



PHOTO: STAR

A happy Paritosh takes care of tomatoes at his field at Kullapara village in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah. Summer tomatoes have changed the lot of the farmer.

Making a fortune with summer tomatoes

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Cultivation of two varieties of summer tomatoes has changed the lot of a few farmers in the district.

Thirty-five farmers at Raghunathpur and Kullapara villages under Kaliganj upazila are now enjoying solvency with their families for the first time in their lifetimes.

"I do not work in others' plot as a day labourer anymore," said a beaming Paritosh of Kullapara village.

"Today I hire labourers for my summer tomato field. The vegetable has saved me and my family from poverty," he said.

Paritosh has recently built a house with bricks and for the first time fitted it with a sanitary latrine.

The success story of Paritosh Kumar and others of the two villages came from cultivating two varieties of BARI-2 and BARI-4 summer tomatoes. As the news of his success spread fast, served others got inspired to grow the monymaker.

These tomato growers spend most time of the day working at fields with hired labourers. Dream of a good harvest motivates them to do even more hard work.

In 2004, Poritosh got training from Jhenidah

agriculture office and started tomato cultivation.

The other successful tomato farmers include, Saiful Islam Chand, Ashraf Ali, Jharu Mondol, Neamot Ali, Shahab Ali, Monoj Kanti Biswas, Shariful Islam and Momin Mondol.

Saiful Islam proudly announced that the profits from tomatoes are assured because it is harvested in a short time and marketed in summer season.

Poritosh told this correspondent that he planted the seedlings early May and harvested the vegetable from mid July till December.

The cost this year is relatively higher but it will come down next year, he said.

"On 14 decimal of land I spent Tk 35,000 but I have already sold tomatoes worth Tk 20,000 at Tk 50 to 60 per kg. If the weather remains favourable, I shall be able to earn Tk 1.5 lakh this season," he said.

Others told similar tales describing how the tomatoes brought a radical change in their life and economy.

The demand for tomatoes is always high and the buyers now come to the villages and load the lorries with the vegetable

without much bargaining.

"Now I know that demand for tomatoes in the big cities is always very high and in summertime it turns into a real moneymaker," Saiful said.

The rare varieties of tomatoes are only cultivated in Kullapara and Raghunathpur villages.

"I have cultivated it on only 8 decimal of land at a cost of Tk 20,000. But within a week of first harvest I have made Tk 10,000. I am now expecting to make Tk 1 lakh more over the next two months," Saiful said.

Tomato cultivation has also brought job opportunities for many day-labourers and van drivers in the area. During the harvest, which lasts for six months, every day around 100 labourers and 50 van pullers earn their living by working at the tomato fields.

Deputy Director (DD) Shafiqul Alam of Agricultural Extension Department (AED) here said, in the current season only the farmers of Raghunathpur and Kullapara have cultivated these two varieties of tomatoes.

"It is heartening to know that the growers are getting good prices," he added with a pleasing smile.

Nothing can stop land grabbers

They continue to fill up historic Barisal Police Line pond ignoring DoE notice and BELA case

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barisal

Encroachers continued filling up Police Line Pukur, a century-old pond in the city, ignoring final notice and summon of the Department of Environment (DoE).

The accused, Abdul Aziz Sardar and his associates, were directed to physically appear before the DoE head office by 11:00am on August 12 with related documents for showing cause why earth filling of that pond would not be declared illegal and compensations against that would not be realised, said Munir Chowdhury, director (monitoring and enforcement) of DoE.

"But the grabbers not only abstained from appearing at the DoE office, but continued filling the pond. And so, the deputy commissioner of Barisal would be asked to take legal action against the grabbers," the official said.

Earlier on July 16 and 23, two notices were issued to stop earth filling of the pond immediately. The DoE issued final summon notice on August 9 under Bangladesh Environment Preservation Act as the accused land grabber and his associates continued their mischievous act, said Sukumar Biswas, director of DoE Barisal office.

Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) Barisal district unit also lodged a case on July 18 with Senior Assistant Judge's Court in Barisal against filling of historic Police Line Pond and the judge fixed next date of hearing of the case on September 13.

Advocate Suvash Chandra Bipro Bedanti, convenor of Barisal Environment Network, also former district coordinator of BELA, said Nirad Ranjan Guha, owner of 71 decimal lands on plot No 3744 under Bogura-Aleksanda Mouza in the area, dug that pond on about 50 decimal of land more than hundred years ago for using as drinking water source by the local residents.

The owner of the land left the country in 1956 and the government acquired the land, pond and building and established District Police Club there and so the pond became familiar as the Police Club Pukur and listed in 'Kha-list' of vested property, said Dipak Chakraborty, assistant union land officer.

But Daliluddin Sardar, the



owner of the neighbouring land, later claimed the ownership of the pond.

Aziz Sardar and Shahin Sardar, sons of late Daliluddin Sardar, creating bamboo fencing started sand filling and piling of the part of that pond on July 13 claiming that they owned 7-ana (7/16) portion of the pond and there was no law against filling of private ponds.

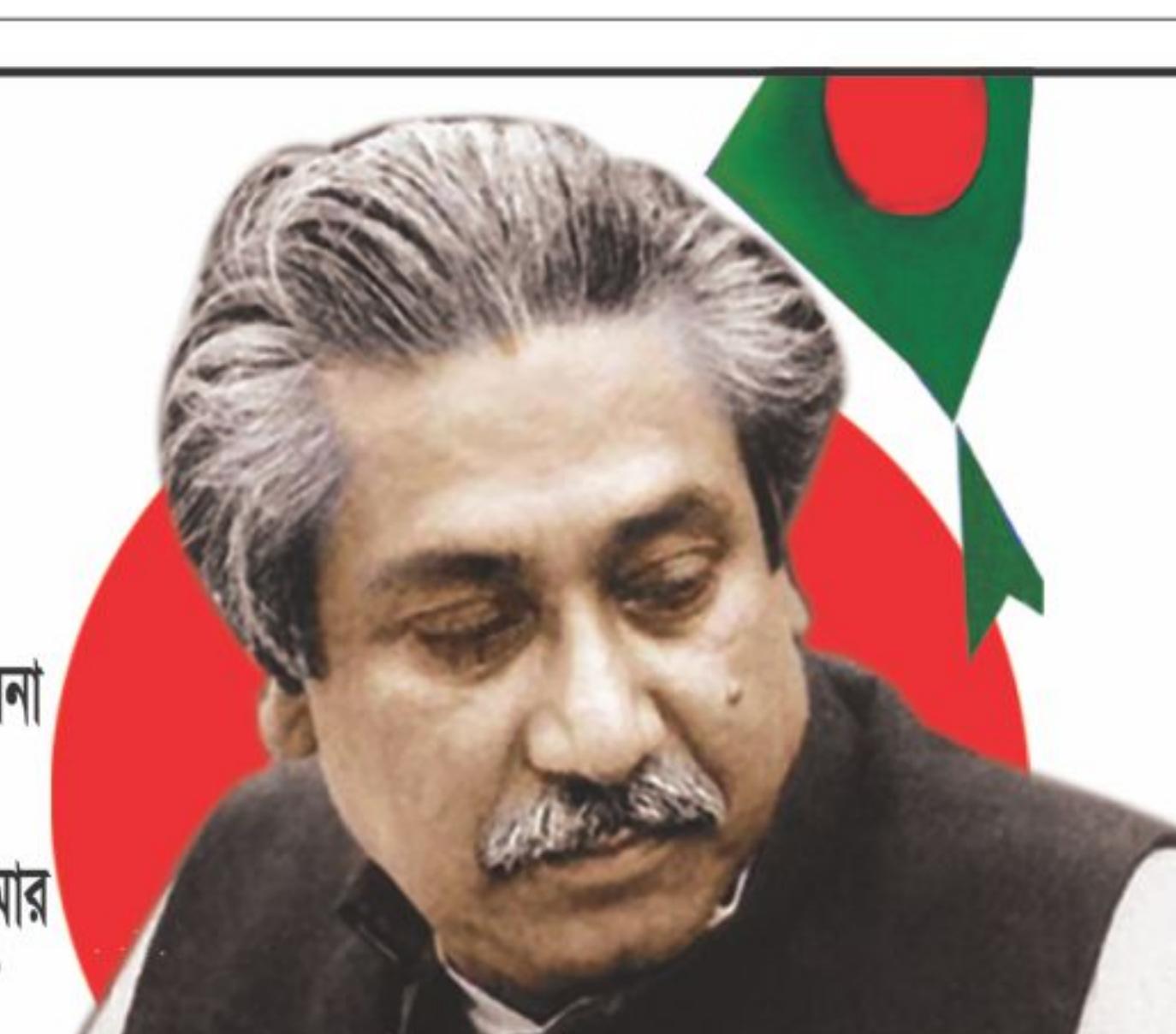
The director of DoE Barisal office, however, said no objection certificates from the DoE, land, and city corporation offices are needed for filling any water body, be it public or private.

Tarikul Islam, superintending engineer of Barisal City Corporation, said the corporation has nothing to do against filling of any private water body.



Land grabbers continue to fill up the century-old pond at Barisal Police Line defying all objections. Above, trucks bring earth for the purpose at dead of night.

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