

CHAR AREAS IN LALMONIRHAT

Bumper pumpkin yield brings smile to farmers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Char farmers in the Teesta and Dharla river basin area in Lalmonirhat district are smiling because there has been a bumper output of pumpkin this year. The char farmers are stocking 50 percent of the harvested pumpkins to sell them during the off-season between October and December to earn windfall profit.

farmers were engaged in farming the vegetable. Bumper yield of pumpkin and its high profit encouraged many others to follow them.

Pumpkin cultivation is started in the first week of January and harvesting is done from the middle of March to April, DAE officials said.

Pumpkin cultivator Nabirul Islami, 55, of Rajpur village said only Tk1,200 to Tk 1,500 is needed to cultivate one bigha of land (one bigha is equal to 27 decimals), and a farmer can harvest 400 to 500 pieces of pumpkin on it. Each pumpkin weighs between 4kg and 8kg. The price of 1kg pumpkin is

between Tk 6 and Tk 8 in the local market during the harvesting period, but it increases to Tk 20 to Tk 25 per kg during off-season.

Nazrul Islam, 48, a pumpkin grower in Bowalmari char village in Dharla River basin under sadar upazila said, "I have already harvested pumpkin from my four bighas of land. I sold 50 percent of them at Tk 24 thousand and I hope I will earn over Tk 28 thousand when I sell the rest this month."

Pumpkin grower Delowar Hossain, 55, of char Gobordhan village in Tesesta basin under Aditmari upazila said they do not need huge capital to cultivate pumpkin on sandy

land. Little investment brings high profit. They need only seeds, some compost fertiliser and proper care of the crop.

Deputy Director of DAE in Lalmonirhat, Safayet Hossain, said pumpkin cultivation on sandy land in char areas can play a vital role in mitigating poverty of the farmers. Wastage from pumpkin fields can fertilise the sandy land for cultivation of other crops, he said.

Char farmers urged the government to provide necessary support, including seeds, fertilisers and insecticides, for increasing cultivation of pumpkin on sandy lands to alleviate poverty.



Pumpkin grows abundantly at a sandy land on the Teesta River basin area of Gobordhan village in Aditmari upazila under Lalmonirhar district, much to the happiness of landless farmers who cultivated the popular vegetable on the once unused land.

Prime accused in 2 rape cases still at large

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Local people including teachers and students held different agitation programmes like human chain and procession, demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment of the alleged rapist.

A case was filed, accusing Idris in connection with the incident, said police.

Police are raiding different areas to arrest the culprit, said the OC.

Meanwhile, the law enforcers rescued a 'missing' college girl, who was gang raped, from Iswarganj railway station area in an

unconscious state on Tuesday.

OC Borhan Uddin of Iswarganj Police Station said Faruq Miah, 25, son of Bachhu Mia of the area, developed love affair with the girl of Netrakona district.

As Faruq promised to marry the girl, she went out of her house after receiving a phone call from his friend Jasim Uddin, 25, of Atharabari area in the upazila, on April 18 and since then she remained missing.

On information, police rescued the girl from the

railway station area in an unconscious state early Tuesday and sent her to the upazila health complex.

Later, they arrested Jasim from the health complex when he tried to abduct the girl from there.

The arrestee was produced in a court that sent him to jail yesterday.

The victim filed a case, accusing Jasim, Faruq and his brother Abu Hanif in this connection.

Faruk and Hanif went into hiding soon after filing of the case, said police.



Students of Sarada Sundari Girls' High School in Faridpur stand in solemn silence for one minute in remembrance of the victims of a garment factory collapse at Rana Plaza in Savar under Dhaka district on April 24 in 2013. Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust organised the programme demanding punishment of the people responsible for the tragedy that led to the reported death of 1,129 people and injuries to many others, and adequate compensation for the victims.

BCL factions clash over capturing college hostel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

Two factions of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) clashed on Jessore Government City College campus over capture of the lone dormitory of the college yesterday.

The groups--one led by Maruf Hossain Iqbal, president of the college unit of BCL, and the other by Mohiuddin Rimon, general secretary of the unit--locked in a clash around 1:00pm, over capturing Muktiyoddha Ziaur Rahman Hall of the institution.

Quoting general students, Shikdar Akkas Ali, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said both sides exploded several crude bombs and traded 4/5 gunshots during the clash.

Contacted, Maruf Hossain said a group, loyal to Ariful Islam Riyad, president of the district unit of BCL, opened gunshots and hurled bombs targeting the general students who went to the hostel to free it from their clutches.

Refuting the allegation, Mohiuddin Rimon said the incident occurred when the general students resisted a group loyal to Anwar Hossain Bipul, BCL general secretary of the district unit, when the group went to the campus in a bid to occupy the dormitory.

Housewife murdered for 'dowry'

UNB, Laxmipur

A housewife was beaten to death by her husband and in-laws allegedly for dowry at Torabganj village in Kamalnagar upazila of the district on Wednesday.

The deceased is Yesmin Akter Sweety, wife of Sourav Hossain of the village.

Police quoted victim's family members as saying that Sourav, son of Tariqul Islam, married Sweety, daughter of Mayen Uddin of Gourinagar village in Laxmipur Sadar upazila, three years ago.

Sourav had been putting pressure on Sweety's family for dowry since the marriage, added police.

Failing to realise the money, Sourav and his family members locked in an altercation with Sweety over the issue. At one stage, they beat up Sweety mercilessly, leaving her dead on the spot.

Being informed by neighbours, police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said AK Azad, sub-inspector of Kamalnagar Police Station. Sourav and his family members went into hiding soon after the incident, the SI added.

Man jailed for selling venison

UNB, Bagerhat

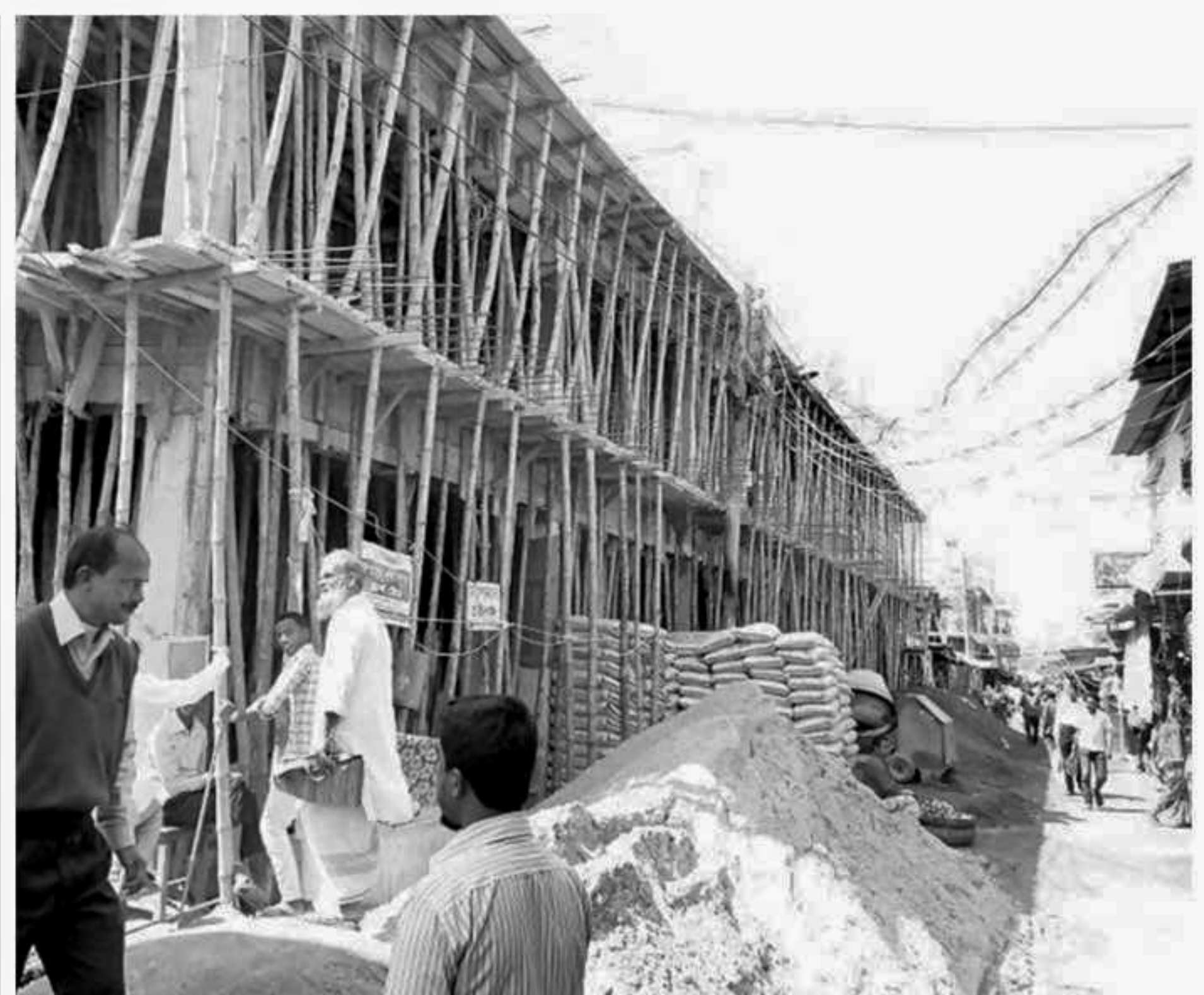
A mobile court sentenced a young man to two months' imprisonment for selling venison in Mongla upazila on Wednesday afternoon.

The convict is Nikhil Chandra, 34, son of Shadhar Chandra of Boiragikhali village in the upazila.

Bangladesh Coastguard West Zone Operation Department Staff Officer Lieutenant A M Rahatuzzaman said a team of the coastguard, acting on a tip-off, conducted a drive at Dwigbazar in the upazila and arrested Nikhil while he was selling the venison.

They also seized 10 kilograms of venison from his possession.

Later, the arrestee was produced before the court, led by Executive Magistrate Nazmul Haque, which pronounced the verdict.



An under-construction multi-storied market, one of 30 such structures being built by illegal occupiers on the railway land in Saidpur municipality under Nilphamari district.

Eviction drive on Saidpur rly land stalled for a month

Local lawmaker's questionable role blamed for the stalemate

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

The biggest ever eviction drive of Bangladesh Railway (BR) to remove illegal structures from its land in Saidpur municipality under the district has remained stalled for one month allegedly due to interference by the local lawmaker.

Earlier on March 18, as per directive of the parliamentary standing committee on railway affairs, BR's estate department in Pakshi division launched a massive eviction drive in Saidpur municipality to free from occupiers most of the 797 acres of railway land there.

In first two days, they demolished about 300 illegal makeshift shops and business structures with bulldozers, clearing surroundings of Saidpur Rail Station and adjoining rail tracks.

The eviction team planned to launch a tougher drive on March 20 to demolish 30 new under construc-

tion multi-storied markets owned by influential people at the town centre.

Approached by the occupants to stop the drive, lawmaker from Nilphamari-4 constituency Shawkat Chowdhury, also opposition Jatiya Party whip in parliament, met the eviction team at railway officers' club on March 19 night.

"In that meeting, the lawmaker requested us to suspend the eviction drive for a few days so that he could talk to higher officials of railway and we complied as he assured stopping the construction work of 30 large markets," Mustaq Ahmed, Pakshi divisional estate officer, said on Wednesday.

"But the occupiers continued the illegal construction, and now we are facing obstacles to restart the drive as an occupant filed a false case against the eviction team members," he added.

Contacted, lawmaker Shawkat Chowdhury said, "Widespread eviction might

affect law and order as occupants are in possession of railway land for decades and doing business there. I met the railway minister and proposed to him that the department keep under possession only the land it needs for operation and the rest of the land be legally leased for long term to occupants for revenue."

Expressing ignorance about continuation of market construction on railway land, he said, "The railway authorities concerned did not bring the matter to my notice."

Earlier mysterious fires on the nights of January 25 and 26 destroyed two big makeshift markets of cloth and groceries on railway land.

Taking opportunity of the sympathetic situation, a syndicate of big traders started illegal construction of 30 multi-storied permanent markets on the railway land in Saidpur, prompting the BR authorities to launch a massive eviction drive.



Farmers harvest boro paddy at a field in Gharinda of Tangail Sadar upazila that sees good yield of the crop this season.

Storm kills 2, damages 200 houses in 2 dists

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Two people were killed and over 200 houses damaged as a nor'wester lashed Adamdighi upazila of Bogra and four upazilas of Natore districts on Wednesday night.

Our Bogra correspondent reported that a woman and her niece died on the spot as they came in contact with a snapped electric wire soon after the storm that swept through several villages in Adamdighi upazila.

The deceased are Rehana Begum, 35, wife of Emdadul Haque, an expatriate in

Malaysia, and Baishakhi, 10, daughter of Mir Kashem Ali. Both hailed from Malshan village in the upazila.

Quoting local people, police said Rehana along with her niece Baishakhi went out of their house after to collect fallen mangoes.

While collecting the mangoes, the duo came in contact with a snapped electric wire and died instantly.

On information, police went to the spot, recovered the bodies and sent them to Shaheed Ziaur

Rahman Medical College Hospital for autopsy, said Moslem Uddin, officer-in-charge of Adamdighi Police Station.

Away in Natore, a storm hit four upazilas of the district around 10:00pm on Wednesday night, damaging over 200 thatched and tin-roofed houses, reports UNB.

The hour-long storm also damaged crops, uprooted trees and electric poles, disrupting power supply in Sadar, Singra, Gurudaspur and Naldanga upazilas.