



Modern farmer Belal Ahmed Imran from Sylhet proudly shows off fresh capsicum from his fields.

PHOTO: STAR

Capsicum Farming in Sylhet

New High Value Crops Gaining Ground

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Belal Ahmed Imran from the Ramdhana village of Biswanath upazila was awarded the Bangabandhu Jatiyo Krishi Podok for his contributions in fisheries in 2013.



PHOTO: STAR

As the owner of "Dream Hatchery", the only hatchery of local species of Shing and Magur in the Sylhet division, every year, Belal sells his fish to Jaipurhat, Khulna, Satkhira, Tangail and Pabna. However, inspired by Shykh Seraj's TV programme on the success story of Capsicum farming by a man from Bogra, Belal became interested about the foreign vegetable.

Accordingly, he collected seeds and cultivated this uncommon vegetable on 40 decimals of land, which has already gotten a good yield. Belal says that, due to the use of organic fertilizer, risk of pest attack and disease is less. He always takes advice from the Agriculture Officials and SAU experts. "I have already sold 1,600 kg worth taka 1.7 lac in only 45 days from 4,700 plants. Hopefully, at least 3,500 kg more will be harvested in 2 months. The supply goes to department stores like Swapno and other wholesale traders in Sylhet."

"I spent only Tk 25,000 to begin capsicum farming," said a confident Belal, adding that the total sale may exceed over Tk 5 Lakh this year. Associate Professor Md. Shahidul Islam, Horticulture Department of

Sylhet Agricultural University (SAU), said that Imran has ventured into a unique job. They have provided assistance for him by establishing a separate demonstration plot for Capsicum farming in front of Belal's house. Belal has already inspired a good number of young men in the area to follow in his footsteps. This year Belal supplied 1,500 saplings to a farmer of Mymensingh. He plans to produce 5,000 saplings for other people in the coming year.

"Seeing the successful yield, a good number of young men in my area have already shown interested in following my work," said Belal. "I will prepare saplings for them in the coming season". Although the youth in the Sylhet region have a common trend to go abroad, especially to the UK, Belal is different. "I see better prospect in farming rare crops like capsicum, cherry tomato, etc. since these have very good demand in the local market".

Md. Khairul Bashar, Deputy Director of Agricultural Extension of Sylhet said that Belal is a modern farmer and that they are providing him with complete assistance and in doing so, setting an example in the area.

The mystery of a deserted village

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

At the moment, the village is desolate. There are numerous marks of past human habitat but at present it looks abandoned. There is evidence that a village used to exist here and it is also in the map of Kotchandpur upazila in Jhenidah.

Sources and locals speak of a village named Mongolpur bearing the jurisdiction list number 66. There are marks even today of people that used to live here. There are three ponds and an Eidgah. According to Dalil Biswas, 82 of Dadpur village, Mongolpur used to be home to 120-150 families. One pond is called Gorer pukur, 10 bigha 22 decimal in size, another is called Tagore pukur, 5 bigha is size and the third and smallest one is 3 bighas and does not bear a name. There are numerous marks of huts where people used to live. Besides, a Eidgah had been built in place of a mosque where the Muslims perform namaj, said Samsul master, 85 of Dadpur village. Abdul Mazed Master, 80, of Dadpur

village said that his grandfather told him stories of what the village was like in the eighteenth century. During the British period, the people of Mughal dynasty lived at the village for which it was named Mongolpur. They were very religious and aristocratic. They allowed some lower caste families to live nearby for everyday chores, about 300 meter away from the aristocratic society. At the time after the fall of the Mughal dynasty they left the village fearing torture and abuse.

Another elderly man, Satyajit Tagore, 95, family member of late Nete Tagore said that Cholera broke out at around 50 years back and a huge number of people died of this fatal disease. Since then, people are afraid of living in this village because they think it is a cursed village. Elangi union land officer Jahid Hossain under Kotchandpur upazila said that this Mongolpur village has 260.50 acres land, Khatian No-206.

Eyewitness Milon Hossain, 50 of Dadapur village said, a man Nete Tagore lived by the side of Gorer pukur.

He was unmarried. He was slaughtered to death in 1985 by some miscreants. He was the last villager of Mongolpur. The previous inhabitants left the village before his birth, he added.

Md. Abdul Kuddus Khan in charge of the mosque of Mongolpur village said, he has unearthed a lot of skeletons in 1992 which were 8.50 feet length. He has heard from his forefathers that all the families have left their living place a long time ago. Election officer of Kotchandpur upazila said, there is a village named Mongolpur in the list but there are no voters.

Kotchandpur upazila UNO Debo Prashad Paul said, he has heard that there is a village named Mongolpur. Local union land office bears valid papers of the village and its JL No-66 in the map of the union. If any archeological department takes steps in looking into solving the mystery, we may find out if the people of Mongolpur were indeed 8.5 feet tall giants, and maybe we will find out truths about the village stranger than fiction.



PHOTO: STAR

Kuddus Ali, a local villager who lives in an adjacent village, points to the Eidgah - the only standing structure at Mongolpur.

Tube-wells meant for poor go to officers' club, rich men's houses

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Government tube-wells meant for providing pure drinking water to poor people have been set in on the premises of the officers' club in Nilphamari town, and in the houses of rich ruling party men and union parishad (UP) chairmen and their relatives in most unions of Sadar upazila under the district.

The Department of Public Health and Engineering (DPHE) provided 25 tube-wells with metal platform to Nilphamari Sadar upazila parishad in December last year under a project for providing pure drinking water to the poor and distressed people in 14 unions of the upazila, sources said.

As per official provision, allocated tube-wells are usually set at a place where at least 10 poor families can procure water, said Abdul Kader, executive engineer of DPHE in Nilphamari.

But visiting different places of the upazila, this correspondent saw a different picture.

In Charaikhola union, a tube-well was allocated against the name of Safiar Rahman, a neighbour of the local UP chairman, but it was set in the bathroom of the chairman's house and he (chairman) rented the portion of the house.

As this correspondent asked UP chairman Abdur Rouf Molla about the matter over cell phone, he expressed annoyance and switched off his mobile.

In Panchapukur union, a tube-well was allotted in favour of Saidul Islam, a rich man, also

younger brother of local UP chairman and ruling Awami League (AL) leader Wahidul Islam.

In Ramnagar union, two tube-wells were allocated for Momtaj Ali, former president of local unit of Jubo League, and his brother Halim, and both the tube-wells were set inside their houses.

Uttom Kumar Roy, brother of Polashbari UP chairman Tapon Kumar Roy, got a tube-well and set it inside the village home of the chairman.

Madrasa teacher Abdul Hamid, also a solvent farmer in Itakhola union, got allotment of a tube-well but he kept it inside a room of his house as he had already a good tube-well of his own.

The upazila parishad concerned even allocated a tube-well in favour of the officers' club near the DC office.

The deputy commissioner of Nilphamari, also president of the officers club, said, "The tube-well has been set near the officers' club perhaps to provide pure water to the community as there is a high school and college and district collectorate building nearby."

Abyzar Rahman, chairman of Sadar upazila parishad, said, "The union parishads selected the names and sent to the upazila administration for finalisation. We had to rely on them. We shall try to follow rules strictly in future."

Sabet Ali, upazila nirbahi officer, said he would ask for investigation into the matter and necessary steps would be taken, if irregularity is found.



PHOTO: STAR

A tube-well, meant for providing pure drinking water for poor people, got sunk on the premises of the officers club in Nilphamari town.

Villagers confine 4 Rab men, suspecting robbers

The elite force members rescued after 2 hours, UP chairman among 25 sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Locals caught four plainclothes Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) men in Belaichandi Bazar of Parbatipur upazila under the district on Monday evening, suspecting them as robbers during an anti-drug raid.

"Eight plainclothes members of Dinaipur Rab - 13 riding on four motorcycles came to Belaichandi Bazar and arrested Monwarul Aziz, 27, son of Md Anis of Chowdhurypara village, on charge of drug peddling," said Nur Mohammad Raza, chairman of Belaichandi Union Parishad.

As the Rab members stood near a local bus stand along with Aziz, he started shouting that fake Rab men caught him.

At this locals encircled the Rab members and the latter fired bullets to drive away the mob.

Then the angry mob started throwing brickbats and confined them.

At around 10:00pm, Rab and police officials from Dinaipur, Rangpur and Parbatipur along with Parbatipur UNO Rahenul Islam went there and brought the situation under control.

At around 10:30pm high officials of Dinaipur Rab-13 left the area with plainclothes Rab men.

"There were several robbery incidents in this union recently. As the Rab members were in plain clothes and the motorcycles they used did not bear any registration number, people became suspicious," said UP chairman Nur Mohammad Raza.

Md Kuddus, deputy assistant director of Dinaipur Rab-13, filed two cases accusing 25 people including 12 identified ones with Parbatipur Police Station yesterday afternoon.

Belaichandi UP chairman Nur Mohammad Raza, also joint secretary of Parbatipur upazila unit of Awami League, was made top accused in the case.

Local computer shop owner Md Abdul Wahab, 28, son of Mukul Shah of Belaichandi Burirhat village under Parbatipur upazila, went missing after the incident, said his family members and the UP chairman.

Later Rab handed Wahab over to Parbatipur Police Station and he was shown arrested in the case, said Mahmudul Alam, OC of the police station.

Kismat Hayat, commanding officer of Rab-13, said the incident on Monday night occurred due to a misunderstanding.

OC Mahmudul Alam said they are investigating the matter.

Torn-apart, families wait in whimper for justice

FROM PAGE 16

Sepoy Selim Reza, who led the armoury break-in and the first wave of killings, had made this chilling revelation in his confessional statement. Two cases were filed following the mutiny -- one for carnage and another for blast.

The special court awarded death penalty to 152 people and different terms of imprisonment to 423 people in the carnage case. Almost all of them were BDR soldiers.

Following this, appeals were made to the High Court challenging the verdicts.

A special HC bench of Justice Md Shawkat Hossain, Justice Md Abu Zafor

Siddique and Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder had already heard the confessional statements of 538 accused and the depositions of 14 prosecution witnesses out of 654 between January 18 and February 24, said Deputy Attorney General KM Zahid Sarwar Kazal.

"The HC may deliver its judgment in six months and then it may take another six months to write and release the full verdict," said Mahbubey Alam.

After that, the next relevant procedures at the Appellate Division and the execution of the convicts might be finished in the next one year, the country's chief law officer said, explaining

the details of the legal process.

THE BLAST CASE Meanwhile, the trial of the blast case in connection with 2009 BDR carnage is still in its initial phase.

The special court set up at the capital's Bakshibazar to try the mutiny cases did not sit for a single day in the last one year.

A total of 834 people, including a civilian, stand accused in the case, filed under the Explosive Substances Act. Most of these people were accused in the carnage case as well.

Though the trial proceedings in both cases started in August 2011, the blast case was put on hold to make way

for the carnage case first.

The proceedings of the case resumed only after the carnage case verdict in November 2013.

Explaining the delay, acting chief public prosecutor Mosharraf Hossain Kajol on Monday said under the current circumstances, it was risky to bring the accused, many of whom were convicted killers, to the make-shift court.

He, however, hoped that they would be able to complete the case proceedings by year-end.

Apart from the Bakshibazar court trials, 11 BGB special courts awarded 5,926 jawans jail terms ranging from a month to seven

years in connection with the mutiny.

THE WAIT GOES ON

"Our pain will heal only when the killers will be executed," Nehreen Ferdousi, widow of slain Col Mujibul Haque told The Daily Star on Monday.

Nehreen, who was ready to wait longer for justice, said she, like the wives of many other army officers massacred in the 2009 carnage, still wanted to know who the "real mastermind" behind the killings was.

She also demanded that the government announce February 25 as "a national day" and install a monument for people to pay tributes to the carnage victims.

How phone apps

FROM PAGE 16

information about the user's battery power, which can be used to calculate their location with alarming precision, experts have claimed.

According to researchers at Stamford University, different mobile phone masts suck up users' battery power at different rates, making it possible to piece together someone's movement between so-called 'base stations'.

The technique is similar to the way police can locate suspects, by tracking their mobile phone signal as they move between base stations.

Anyone tracking that person would have to know

the broad geographical area they were in, but once they had that information, they would be able to piece a map together.

"Applications that want access to location data can bypass all these restrictions and covertly learn the phone's location," the researchers said.

"This can be done with no knowledge of the base stations to which the phone is attached, as long as the attacker knows the general area in which the victim moves."

Many companies try to track mobile users' movements in order to target them with the adverts most

likely to make them spend money.

For example, a coffee shop would be keen to send money-off vouchers to mobile phone users passing their doors, whilst a clothes retailer might want to send adverts to people in a shopping centre.

Many mobile phone users try to protect their privacy by turning off features like 'location services', designed to track their movements.

However, Peter Sommer, a digital forensics expert who has taught at London School of Economics, said: "If you use a mobile phone, you will be tracked."