

Farming of insecticide-free vegetables faces setback

Pheromone 'not available' in three districts

HOSSAIN SERAJ, back to Magura from Gaidghat, Jessore

After years-long success, the initiative to produce insecticide-free vegetables in Jessore, Magura and Jhenidah districts now face setback as pheromone, the principal ingredient used in the process, is not available in local markets.

Farmers of the three districts have to go to Jessore town to collect the item.

In 2004 farmers of the three districts began to use 'pheromone trap' and beneficial insects to check pest attack on their fields as Krishi Projukti Bastobayan

Kendro (KPBK) with cooperation of BARI (Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute) introduced the environment-friendly items produced by Ispahani Agro-Biotech Limited, Safe Agriculture Bangladesh Limited, and a few other companies.

At least five thousand acres of land in 62 villages of the three districts are now being used to produce pesticide free vegetables, said sources in KPBK. In the ongoing season, the farmers are growing vegetables like korola (balsam apple), gourd and brinjal.

This correspondent

recently visited Gaidghat village under Bandobila union in Bagherpara upazila of Jessore, Sikandarpur and Nagorpur in Jessore Sadar and Piarpur in Shalikhra upazila of Magura district and talked to farmers.

"We have to take the trouble to go to Jessore town as pheromone is not available in local markets, even at the upazila headquarters," said Nazrul Islam Khan, a farmer engaged in producing insecticide-free vegetables.

The farmers said they want to continue the new pest management system as it is less costly, hygienic, and environment friendly but

non-availability of pheromone seriously holds back the prospect of 'silent revolution' in pest control management and environment protection.

A single pheromone trap including medicine and a plastic-bottle costs only Tk 50, they said.

"Pest control using pheromone trap and beneficial insects, from sowing to harvesting a vegetable on one bigha of land needs Tk 2,400 only while using pesticide it costs at least Tk 12 thousand," said Ayub Hossain, a farmer of Premchara village in Bagharpara upazila.

"Farmers in the area usually buy pheromone from the office of Ispahani Agro-Biotech Limited at Jessore town. The research organisation under a special permission of the agriculture ministry imported pheromone to use it for research and development. The item is not easily available in local markets as it is yet to be imported on commercial basis," said Lakkhan Chandra Mondal, president of KPBK, at its office at Gaidghat under Bandobila union in Bagharpara upazila of Jessore district.

Contacted over cell phone, Dr Syed Nurul Alam, chief scientific officer of BARI's Entomology Division, said, "Earlier pheromone could not be imported as the 'Pesticide Rule' of 1985 did not have the provision to import organic pesticide on commercial basis. Hopefully, pheromone will be available in markets by December this year as the Ministry of Agriculture has already withdrawn the ban on import and sale of organic pesticides through an amendment of the Pesticide Rule."

A 'pheromone trap' contains a chemical capsule comprising pheromone, the female sex hormone of insects, which is kept in a plastic bottle half-filled with water. It attracts male insects to flock to the bottle to drown.

And to destroy the harmful female insects, farmers have to use some beneficial insects like bracon, habator, trichogramma, chilonis and chrysopa, experts said.



PHOTO: STAR

A farmer gives a gratifying smile, holding bitter gourds reaped from his profusely yielding field at Gaidghat village in Bagharpara under Jessore district, thanks to the introduction of environment-friendly 'pheromone trap' that kills harmful pests without the use of any chemical pesticides.

3 pro-Rana ruling party leaders held in Ghatail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested former joint secretary of Ghatail upazila Awami League (AL) along with a foreign made pistol.

The elite force also arrested Sujon Talukder and Kamruzzaman Jewel, president and general secretary of the recently dissolved Ghatail upazila unit Jubo League on the same day.

A team of Rab-12, led by its deputy commander Maj Mostafizur Rahman, raided the house of Jubo League leaders Sujon and Jewel in Chandshi and Ratanpur areas in the upazila in the

morning and arrested them.

On the basis of information by the arrested Jubo League leaders, the same team raided the house of former AL leader Masudur Rahman Azad at Kazibari in the upazila headquarters and arrested him.

The law enforcers seized a .9mm pistol from the bedroom of the AL leader, said ASP Mizanur Rahman, Commander of Crime Prevention Company (CPC)-3 of Rab-12.

Locals said that all the three arrested ruling party men are supporters of Amanur Rahman Khan Rana, rebel AL candidate in Tangail-3 (Ghatail)

byelection.

Masudur Rahman, deputy director (DD) of CPC-3 of Rab-12, said a case under Arms Act was filed against the three arrestees with Ghatail police station after they were handed over to the police station at noon.

The three were produced in a court in Tangail at 3:00pm, said Mahbulul Haque, officer-in-charge (Investigation) of the police station.

Earlier, Ghatail police arrested four more ruling party men, who were supporters of now independent candidate Amanur Rahman Khan Rana, from different places in the upazila on Thursday night.



Amanur Rahman Khan Rana



Shahidul Islam Lebu



Abu Yusuf Abdullah Tuhin

TANGAIL-3 BYELECTION

All three candidates for army deployment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

With the November 18 byelection drawing near, all the three candidates in Tangail-3 (Ghatail) constituency have urged deployment of army to ensure a free and fair voting.

Earlier, the Election Commission (EC) identified 67 polling centres out of the total 96 in the constituency risky.

The parliamentary seat fell vacant after the death of ruling Awami League (AL) lawmaker Dr Matiur Rahman on September 14.

The AL Parliamentary Board nominated Shahidul Islam Lebu, former general secretary of Ghatail upazila unit of AL, as the party candidate but Tangail district AL Religious Affairs Secretary Amanur Rahman Khan Rana is also in the polls race as an independent candidate.

Rana was one of the six nomination seekers from the AL for the byelection.

Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) backed candidate Syed Abu Yusuf Abdullah Tuhin is another candidate in the bypolls.

No candidate from main opposition BNP is contesting the byelection.

At a press conference held at the Reporters' Unity in Dhaka on Saturday, Amanur Rahman Khan Rana said, "I am participating in the by election with pineapple symbol and getting good response from people. But Shahidul Islam Lebu and his supporters are threatening my supporters in various ways."

"In this situation army should be deployed to hold the election free and fair," Rana said.

He also drew attention of the EC for taking steps against 'biased attitude' of the local administration and police.

AL nominated candidate Shahidul Islam Lebu in a view exchange meeting with the local journalists on Saturday also demanded deployment of army and BGB in the election to save the party voters from the 'criminals' of independent candidate Amanur Rahman Khan Rana, resist activities of the outsiders and hold the election fair.

Talking to the journalists, Jatiya Party (Ershad) nominated candidate Syed Abu Yusuf Abdullah Tuhin said, "Deployment of army is needed to ensure security of the voters and hold a free and fair election, especially against the backdrop of the tension due to the activities of the two other candidates."

Asked about the matter, Syed Khurshid Anwar, returning officer of the byelection, also election officer of Mymensingh region, said, "The situation in Tangail-3 constituency ahead of the byelection is still calm and nice. None of the three candidates submitted any application to me regarding the demand of army deployment here. And I do not want to make any comment in this regard as the EC is the authority to take decision on the matter."

Electioneering by 'rebel' AL candidate Amanur Rahman Khan Rana, who enjoys support of a good number of local party leaders and activists, is likely to make the byelection a contesting one, despite boycott by the main opposition BNP.

The large constituency is now buzzing with activities as the three candidates are going door to door to woo voters.

On November 4, several central leaders of AL including presidium member Jafarullah, joint secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif and organising secretary Ahmad Hossain went to Ghatail and addressed a party meeting there.

In the meeting, AL leader Hanif warned 'rebel' candidate Rana of expulsion from the party if he does not withdraw his candidature within three days while Rana on the same day declared that he will be on the polls race as a 'candidate of Ghatail people'.

The same day, Azmol Hossain, convener of Ghatail upazila unit AL, and Hasan Ali, its joint convener, were expelled from the party for supporting 'rebel' candidate Rana and the convening committee of upazila AL was simultaneously dissolved.

Two days later the central unit of Jubo League issued a letter, declaring the Ghatail upazila unit of the organisation dissolved.

BMA's Mymensingh unit poll postponed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The biennial election to BMA (Bangladesh Medical Association) Mymensingh unit, scheduled for November 29, has been postponed.

The election commission headed by Prof PC Babla of blood transfusion medicine at Mymensingh Medical College yesterday postponed the election as a faction of Swadhinata Chikitshak Parishad snatched nomination withdrawal forms from some candidates in the afternoon.

The candidates were going to the chief election commissioner to submit their withdrawal letters as yesterday was the last day for withdrawal of candidature.

As many as 200 candidates from different groups

of Swadhinata Chikitshak Parishad filed nomination papers to contest the election to 23-member Mymensingh BMA unit.

As it was difficult to nominate 23 candidates from the parishad, central leaders on Saturday held a meeting with Captain (ret) Mujibur Rahman Fakir, MP, at his residence in the capital and finalised a panel.

A group of parishad members, deprived of getting nominations, rejected the panel yesterday and snatched withdrawal letters from other candidates, sources said.

Contacted, Dr Mohammad Ali Siddiqi, Mymensingh unit general secretary of Doctors' Association of Bangladesh (DAB), said it was a well planned game of the AL-backed Chikitshak Parishad to foil the election.

STRIKES CALLED OFF

Export, import resume at Benapole, Sonamasjid

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Workers at Benapole land port called off their indefinite strike yesterday while export-import through Sonamasjid land port resumed on the day as lorry drivers and labourers in the Indian side of Mohodipur port ended their 24-hour strike.

Our Benapole correspondent reported that around 1,500 port workers resumed loading and unloading of goods in the afternoon after their wages for the month of October were paid.

They went on an indefinite strike on Thursday demanding payment of their wages for the month.

Abdul Awal, director of the port, said the workers

withdrew their strike after local lawmaker Sheikh Afluddin held a 'fruitful' meeting with them.

Workers union President Jahangir Alam Lal said they called off the strike as their demand for arrear wages was met.

Sources said about 80 percent raw materials for the country's garment industries are imported through Benapole port.

According to our Chapainawabganj correspondent, export-import through Sonamasjid land port resumed yesterday.

The trade remained suspended from Saturday morning due to a strike enforced by lorry drivers and labourers in the Indian side of

Mohodipur land port in Maldah in Paschimbaranga.

A gang of robbers blocked the Maldah-Mohodipur land port road, beaten up a few lorry drivers and snatched their money and mobile phone sets on Friday night.

Protesting the incident, Indian lorry drivers and labourers of Mohodipur land port went on a strike from Saturday morning.

After resolving their own problems, goods laden trucks that were stranded at Mohodipur land port in India started entering Bangladesh yesterday noon, said Shariful Islam, president of Clearing and Forwarding Agents Association of Sonamasjid land port.

TEESTA EROSION-HIT PEOPLE

Cheque returned as amount 'too small'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A cheque for Tk 10,000, given by Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila parishad chairman for 311 Teesta erosion-hit families of Khuniyagachh union, has been sent back to him.

Khuniyagachh Union Parishad Chairman Khairuzzaman Mandol returned the cheque to UZ Chairman Nazrul Haque Patwary on Thursday, saying the amount is too small to support the erosion victims.

The UP chairman said 311 families were rendered homeless and farmlands, two mosques, two schools and a temple were eroded by the Teesta in his union last month.

Chairman Nazrul Haque Patwary told me to submit a list of erosion-hit families to his office. Accordingly, I prepared a list of 311 families and submitted it to the UZ office. The upazila chairman on November 5 sanctioned only Tk 10,000 for the victims," UP chairman Mandol said.

Erosion victim Shamsul Alam, 62, of Khuniyagachh village said, "My homestead, five bighas of cropland and a bamboo cluster were eroded by the Teesta in the middle of October, but the upazila chairman sanctioned only Tk 32 for me."

He hailed the decision of the union parishad to return the cheque to the upazila



PHOTO: STAR

Coastguards and staff of the fisheries department seize 25 maunds of young hilsa, known as jatka, from Charkawa ferry terminal in Barisal city yesterday. Though the government imposed a countrywide ban on netting and sale of hilsa fry for seven months from November 1, a section of fishermen tend to defy the ban.

Police SI suspended on rape charge

A CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A police sub-inspector has been suspended here on charge of raping a woman.

Locals caught SI Md Abdul Malek Sarker of Phulbari police investigation centre red-handed at Motel Castle MH at Matirdali intersection in the town at around 6:30pm on Tuesday and informed the police who took both the victim and the cop to Sadar Police Station.

Being informed, Police Superintendent (SP) Mozzammel Haque reached the PS at around 9:00pm. The SP talked with the victim and then suspended the SI at night. He also talked with the cop.

The victim told the SP that she went to the police camp on November 4 to

lodge a complaint against her husband, who, she said, does not look after her and provide for her upkeep.

She said the camp in-charge Abul Kalam advised her to file a written complaint the following day. "Accordingly, I went to the camp on November 5, but the in-charge was not at the camp."

As per advice of SI Malek, I again went to the camp on November 6, but he was absent. When I talked with him over cellphone, he asked me to come to the intersection. On arrival there, SI Malek took me to the motel and raped me, the victim alleged.

A case was filed against SI Malek with Sadar Police Station. The SP said departmental action will be taken after investigation.