upazilas last week.

The two upazilas are Galachipa and Kalapara. Three persons were killed in Galachipa upazila and two persons were killed in Kalapara upazila. About 100 persons were attacked by the disease in the two upazilas.

The victims are Abdul Mannan, 60, Salam, 55, and Marjina, 7, in Galachipa upazila and Rani Begum, 32, and Sanjida, 10, in Kalapara upazila.

According to Patuakhali Civil Surgeon (CS) Dr Nurun Nahar Begum, the situation is under control. As many as 101 medical teams are working in the affected areas. 'The stock of saline in all the hospitals is also satisfactory', she added.

JCD man, BCL activists held by Barisal Rab

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) arrested one JCD and two BCL activists from Jhalakati town Tuesday night for alleged extortion.

They are Jhalakati Sadar Upazila JCD President Mizanur Rahman alias Milon Khalifa, 26 and BCL activists Zakir Hussein alias Sumon Khalifa and his brother Shafiqur Rahman Kutty, 24.

RAB brought the three to its Barisal camp for interrogations.

Capt Iftikhar, Commander of Barisal RAB, said there are many allegations of terrorist activities and toll collection against them. They will be handed over to police after primary interrogation, he said.

Vow to create awareness about AIDS

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *B'baria*

An advocacy and view exchange meeting on HIV/AIDS was held at Brahmanbaria Zila Parishad auditorium in the town yesterday.

It was organised by a health service providers Marie Stopes, Bangladesh and Family Health International (FHI).

The meeting was presided over by Dr. Reena Yasmin, GM (Services) of Marie Stopes.

Brahmanbaria Civil Surgeon MD Ishak Khan was the chief guest while

Additional SP Md Jahangir Hossain, ADC (general) Mia Abdullah Mamun were special guests.

It was addressed by, among others, Dr. Masudus Salehin, Md Hossain Chawdhury and AKM Fazla Khuda, all from Marie Stopes; lawyer Shamima Karim Runa and journalists Mahamad Arzo, Sheikh Md Shahidul Islam, KAM Rashidul Islam, Pijush Kanthi Archarjo, Sadiqur Rahman and Abdul Noor.

The speakers said only religious teaching, checking erosion of moral values and use of drugs can prevent spread of the incurable disease. Bangladesh is vulnerable to the diseases as it is surrounded by India and Burma where its prevalence is high.

Twenty-six journalists representing different national dailies and the TV channels, teachers, lawyers and representatives of other professional groups attended the meeting. They vowed to create a mass awareness about the disease.

FOOD SECURITY PROJECT IN BANADARBAN

Japanese envoy happy on progress of work

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bandarban*

Days are not far away when Bangladesh will be self-sufficient in agriculture and other rural sectors, Japanese ambassador in Bangladesh Hari Godi has said.

He made the observation while visiting some projects under Special Food Security Programme, funded by Japan. The programme that began in 2002-2003 financial year is being implemented by FAO.

Besides agriculture, it covers 11 sectors including fishery, poultry, livestock, health and education, designed to improve life of hill people.

"I believe the dream is going to be a reality", he said while walking through narrow walkways in the hills, seeing the enchanting beauty. Hari Godi was accompanied by his wife and Bangladesh officials during the two-day visit of the district that concluded yesterday.

The visit took him to remote areas like Daneshpara, Tetuliapara and Paitongpara in Roangchari Upazila and Mongching in Alikadam Upazila included under the project.

The ambassador and his wife

expressed satisfaction seeing people taking to modern methods of cultivation with irrigation, something unseen in the hills before.

They were cordially received by local people. Hari Godi was the first Japanese envoy to visit the hill district in several years.

In the past, all the ambassadors who visited Bandarban were from Western countries.

The total cultivable land in Bandarban in 1,38,688 hectares only. Because of lack of irrigation facilities, 95,255 hectares remained uncultivated earlier, leaving the district a food deficit area. Over the years, 43,433 hectares have been brought under irrigation facilities, but the district is still not self-sufficient in food production.

For the reason, there remains food crisis in the district yet.

Agriculture and other rural sectors are now improving in Bandarban after launch of the Special Food Security Programme, which covers 21 upazilas in 17 districts.

Besides rice, other crops like wheat and maize are now produced in Bandarban.

Hiking at Habiganj forest

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Participants at a trail hiking at Satchuri Reserved Forest in Habiganj on Sunday stressed on the need for creating more job opportunities for local people with a view to stopping illegal felling of trees in the forest.

They told this at a post-hike discussion on forest conservation by developing a collaborative management process with the Forest Department, says a press release.

Md Emdadul Haque, Deputy Commissioner of Habiganj took part in the programme as chief guest while it was attended by Union Parishad (UP) chairmen, members,

teachers, doctors, journalists, representatives of civil society, police and BDR.



PHOTO: STAR

Officials of Habiganj district administration and the Forest Department accompanied by representatives of local elite visiting Satchuri forest to create awareness about bio-diversity.