

How profitable is Tobacco Farming?

Tobacco grabs huge paddy lands in Lalmonirhat



Farmers farming tobacco on huge lands after getting lucrative offers from tobacco companies in Lalmonirhat. PHOTO: STAR

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Huge paddy lands have been targeted for farming tobacco in Lalmonirhat for this season. Farmers are farming tobacco instead of paddy and other crops after getting seeds, fertilizers and interest loan facilities from the tobacco companies in the district. A good numbers of tobacco farmers from different villages have gathered together in Lalmonirhat town, and went out on the town roads demanding alternative crops instead of tobacco farming in order to save their land's fertility, their health and environment, and they also made strong protest against the tobacco companies as they (farmers) are always encouraged towards farming tobacco on their paddy lands. Agitated tobacco farmers also demonstrated for several hours over the same issue at the town's Mission Intersection.

In the demonstration rally, tobacco farmers claimed that it is true that tobacco farming isn't profitable but farmers show their high interest due to easy marketing and attractive offers from tobacco companies. If farmers get facility for alternative farming besides tobacco, and tobacco companies stop their illegal practices to encour-

Sarpukur village of Aditmari upazila said, "I earn Taka 24 to 30 thousand from farming tobacco on one bigha (27 decimals) of land by spending Taka 8 to 10 thousand. But me and four other members of my family invest our labour daily for three months," he said adding that the earning actually comes from their hard labour.

"If our estimates are correct, then wages earned from tobacco farming doesn't make it really profitable," said tobacco grower Madhuram Das, 58, from Haziganj village of Aditmari upazila. "If we invest the same kind of labour to farming paddy or other crops instead of tobacco, we will earn a lot better but we need that alternative option," he said.

A local schoolteacher, also a farmer at Kakina village of Kaliganj upazila said that the tobacco companies are gradually occupying lands used for producing food grains and other crops by luring the farmers into more profit, and the companies are making profit for years through the government's subsidized fertilizers and irrigation facilities. "Realizing the disastrous impacts of tobacco farming, we the farmers started growing other crops on our lands," he added.

"Eight bighas of my land have been losing their fertility as I have been farming tobacco on these for the last few years for the lucrative offers from tobacco companies. If I didn't get these lucrative offers, I would never be farming tobacco," said farmer Altaf Hossain, 46, from Bhadai village of Aditmari upazila.

Jahedul Islam, 50, a tobacco farmer from Barabari village in Lalmonirhat sadar said that he doesn't get expected output of paddy and other crops from his five bighas of land because the soil is losing its fertility due to tobacco farming. "Primarily we understand that tobacco farming gives us profit, but its harmful effects are permanent," he said praying to govt. to take proper steps against increasing tobacco farming.

"If the govt. doesn't take proper initiatives for stopping the increasing amount of tobacco farming and malpractices by tobacco companies immediately, it could lead to total domination of tobacco farming in this region," said tobacco farmer Aminur Rahman, 42, from Mahishkhocha village of Aditmari upazila.

Paresh Chandra Barmon, 55, a farmer from Sarpukur village of Aditmari upazila, said that tobacco farming has increased dramatically in the district because of the interventions by tobacco companies. "We are always encouraged towards tobacco farming with the incentive of getting attractive offers from the tobacco companies," he said.

Safayet Hossain, Deputy Director DD in Agriculture Extension Department in Lalmonirhat, said that it isn't possible to decrease tobacco farming without offering alternative crops. Farmers now understand the harmful effects of tobacco farming, and this awareness can decrease tobacco farming.

Memorial setup in Nilurkhamar killing field

Memorial set up 44 years after the liberation war to honour the martyred

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Foundations for a memorial were set up at the Nilurkhamar village of Santoshpur union under Nageswari upazila of Kurigram district. The memorial is to be set up at the Nilurkhamar killing field (Baddhabhumi) of the '71 Liberation War.

The district unit of Sammito Sangaskritik Jot (a cultural organisation) laid down the foundation for the memorial at the killing field and organised locals and freedom fighters to attend in the function.

A memorial discussion, presided by the unit convener Shemol Bhaumik, was held there after setting up a temporary memorial on December 7 to observe the "Kurigram Free Day" on 6th December.

Among those present, Deputy Commander of the district Muktijodya sangshad unit Aminul Islam, freedom fighter Harun Ar Rashid Lal, freedom fighter and the district Awami League president Aminul Islam Manju Mandol, President of

the district Ghatak dalal nirmul committee Jothi Ahmed, Nageswari muktijodya sangshad unit commander Abu Bakar and Santoshpur union chairman Liakat Ali, spoke in the discussion while about two hundred people including martyrs' relatives and students were present.

The speakers said that the Pakistani Army, with assistance from Razakar and Al-Badar, attacked the innocent people of Nilurkhamar village on the night of November 17, 1971 and brutally killed 79 people within an hour as the village was scattered camp of freedom fighters. They were later buried in a ditch in the village.

Unit convener Shemol Bhaumik said, "No initiatives, by government or non-government had been taken for setting up a memorial in Nilurkhamar killing field (Baddhabhumi) before this. After 43 years of our liberation, we have been able to finally take an initiative to set up this memorial. The construction will be completed within one year".



Activists placing flower wreaths to the memorial in Nilurkhamar killing field. PHOTO: STAR

Plum growers worried as prices fall due to blockade

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Around 5000 plum growers in the district are passing worrying time as the popular winter fruit is selling for low prices due to the transport problem amid the countrywide non-stop blockade enforced by the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

They are fearing huge losses if the matured fruits are not harvested and marketed in time.

Visiting Sanbandha, Chandrapara, Banuria, Baliadanga, Taherpur and Chandpara villages in Jhenidah and Hakimpur and Chakla in Jessore dis-

trict, this correspondent saw plum growers plucking the fruit from their orchard and sorting it.

Several farmers said they earlier cultivated sugarcane but switched to plum farming during the last few years as sale of the fruit brings them ready cash.

This year around 1700 hectares of land has been brought under plum cultivation in Jhenidah, said sources of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

Thaikul, baukul and apelkul are among the most widely cultivated varieties.

"I cultivated plum on 10 bighas last year and got

profit of Tk 5 lakh. This year I cultivated the fruit on 17 bighas in the hope of good yield. But I will not get back even the production cost if the blockade lasts long," said Enamul Kabir, a big farmer of Sanbandha village.

Jumarat Ali of the same village said he cultivated plum on two bighas of land last year and got profit of Tk one lakh.

"Being encouraged, I have cultivated the fruit on eight bighas this year. Early this season I sold the item for Tk 50 a kg but the price has fallen to Tk 15/20 due to the blockade.

I will incur huge loss if the situation continues," he said.

Although the demand of plum is high in big cities, traders are not purchasing the fruit up to their capacity as goods laden trucks are highly vulnerable to arson attack during the blockade, said plum traders Ashraf Ali and Sakhawat Ali.

Now there is no option but to wait for the situation to improve, they said.

Akramul Haque, deputy director of DAE in Jhenidah, said the countrywide blockade is causing losses to the plum growers in the district.

THAKURGAON BSF picks up youth from border

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) picked up a Bangladeshi youth from Paria border in Baliadangi upazila on Monday night.

The youth, Jamal Hossain, 28, hails from Roypur village in Barhatta upazila of Netrakona district.

BGB sources said a BSF patrol team picked up Jamal from near the border while he was returning home from India without valid documents.

The border guards of the two countries held a flag meeting on the zero point of the frontier at around 11:30am yesterday.

At the meeting, BSF personnel told their Bangladesh counterparts that they had handed over the youth to Goalpukur Police Station under Uttar Dinajpur district of the Indian state of Paschimanga.

Five to die for killing schoolboy in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A court here yesterday sentenced five people to death for killing a schoolboy in the district town in 2010.

Those who have been awarded death penalty are Fazle Rabbi Shishir, 23, son of Musa Karim of Kampapur village, Saddam, 23, son of Abbas Ali of Miapara village, Zakir Hossain, 24, son of Badal Mia of Muslimabad village, Miran, 24, son of Nur Islam, and Setu, 24, son of late Helal Uddin of Sakal Bazar area in the town.

Judge Wahiduzzaman Shikdar of Additional District and Sessions Judge's



Shahjamal Islam Swadhin

Court delivered the verdict.

According to the case statement, the convicted five sufficed with the deceased, Shahjamal Islam Swadhin, a Class X student of Jamalpur High School, when they tried

to snatch his mobile phone at a Baishakhi fair in the town on March 23, 2010.

As a sequel to the incident, they called Swadhin out of his house in Bajaripara area at around 9:00pm, stabbed him in the chest and fled the scene. Critically injured Swadhin succumbed to his injuries on way to Jamalpur General Hospital the same night.

Saiful Islam, father of the deceased, filed a murder case with Sadar Police Station, accusing the five people, the following day. The court recorded statements of eight witnesses during the trial of the case.



Plum growers sorting the popular winter fruit on a land beside their orchards at Sanbandha village in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah district. PHOTO: STAR

Hindu temple set afire in Barguna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Criminals set a Hindu temple afire and vandalised an idol at Agapadma village in Sadar upazila of Barguna district early yesterday.

A portion of the temple was gutted in the fire, said Keshab Chandra Majhee, chairman of the temple management committee.

Keshab said he found the temple burning when he came out of his house adjacent to the temple around 12:30am and cried for help.

Hearing scream, locals rushed to the spot and doused the fire after half an hour, said Reaz Hossain, officer in-charge of Barguna Sadar Police Station.

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জরুরী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, সরকার ১০/- (দশ) ও ৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ) টাকা মূল্যমানের বাংলাদেশ প্রাইজবন্ডের সকল কার্যক্রম আগামী ৩১ জানুয়ারী, ২০১৫ খ্রিঃ তারিখ হতে চূড়ান্তভাবে বন্ধ ঘোষণা করেছেন।

এমতাবস্থায়, আগামী ৩১ জানুয়ারী, ২০১৫ খ্রিঃ তারিখের পূর্বে সুবিধাজনক সময়ে পূর্বের ন্যায় ১০/- (দশ) ও ৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ) টাকা মূল্যমানের বাংলাদেশ প্রাইজবন্ড নগদায়ন অথবা ১০/- (দশ) ও ৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ) টাকা মূল্যমানের প্রাইজবন্ডের বদলে সমমূল্যের ১০০/- (একশত) টাকা মূল্যমানের প্রাইজবন্ড বিনিময় করে নেয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হলো। উক্ত সময়ের পর ১০/- (দশ) ও ৫০/- (পঞ্চাশ) টাকা মূল্যমানের বাংলাদেশ প্রাইজবন্ডের কোন দাবী (নগদায়ন বা বিনিময়) গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না।

এ বিষয়ে সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের আন্তরিক সহযোগিতা কামনা করছি।

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