

# Over 100 mushroom farms closed in Tangail in a year

*Lack of funds, marketing facilities*

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Over 100 mushroom farms were closed in the district in a year due to various reasons including lack of fund.

Owners of the farms have abandoned the business due to lack of bank loan and indifference of authorities to their problems, said Morshed Akter Lipi, a member of Bangladesh Mushroom Foundation and project director (PD) of Himel Mushroom Cultivation Project.

Mushroom is a highly nutritious and tasty vegetable having medicinal value. It contains 25 to 35 per cent protein, 57 to 70 per cent vitamin and mineral, 5 to 6 per cent fat and 4 to 6 per cent glucose. These are required for strengthening immune system of human body. Mushroom helps cure high blood pressure, diabetes, gastric, jaundice and heart ailment, experts say.

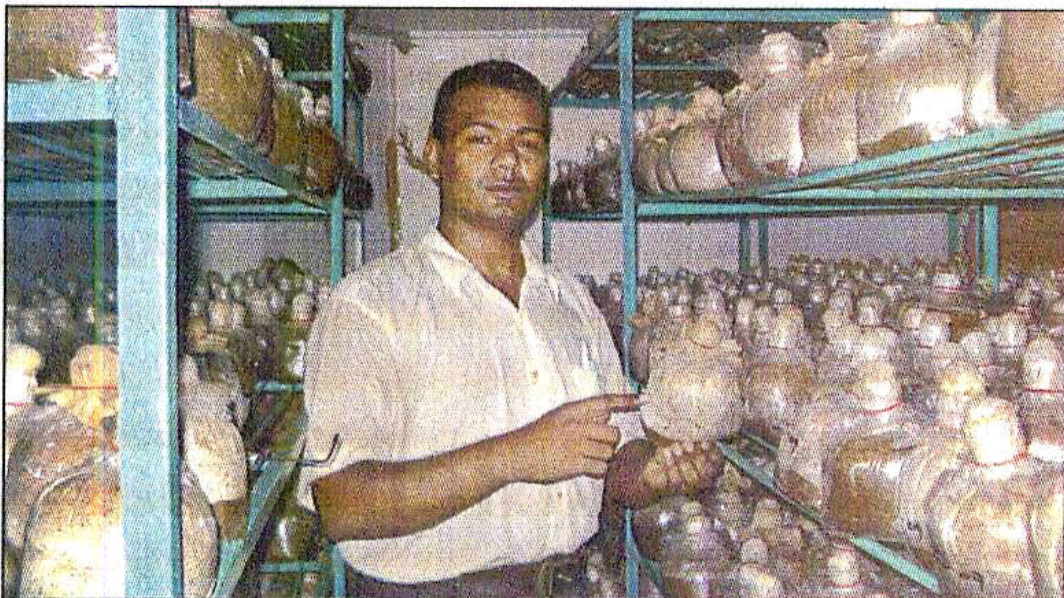
About 2000 varieties of mushroom are available in the world. Six of them are eatable. Of the six, only Oyster Hybrid variety of mushroom is cultivated in Bangladesh.

Price of each kilogram raw mushroom is Tk 150 while one kilogram mushroom dust costs Tk 1,000 and a spawn (mushroom seed) is being sold at Tk 10 in local markets.

Mushroom cultivation gained popularity here after production of mushroom seed (spawn) on commercial basis at Kodalila here in 2005.

Many unemployed youths showed keen interest in mushroom cultivation. Bangladesh Mushroom Foundation member Lipi trained 196 people including students and unemployed youths.

This correspondent met several cultivators who closed their mush-



Hashmot Ali Rana at his mushroom cultivation center in Tangail.

room farms in Sadar and Kalihati upazilas.

Mohammad Jasim, a cultivator said he took training on mushroom cultivation in 2005. Afterwards, he started mushroom cultivation with 500 spawns (mushroom seed). But he abandoned its cultivation this year due to shortage of capital, he said.

Rana, another cultivator at Ichhapur village in Kalihati upazila said he started mushroom cultivation at his house with 1,000 spawns (mushroom seed) last year. But he was forced to close down his farm due to shortage of capital, short supply of spawn (mushroom seed), scarcity of polythene bag and some other reasons, he said.

Ezaz Ahmed and Mohammad

Firoz, two honours students also closed their farms at Santosh in Beradoma in Sadar upazila due to same reason.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) deputy director (DD) here Mohammad Hakim Uddin said they have sent a list of trained mushroom cultivators to local Krishi Bank for loan. But mushroom cultivators did not get the bank loan for unknown reason, the DD said.

When contacted, Tangail Krishi Bank manager Liakat Khan said mushroom cultivators did not submit their project profiles and required loan amount.

'We shall provide loan to trained mushroom cultivators this year', he said.

However, Hashmot Ali Rana is an exception. He said that he is determined to continue his project despite various problems. 'I am determined to continue my project as demand of mushroom is increasing at home and abroad', he said.

Rana took training at National Mushroom Development Centre at Savar. At present, he is producing spawn at his Deola laboratory here on commercial basis. He said he took Tk 1,50,000 as loan in two installments from Karmosangtham (employment) Bank. Now, he produces about 7,500 spawns every month, he said. He supplies 2,500 spawns to local cultivators and 5,000 spawns to the cultivators in Bogra and Rajshahi, he added.

PHOTO: STAR

## Tanore police records Purnima abduction case

RU CORRESPONDENT

Tanore police yesterday registered the abduction case of Purnima Murnu, minor daughter of indigenous freedom fighter Shuklal Murnu.

Purnima was allegedly abducted by Abdul Zabbar, an influential person at Movenpur village under Tanor upazila in Rajshahi on September 29. Earlier, Tanore police did not register the case. Police registered the case yesterday following publication of a story in The Daily Star, said victim's freedom fighter father Shuklal Murnu.

Shuklal accused five persons, Abdul Zabbar, Anasur Rahman Anas, Zakir Hossain, Zalat Uddin and Kuddus Ali for abducting his daughter for trafficking abroad.

When contacted, Tanore police station duty officer Abdur Razzak admitted the fact of registering the case.

Earlier, Jatiya Adivasi Parishad, in a statement, demanded of the authorities concerned for immediate steps to rescue Purnima from her captors.

## Farmers seize truckload of fertiliser

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Villagers in Mamunshia in Kushna union under Kotchandpur upazila in Jhenidah seized a truck loaded with Urea fertiliser and handed over it along with the driver and the helper to Kotchandpur police while it was being sold in black market Saturday night. The illegal traders, however, managed to escape.

Hearing hue and cry in Mamunshia Chaturia field at 1:00am, the villagers went to the spot and found that the illegal fertiliser traders were selling per bag fertiliser for Tk 550 to Tk 600 while the usual rate is Tk 350. They seized the truck and handed over the driver and the helper to Kotchandpur police.

## Housewife killed for refusing illicit proposal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Criminals beat to death the mother of two children for not responding to their indecent proposal at Shampur village under Sadar upazila of the district on Saturday night.

The victim, Shamima Akter Jyotsna, 24, daughter of Gulam Rabbani of Chandpur village of Sadar upazila, was married to Yasin Mia, son of Abdul Zabbar of Shampur village under the same upazila, about six years ago, family sources said.

In absence of Yasin Mia who has been working abroad for long, Shahee and Alamgir of the same area started teasing and giving indecent proposals to Shamima.

Angered by Shamima's refusal, the two youths and their accomplices broke into the room where Shamima, her son, daughter and niece were sleeping on Saturday night.

The criminals beat Shamima to death and hanged her body with the ceiling fan. Police recovered the body.

Shamima's father, who filed a murder case accusing seven people, said her in-laws were involved in the murder.



PHOTO: STAR

Malta being plucked at a BARI plantation in Khagrachhari.

# Malta creates new hopes for CHT farmers

*Enthusiased farmers seek help after good yields in BARI projects*

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

Malta cultivation has created new hopes for farmers in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) following good production of the sweet and juicy fruit this year, thanks to the efforts by scientists of Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI).

At least 500 farmers are now seeking assistance from BARI to raise Malta orchards, its scientists told this correspondent.

Cultivation of the fruit, locally called misty kamala, has great prospects in hilltops, slopes and valleys in the whole of CHT, they said.

Besides being a good source of Vitamin-C, processed juice, jam, jelly and marmalade can be prepared from it, they said.

BARI scientific officer in Khagrachhari Iftekhar Ahmad said it has an orchard garden of about 400 malta plants in Khagrachhari

and three more demonstration project in Panchhari, Matiranga and Mohalchhari upazilas with a total of 1400 fruit bearing plants.

They are 160-200 pieces of Malta in each tree now, he said.

He said they got around 20,000 fruits this year from Khagrachhari garden and another over one lakh pieces from the rest four gardens. More fruits are expected this year, he said.

A plant starts fruit bearing in 3-4 years. So farmers can get fruits within a short time, he said.

Dr. Md. Shaukat Ali Mallik, Principal Scientific Officer of BARI in Khagrachhari, said malta can be cultivated in both dry and wet seasons but the plants do not survive in stagnant water.

Hilltops, slopes and valleys where rainwater do not stand are very suitable for raising malta gardens.

The soil and climate of CHT is suitable for this fruit. If half of

barren hills are brought under its cultivation, it would earn foreign exchange after meeting home demand, he said. An awareness campaign has been launched in the area to expand its cultivation. Around 400 malta-trees can be planted per hectare, he said, he added.

Divisional Forest Officer Shah-e-Alam said there are over three lakh acres of 'unclassified government forests' in Khagrachhari. Local people would benefit if a comprehensive plan is taken up for raising orchards in the region, he said.

BARI Scientific Officer (Entomology) Chandra Kanta Das said Malta cultivation is very easy and simple as it is less susceptible to pest attack.

Sometimes it is affected by leaf miner, lemon butterfly and fruit fly insects and black spot disease but these can be easily resisted by use of insecticides, he said.

# Sweeter than sugar, suitable for diabetics

*Stevia cultivation at farmers level soon, says Iswardi BSRI scientists*

AHAMED HUMAYUN KABIR, Pabna

Bangladesh Sugarcane Research Institution (BSRI) in Ishwardi has evolved a tissue culture method for cultivation of Stevia, a wonderful leafy herbal plant many times sweeter than sugar but beneficial for diabetics.

It has also innovated a process to produce dust from its leaves, which can be used in preparing tea, other drinks and for baking.

Its commercial cultivation at farmers level is not far away, which will benefit them tremendously, BSRI principal scientific officer Dr. Md Amjad Hossain told this correspondent during a recent visit to the institution.

"We have distributed tissue culture seedlings among some nurseries for multiplication", he said.

Interested people are also collecting seedlings for planting those in tubs, he said.

Its cultivation in normal process is difficult. It can be spread only through tissue culture because seed germination rate is very low below 10 per cent and transplantation through 'stem

cutting' has proved unsuccessful, he said.

"So far, we found that it can be grown only through tissue culture", he said.

BSRI collected two Stevia plants from Thailand in 2001 and has been doing research on it since then. After research for long, BSRI has confirmed its medicinal use also, specially for diabetics.

"Its dry leaves are 30-40 times sweeter than sucrose and but does not contain any calorie or glucose", a BSRI report on Stevia said.

Stevia is good for diabetic patients because it is free from sucrose and glucose, it said.

The plant is native to Paraguay. Its cultivation started in different countries in 1964. Now it is grown in Japan, China, Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Brazil, Tanzania, Canada and the United States.

Research is going on for its commercial cultivation on fields, said BSRI scientific officer Nadira Yasmin. "We are still producing the plant in tubs".

The Federal Drug Administration (FDA) of USA has certified that Stevia is very useful for health as it also controls pressure, she said.



"We are doing more research on whether it has any bad effect on humans. Experiment is also going on at Mymensingh Agriculture University", she said.

BSRI has sought government's permission for allowing its commercial cultivation, which will

open up tremendous prospects for farmers. At least one lakh seedlings could be planted in one hectare of land, she said.

BSRI is producing Stevia dust and small quantities are being distributed among local people, BSRI sources said.

# Voter listing begins today in Tangail

*Campaign in Khagrachhari*

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Work on voter enlistment with photograph and National Identity Card in Tangail municipality area and data collection of voters in Khagrachhari hill district will begin today.

Our Tangail correspondent said: Maj Gen AKM Mujahiduddin, general officer commanding (GOC) of Ghatail area will formally inaugurate the programme at a function scheduled to be held at Government Bindubasini Boys' High School this morning.

District Election Office officials said registration of voters will be done at wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 within a period of October 22 and 27.

They said the work will be done at wards 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18 including Mahmudnagar and Katulee unions in Sadar upazila from October 28 to November 2.

At Huga, Kakua and Mogra unions in Sadar upazila, the work will be done from November 3 to 7.

Registration will be done at

Baghil, Dainna, Silimpur and Porabari unions of Sadar upazila within November 8 and 12 while the work will be done in Gala, Gharinda and Karatia unions in Sadar upazila from November 13 to 17.

A total of 1,149 enumerators, 234 supervisors, 350 data entry operators and 20 proof readers have been entrusted with the task after three-day training.

Meanwhile, the field level campaign for collecting preliminary information on enrolment of voters with photographs will begin in Khagrachhari today, said our correspondent.

The data collection will continue till November 3, Nurul Hasan Bhuiyan, District Election Officer here said.

Work on voter registration will begin on November 5.

Each eligible voter will have to provide his/her personal information.

A total of 279 data collectors, 80 computer operators and 62 supervisors have been appointed for the purpose.

# Khulna court summons Jubok chairman, two directors

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna District Magistrate SM Firoze Alam yesterday asked Chairman of Jubok (Jubok Karma Sangsthan Society) Abu Mohammad Saeed and two other executives to appear before his court within ten days.

The summons were issued following cases filed by depositors at different times with Digholia Police Station in Khulna district on charge of misappropriating several crore taka through forgery.

It has been mentioned in the summons that the accused would be tried in absentia if they fail to appear before the court within the given time.

Jubok and Jubok Housing and Real Estate Development Ltd collected several crore taka from hundreds of people in Khulna city and district assuring them to give high interest against deposited money and plots of land.

Earlier Bangladesh Bank issued a circular declaring Jubok's banking activities illegal and directed the Jubok authorities to give back the depositors' money. But a large number of depositors are yet to get back their money.

The two others are Executive Director of Jubok Housing and Real Estate Development Ltd Hossain AL Masum and its Finance Director Syed Rashedul Huda Chowdhury.

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PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Fishing together in receding waters during late autumn is a traditional scene in rural Bangladesh. The photo was taken from Kacharia Beel in Natore.