

Guti urea, the source of high yields and low costs

SHYKH SERAJ

Few days back I went to a village in Mymensingh out of sheer interest - the name drew me to it: Guti Village. Those of you who know about fertilizers, guti (granular) urea is a very effective and cost-saving fertilizer and a much appreciated agricultural input. After coming to guti village, it reminded me of the early stages of guti urea extension.

During the 90s, I started the campaign of guti urea on Mati O Manush, which aired on Bangladesh Television. But at that time, Bangladesh had no fertilizer crisis and naturally the Department of Agriculture didn't show any interest on this new fertilizer. Moreover, many have said no farmers will be interested to use this technology. It was 2007-2008 when the country faced extreme crisis of urea fertilizer along with other fertilizers. I came down to the field with massive awareness programmes on guti urea with IFDC (International Fertilizer Development Center). During that period, government ordered the district administration across the country to get engaged in guti urea extension.

And the result now shows in the name of a village itself! Govindabari village, situated in Mymensingh's Muktagachha upazila's Dulla union is known as the guti village. There is not a single piece of land here where you won't find granular urea. Farmers are using granular urea on their paddy lands as well on vegetables and fruits.

Price hike at the international fertilizer market was locally addressed by using



PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

Farmers compressing granular urea.

also known as 'Urea Deep Placement' or UDP. If farmers use this technology, they can save about 30-40% of the urea. Usually Bangladeshi farmers spread urea on the field but UDP means the fertilizer is placed beneath the surface of soil after five to seven days of paddy plantation. The granular urea is compressed in small machines and the size of it is made 1.8 grams and 2.7 grams. These compressed ones are called briquettes and has to be placed at the centre of four hills having space of 20 cm X 20 cm. Farmers use urea three times throughout rice season, whereas the use of guti urea only once throughout the growth season of paddy plants is enough.

Many farmers across Bangladesh started to benefit by using guti urea. They are getting higher yields with reduced costs. This extension programme of guti urea turned into a social mission. Although the extension work

was hindered almost all the time. Because urea fertilizer secures a strong position at the global market of agricultural inputs, intending to reduce the use of urea fertilizer means you are hurting its global business. That was a headache for many. Still, the farmers were real enthusiasts who kept on using the guti urea instead of the urea fertilizer. Hridoye Mati O Manush has kept on working hard for a long time for proper extension of guti urea.

Two months back, I went to Rwanda and also seen how the small East African country is moving ahead using guti urea, the successful technology of Bangladesh. Guti urea use is increasing in Bangladesh over the years. IFDC and DAE says during the past boro season farmers in 62 districts have used guti urea on 1.2 million hectares of land, 0.2 million more than before. More importantly, farmers are now using it on

the vegetables and fruits, not just in the case of paddy.

I went to a women farmer organization, CIG (Common Interest Group) in Mymensingh. Mamta Begum, the coordinator of this group, is managing the guti urea production and marketing. Through these associations women are commercially producing guti urea, doing the marketing and using it on fields.

"How do you get paid? For example farmers bring sacks of fertilizer which you convert to guti, isn't it?"

"Yes."
"How much do you get?"
"We charge Tk. 100 per sack."

Farmers are also using the 'applicator' a latest technology for applying guti urea. It was during the late 80s when IFDC first started campaigning on guti urea. I still remember that in Comilla I showed on TV how to apply it. Guti urea was a very new concept for Bangladeshi farmers back

plained about the process needed to apply it. Many thought that this technology won't be popular. USAID also assisted the Bangladeshi farmers in many ways to promote this technology. Farmers from Tangail's Poujan apply guti urea as if they are machines; they are extremely specialized in it. Still, we thought if there is a technology for guti urea application, it will be really good. A farmer from Mymensingh, Abdul Hai also invented an applicator to make the use easy. Later on a scientist from Bangladesh Agricultural University, Dr. Abdul Wahab, invented another applicator.

I spoke to local farmer Anwar Hossain Akash regarding the success of guti urea in Govindabari.

"Do the farmers know about the benefits of guti?"

"Yes. They also know if they use it once, everything will work fine."

"Okay, how do you apply it on vegetables?"
"We sow four briquettes around one vegetable plant."

Last season, farmer Kamal Mia got very good result using guti urea on wheat.

"On one pakhi of land how much fertilizer do you use?"
"Previously we used to broadcast urea that took at least a maund. But, guti urea saved a lot of cost for me."



Shykh Seraj is an Agriculture Development and Media Activist. He is an Ashoka Fellow and an FAO A.H. Boerma Awardee. At Channel i, he is Director and Head of News. He is also Director, Planner and Presenter of the popular Agro-Documentary "Hridoye Mati O Manush".

Guti urea also yields more."

Farmer Mohammad Ali first started using guti urea on vegetables in Govindabari. He's a creative farmer.

"I couldn't use urea on my cabbages. Then I thought of using guti urea. I got a bumper yield! Then I told my fellow farmers that they can also apply guti urea on vegetables."

"Who taught you this technique?"
"Selim Reza did, he's the SAAO (Sub-Assistant Agriculture Officer)."

During the Aman season, the use of guti urea is low. As you know, the boro rice uses 2.7 gm size briquette and the Aman uses 1.8 gm size briquette. To revive the soil quality and health, farmers want to curb the use of chemical fertilizers. Most farmers across the country are now well aware that guti urea is an effective technology. To keep the soil health steady, we'll see more public and private initiatives in enabling farmers to take up modern technology and methods in the future.

The government, through the Department of Agricultural Extension and International Fertilizer Development Center, has been extending this technology. From my field experience, I recommend farmers to use guti and also request the government to take the technology to as many farmers and regions as possible so that they save



PHOTO: STAR

Shafiqul Alam awarded for his contribution to dance.

Kurigram's Pioneer of Dance

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Shafiqul Alam Dudu has been contributing to the establishment of dance in Kurigram for last 42 years. He has been a dance trainer of the district unit of Bangladesh Shilpakola Academy since 1975 and is an Assistant Teacher of Kurigram Shisu Niketon since 1988. He is the only trained dance-teacher in Kurigram. Shafiqul got involved with dance in 1961. His first teachers in dance were Jakia Ahmed and Utpal Nandi. In 1963, he began to perform on stage.

He left the country for Singapore in the 1980s. Besides his main job, he took training on dance from Banasshree Shen Gupta for five years, from 1980 to 1985. In Singapore, he performed the dance drama 'Chandalika' of Bengali poet Rabindranath Tagore in the Singapore Victoria Memorial Auditorium. He participated in various dance programmes in Singapore. After returning to Bangladesh in 1985, he joined Shilpakola Academy as a dance teacher.

Shafiqul directed the dances dramas on 'Kabor' of Bengali poet Jashim Uddin and 'Kono Ayk Gayer Badhu' of Bengali poet Shalil Chawdhury. He took training on 'Producing Drama' in 1992 and 'Drama Art' organised by Bangladesh Shilpakola Academy in Dhaka in 1993. In recogni-

tion of his contribution to the art of dance in Bangladesh, he was conferred various awards by many organisations, which include Rangpur Dance Artist Association (2003) and Advocate Nazir Hossen Memorial Parishad (2008). Besides, he also received awards on classical dance, folk dance and normal dance (Loghu Nritya).

He is the Founder President of the district Dance Artist Association and Vice-president of Dance Artists' Association of Rangpur. According to Shafiqul, he taught more than four hundred students, of them, BTV artists Nahid Ferdous Meghna and Binita Alam are two of the most worthy of mention, he added. He said, "Kurigram is a backward region. Some overly religious people cause resistance for learning and practicing dance. Also, economic incentives are low in this field. Many students want to be performers, but do not want to be artists. They only learn dance as a hobby. There is a great lack of professionalism here".

According to Shafiqul, there is little hope for the torch of dance to be carried by someone after him. "The learning of dance may stop here after me. I am growing old and there is no one to take my place. There is some hope though - my daughter (Binita Alam) is learning to dance from the perspective of becoming a trainer. She can continue in my absence in the



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Waves and tides from the Bay erode Kuakata sea beach, a popular tourist spot in Patuakhali district, every day. The photo was taken on Monday.

Accused in Jubo Dal leader murder case hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

An accused in local Jubo Dal leader murder case was hacked to death allegedly by his rivals in Satgara-Mistripara area of the city yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Farhad Hossain, 28, son of late Rashiduzzaman Kutu of Munshipara area in the city.

Police said a gang of 6/7, allegedly led by 'top terror' Ariful Islam alias Pichchi Apel and Chhatra Dal activist Palash, attacked

Farhad with sharp weapons, leaving him seriously injured around 9:00pm on Monday following previous enmity over cable TV network business in the area.

He later died on way to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital early in the morning.

Farhad was accused in five cases, including one for murder of Mosharrif Hossain Padmo, assistant office secretary of Rangpur district unit Jubo Dal.

Ferdousi Begum, mother of the deceased, filed a murder case in this connection, said the OC.

Announcement

Written Test for the posts of
Junior Officer & Junior Officer (Cash)

The written test for the posts of Junior Officer & Junior Officer (Cash) will be held on **Friday, 18 July 2014, 09:00 AM to 11:00 AM** (02 hours). Details of the test will be available in the Admit Card.

The candidates are requested to download and print their Admit Cards for the written test from the Bank's website:

www.pubalibangla.com/career.asp

Admit Cards will be available at the website only for the short-listed candidates.

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Abductors free housewife

Culprits still scot-free

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police rescued a housewife from Kathgola Bazar area in the district town early yesterday, three days after her abduction.

However, none was arrested in this connection, said Faruq Ahmed, sub-inspector of Iswarganj Police Station.

The abductors left the woman on a road in the area at 2:30am and fled the scene. On information, police rushed to the spot and rescued her.

In the morning, she was produced before a court in the district to record her statement.

On the night of July 5, a gang of 10/12 picked up the woman from Gazaria in the upazila when she was going to her father's house with her husband by an auto-rickshaw.

The gang also beat up the victim's husband, a Malaysian expatriate, who recently returned home.

The criminals looted Tk 2.5 lakh and four tolas of gold ornaments from the possession of the couple.

Earlier on Monday noon, the kidnappers demanded Tk 10,000 from the victims' family for her treatment over mobilephone.

Father of the woman filed a case with Gouripur police station, accusing six people, including one Mofizul Islam in this connection.

Mofizul had been wooing the housewife for the last few years. The parents of the victim earlier refused his marriage proposal, said the SI, also the investigating officer of the case.

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