

# Rangamati sees bumper watermelon yield

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

The hill district sees bumper yield of watermelon this season, much to the delight of the growers.

Started about 15 years ago, commercial cultivation of the popular summer fruit sees gradual increase in different upazilas of the district, especially in the char (landmass emerged from riverbed) areas of Kaptai Lake, said sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

Some 165 hectares of land, mostly in Longudu upazila, have been brought

under melon cultivation this year and total yield is expected to be 7,425 tonnes while in last year 2340 tonnes of watermelons were produced from 60 hectares, DAE sources said.

This year per hectare outcome is expected to be 45 tonnes against last year's 39 tonnes.

Favourable weather conditions, adequate supply of fertiliser and less pest attack are main causes behind the good yield.

Besides Longudu, Sadar, Jurachhari, Barkal, Bilichhari and Baghaichhari upazilas produce watermelon, although in small areas.

Of the six varieties of watermelons cultivated in the district, hybrid varieties Topel, Glory and Champion are in high demand as they are larger and sweeter.

The juicy summer fruit started arriving in the local markets with huge quantity early March. The prices, however, remain high.

Currently, a big size melon is selling for Tk 90 to 150 in the hill town and a small size for Tk 50 to 70.

"I cultivated watermelon on about two bighas of land spending Tk 40 thousand. I have already sold the fruit worth Tk 60 thousand and

expect to get Tk 2 lakh more from rest of the produce that is yet to be harvested," Abdul Malek, a farmer at T & T area in Longudu, told this correspondent during his visit there a couple of days ago.

"I cultivated watermelon spending Tk 12 thousand on my two kani land and already I sold the entire produce for Tk 50 thousand," said Bijoy Giri Chakma at Lemuchhari in Sadar upazila.

Naresh Chandra Baroi, deputy director of DAE, said they are taking step to provide training to the farmers to help them to get better yield.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers harvest watermelons at a field in Rangamati Sadar upazila. The area sees rapid increase in the commercial cultivation of the popular summer fruit.

## Three JMB men held with bombs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

The Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested three members of outlawed Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) along with seven crude bombs in Dasherhat area under Sadar upazila of the district yesterday morning.

The arrestees are Anwar Hossain, son of late Shariat Ullah of Krisnapur area, Jobed Ali, son of late Tapar Uddin of C&B Ghat area of the town, and Manwar Hossen Biplab, son of Naoshad Ali of Pashchim Babukha village under Kotwali police station in Rangpur district.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of DB police raided the area and arrested the trio along with the bombs.

Later, they were produced in the Chief Judicial Magistrate court that sent them to jail.

Police Shanjoy Kumar Kundu said they were planning for carrying out sabotage acts on the Pahela Boishakh celebration programme in the upazila.

## Robbers loot house

UNB, Sylhet

Armed robbers looted gold ornaments, cash and other valuables worth Tk 3 lakh from a house at Alaibahar village of the city early yesterday.

Locals said a gang of 10/12 stormed into the house of Shankar Bhattacharya at the village at about 2:30 am by breaking open the door and held the family members hostage at gunpoint.

They took away 3.5 tolas of gold ornaments, Tk one lakh, mobile phone sets and other valuables from the house, police said.



## LOW CATCHES, HIGH PRICE

# Hilsa to elude common man on Pahela Baishakh

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Popular fish hilsa has become dear in the district, due to its low catches and high demand for supply to other areas including Dhaka and Chittagong, a couple of days before Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year.

Visiting Parerhat fish landing station in Pirojpur Sadar upazila yesterday, this correspondent found that hilsa weighing 1.5 kg was selling for around Tk 2,000, one kg for Tk 1,600, 700-900 gram for Tk 1200, and 200-300 gram for Tk 450 to the wholesalers.

This year the supply of hilsa is less than last year's, said Md Nasir, a wholesaler at Parerhat.

After buying hilsa from Parerhat and other places in the district, wholesalers supply it to other areas of the country for getting more profit.

But the high prices at local markets discourage many of the common people to buy the fish. "I cannot afford the pricey hilsa," said Paritosh Mandal, a trader in Pirojpur town.

Many people are not likely to be able to arrange curry with delicious hilsa on Pahela Baishakh.

As hilsa fishes' price is high, the fishermen try to catch fish whole day in the

Kacha, Baleshwar, and Sandha rivers in the district and often small sized hilsa are get trapped into their nets.

"Despite trying day and night, we get only a few fishes from the river," said Abdus Salam, a fisherman at Umedpur village in Zianagar upazila under the district.

Md Oliur Rahman, district fisheries officer in Pirojpur, however, claimed that the supply of hilsa fishes sees increase every year.

"Although it is not proper time for getting hilsa, is found in the river now as steps were taken for saving the stock of the popular fish," he said.

# 3 new missions in Europe

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Bangladeshis now live abroad and remit around \$15 billion a year.

Officials said there is a common perception that government spends huge amount of money to run the foreign missions. But some missions, including those in the Middle Eastern countries, Malaysia, the USA, the UK, Italy and Singapore, earn a good revenue and send foreign currencies to Bangladesh by providing consular services to people.

At present, Bangladesh has 69 embassies/high commissions, consulates, deputy high commissions, assistant high commissions and visa offices in 52 countries.

## MAJOR RESHUFFLING

The government has decided to make changes in its foreign missions in Washington, New Delhi, London and Canberra. It also transferred several ambassadors and made fresh appointments at some important embassies.

High Commissioner in New Delhi Ahmad Tariq Karim, Ambassador to Washington Akramul Qader, High Commissioner in Australia Lt Gen (ret'd) Masud Uddin Chowdhury and High Commissioner in London Mijarul Quayes will be replaced.

Ahmad Tariq Karim and Akramul Qader were appointed in August and November, 2009 on contractual basis.

Sources in the foreign ministry said the government will appoint former foreign secretary (1999-2001) Syed Muazzem Ali as the next High Commissioner in New Delhi, while Ambassador-at-Large Muhammad Ziauddin as Ambassador in Washington DC.

Akramul Qader has opted for not to extend his service contract due to his health. A source in the PMO said Ahmad Tariq Karim might be accommodated in a higher position in Dhaka.

Bangladesh High Commissioner in London Mijarul Quayes has been transferred to newly opened embassy in Brazil, which the foreign ministry officials consider as a demotion due to his non-performance.

One of the reasons for downgrading Quayes is his failure to convince the British government to send a congratulatory letter to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina upon her reelection in the January 5 national polls, a highly placed source in the government told this newspaper.

Former foreign secretary Quayes has been facing audit objections for drawing excessive amounts of money during his transfer from Maldives to Russia and purchase of paintings worth about Tk 8 crore while serving as foreign secretary.

He bought the paintings for decoration of the foreign ministry and foreign missions abroad. The items have been left in a store at the ministry for the last few years.

Bangladesh Ambassador and Permanent Representative in Geneva Md Abdul Hannan will replace Quayes. Bangladesh envoy in Brazil M Shameem Ahsan has been appointed as Ambassador and Permanent Representative in Geneva.

Bangladesh Ambassador to Thailand Kazi Imtiaz Hossain is going to replace Masud Uddin Chowdhury in Australia. Bangladesh envoy in Myanmar Maj Gen Anup Kumar Chakma is also expected to be replaced as he has already completed his three-year tenure.

Foreign Ministry Director General (admin) Md Allama Siddiki has been appointed as High Commissioner in Pretoria, South Africa while Director General (UN) Saïda Muna Tasneem is likely to be made ambassador in Thailand.

# BNP blasts role of EC

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The resolution, passed unanimously at the meeting with Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the chair at her Gulshan office last night, also strongly denounced "unprecedented" violence, vote rigging and manipulation of polls results in the upazila elections by the government and the ruling Awami League.

"The election commission and the administration shamelessly assisted the Awami League in the upazila elections. The BNP thinks the roles played by the government, the Election Commission and the administration have proved that a free and fair election cannot take place under the AL administration," reads the resolution signed by BNP Joint Secretary General Salahuddin Ahmed.

The party also alleged that oppression against the "opposition" parties has increased after the elections.

"Elected [upazila] chairmen are being arrested and thus, being obstructed from taking oath," said the resolution.

The highest policy-making body of the BNP also lambasted the government for failing to ensure fair share of the Teesta river waters from India.

"Environment and agriculture of the country's entire northern region are badly affected due to the unilateral withdrawal of water by India from the common river Teesta," said the resolution.

The BNP demanded that the government take necessary steps to ensure fair share of waters of all common rivers.

## MOUDUD-GOYESHWAR SQUABBLE

In the meeting, BNP standing committee members Moudud Ahmed and Goyeshwar Chandra Roy locked horns over a recent remark of the latter.

Alleging the judiciary's bias towards the ruling party, Goyeshwar recently commented that all the courts of the country were now in the pocket of the "Mujib coat".

A BNP standing committee member, who was present at the meeting, quoted Moudud as saying, "Our leaders will not get bail if the higher court becomes displeased over his [Goyeshwar's] comment on courts".

Goyeshwar sharply reacted to this, saying that the anti-government movement before the January 5 polls did not succeed due to the "overly lenient" policy of some BNP leaders.

Party chief Khaleda Zia did not intervene during the hour-long heated argument between the two senior leaders, said the

## SNIPPETS

### Night guard beaten to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A night guard was beaten to death allegedly by his fellow at a construction site of JJKM Girls' High School and College in Islampur upazila town of the district yesterday. Deceased Omar Ali, 26, son of late Abdur Rashid of Mouja Jalla area in the town, was a night guard at a two-storey under-construction building of the institution. Police and locals said Omar locked in an altercation with Ghuri, 65, of Natarkanda village, also a night guard of the construction site, over a trivial matter in the morning. At one stage, Ghuri beat Omar up mercilessly, leaving him seriously injured. He was rushed to the upazila health complex where on duty doctors declared him dead.

### Man gets life for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A court here yesterday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for violating a woman in 2007. The convict is Abdul Awal, 45, son of late Chanfor Ali of Dhamina village in Kendua upazila. According to the prosecution, Awal raped the woman at his tailoring shop on October 31, 2007. The victim then filed a rape case with Kendua police station against Awal. After investigation, police submitted charge sheet to the court against Awal on April 28 in 2009. After examining witnesses and evidence, Additional District and Session Judge Abdul Hamid of the court found him guilty and pronounced the verdict.

### Girl 'commits suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chuadanga

A teenage girl allegedly committed suicide at Korchadanga village in Jibannagar upazila on Wednesday afternoon. The dead is Rehena Khatun, 21, daughter of Osman Gani of the village. Police said Rehena took her life by hanging herself from the ceiling of her room following an altercation with her father over the family matter. The body was sent to Chuadanga General Hospital morgue for autopsy.

### Transport strike called off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Transport workers called off their indefinite strike on different routes in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts yesterday following a 'fruitful' meeting with the local administration. The meeting was held at the conference room of deputy commissioner's office on Wednesday night, said sources. On Tuesday, the strike was called demanding immediate ban on plying of unauthorised shallow engine-run Nasiman, Kariman and Bhothbhoti on highways of the districts.

### One to die for killing wife

UNB, Manikganj

A court here on Wednesday sentenced a man to death for killing his wife for dowry in 2010. The court also fined the convict, Abu Hanif, son of Korban Ali of Dhankora village in Satoria upazila, Tk 20,000. According to the prosecution, Hanif strangled his pregnant wife Parvin while she was asleep following a feud over dowry on November 1, 2010. Victim's brother Farhad Hossain filed a case with Satoria police station. Later, Hanif was arrested. Police submitted the charge sheet on October 5, 2011. After examining the records and eight witnesses, Judge Al Mahmud Faijul Kabir of the District and Sessions Judge's Court handed down the verdict.

# Coal import from Assam, Meghalaya resumes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Import of coal from the Indian states of Meghalaya and Assam through six land customs station of Sylhet region resumed yesterday.

Coal import came to a halt on April 1 as the Indian exporters stopped supply, protesting sudden rise in excise duty.

Around 30,000 labourers at the land customs stations remained jobless for ten days due to the suspension of the import.

A six-member team went to Assam and Meghalaya on April 5 and sat with the Meghalaya Exporters Association in Shillong and Karimganj District Exporter & Importers Association

and Assam Exporter & Importers Association the following day.

At the separate meetings, the Indian exporters assured the Bangladesh team of resuming coal export from April 10, said Chandan Saha, general secretary of Coal Importers Group, Sylhet.

Fifty-seven coal-laden trucks entered Bangladesh through the Sheola land customs station yesterday, said Sunandan Das, superintendent of the station. Coal import through the five other stations will resume in two or three days, he added.

About 15 lakh tons of coal is imported through the 6 land customs stations in Sylhet-Sunamganj region.

These are Tamabil, Sheola and Bholaganj in Sylhet, and Barchhara, Bagli and Charagaon in Sunamganj.

## Arms, ammo seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized two pistols, nine bullets and four magazines from a field at Kironganj village in Shibganj upazila on Wednesday night.

On patrol information, a BGB secret team raided the area and seized the arms and bullets. However, none was arrested in this connection said Captain Mosleh Uddin, deputy director of BGB-9.



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