

THAKURGAON, PANCHAGARH

Pheromone trap gaining popularity among farmers

The environment-friendly method serves as alternative to toxic pesticides

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Environment-friendly 'sex pheromone trap' for killing harmful insects is gaining popularity among the vegetable farmers in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts, thanks to the motivational programme of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

The alternative method appears as a blessing against the backdrop of random use of toxic pesticides that threaten the ecological balance and public health, said agro-officials and farmers.

In sex pheromone trap, a capsule containing female sex hormone of insects is hung in a plastic bottle with one inch of soap-water and two holes are created in the middle of the container for entrance of insects.

Set in the crop field with two bamboo sticks, the bottle attracts male insects that drown in the soap water. Thus, mating and spread of pests are checked.

"A trap is needed for every three decimals of vegetable field. Accordingly, 11 traps are enough for a bigha (33.06 acres) of land to check pest attack. Now a capsule sells for Tk 25 and it remains effective for three months," said Azizul Islam, Thakurgaon Sadar upazila agriculture officer.

During a recent visit to different villages in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila and Boda and Sadar

upazilas of Panchagarh, this correspondent saw that many farmers have set the traps at their vegetable fields including pumpkin and tomato.

"Using sex pheromone traps in my one bigha of tomato field, I have got good result in pest control. The yield is satisfactory too. People show interest to buy the pesticide-free vegetable even for a bit higher price," said Jamal Uddin, 35, of

Darikamai village in Panchagarh Sadar upazila.

Md Arshed Ali, deputy director of the DAE in Thakurgaon, said they have arranged several demonstration plots at different villages to popularise the method among the farmers.

"Sex pheromone trap has been proved successful to save vegetables like cucurbit and fruits like mango and litchi from pest attack.

Besides, if toxic pesticides are not used in crop fields, it attracts beneficial insects like bees that help better pollination and yield," he added.

Forhad Hossain, owner of Janata Biz Bhandar in Panchagarh, said they have already sold about 10,000 capsules for sex pheromone traps as increasing number of vegetable farmers are using it in their fields.



PHOTO: STAR

A pheromone trap, used to kill harmful insects without the use of toxic chemicals, is set at a tomato field of Darikamai village in Panchagarh Sadar upazila.

Discovering Moheshkhali through students' art

BY ANDREW EAGLE

In the dry spring months Moheshkhali Island's Ghortibanga Bazar appears as a desert outpost, a film set from a western genre movie. It mightn't have tumbleweed but the dusty strip of tin shops adjacent to a wind-swept British-era cemetery is vaguely reminiscent of Hollywood's American Wild West. You wouldn't think the coast is nearby.

Overlooking the scene is Ghortibanga Government Primary School, housed in a cyclone shelter. Surely nobody can introduce Moheshkhali to the newcomer like the island's students can.

One thousand students, 9 teachers and 2 assistants: the school is making history as the island's first primary school to adopt the government initiative of teaching to Class VIII.

"The students are very eager," says English teacher Md Shohidullah. "They are productive, have lots of potential and too much curiosity."

Armed with crayons and felt-tip pens I hope to ask the 48 Class VIII students to draw Moheshkhali: as it was, is and will be.

Art is in the syllabus from Class VI but Ghortibanga there's no permanent art teacher. The students hardly ever draw. Nonetheless they prove willing to take the challenge.

Tajmahal and Tahamina, both 13, at the nearest bench, set to work depicting contemporary Moheshkhali. Onto paper they outline banana and banyan trees, and a jubjar bush.

With southern Moheshkhali criss-crossed by tidal watercourses there's a channel added; on each side they're colouring a house for themselves. With the addition of a small mouka boat they can ferry across to visit each other.

How easily they work together. Ghortibanga's students are accustomed to making do.

Just as there aren't enough pens and crayons for all, Class VIII teacher Md. Jahedul Islam, 26, who has taught there for the last 2 years, says there's a shortage of low and high student benches and classrooms need new blackboards.

"We need ceiling fans," adds a student. It's not difficult to imagine how true that must be in summer.

What's the best thing in Moheshkhali? "The betel leaf," Tajmahal answers. Although sweet Moheshkhali betel leaf is famous to the degree that it's the subject of songs, I'm surprised. "How do you know? Do you chew paan?"

"Our mothers and aunts chew it," says Tahmina. "We live here. We know."

Meanwhile the boys cluster around a bench beside the window. Md

Sharif, 15, seems natural group captain, confidently sketching a design in lead pencil, with colour added later. The boys are working on Moheshkhali's past.

With the ubiquitous salt fields and bean vines, the scenes of yesteryear are similar to now. There's a farmer tilling soil, a hay bale and cows. Perhaps the only feature that is really nearing its end is the foot-powered rice crusher, once familiar to villages nationwide.

"I like shutki (dried fish) best," Sharif says of Moheshkhali. "We send it everywhere: really tasty."

I ask Islam why there are only 12 boys to 36 girls. "Many boys drop out after Class V," he says. "Their families need them to work." Sometimes this reality arises from poverty, but Moheshkhali has a business focus -- salt, fish and betel leaf. Education doesn't always get priority.

In the back corner,

Sagorika, Ruposhi, Samira and Lovely are working on a drawing of the island's icon: Adinath Temple. Their artwork features the jetty built by the Nepalese government in the temple's honour, the mangrove forests and a tiger -- there may once have been a tiger kept on temple grounds. There's a priest to attend the temple with the signature singular strands of hair from the top of his otherwise bald head.

"It's a beautiful area," the girls say.

Nearby, Tanzina, Jahanara and Shaheda are working on Moheshkhali's future, demonstrating no lack of imagination. On one side they've put a village -- not much change. On the other is a large town with a train service -- an imagined Moheshkhali City.

If the enthusiasm of Ghortibanga's students is any indication, in Moheshkhali anything becomes possible.



PHOTO: STAR

Two Class VIII students of Ghortibanga school in Moheshkhali of Cox's Bazar district engrossed in drawing.

RABINDRA UNIV PM to lay foundation at Shahjampur today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to lay the foundation stone of Rabindra University at Shahjampur Pilot High School ground in Sirajganj today, marking the 154th birth anniversary of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

Later the prime minister will inaugurate a three-day Rabindra festival at the same ground.

With the laying of the foundation stone, the demand of the local people will be fulfilled.

Deputy Commissioner of Sirajganj, Md Billal Hossain, said the University Grants Commission had visited three places in Shahjampur for establishing the university. UGC will select the site, and then the district administration will acquire the land for the university, the DC added.

Housewife commits 'suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

A Housewife allegedly committed suicide following a family feud at Shampur village in Avaynagar upazila of Jessore district on Wednesday night.

The deceased was identified as Asma Begum, 22, wife of Raihan Fakir of the village.

Police said Asma hanged herself from the ceiling of her room following an altercation with her husband over family matter.

She later died on way to Jessore Medical College Hospital.

Schoolgirl raped in Manikganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

A schoolgirl was raped allegedly by her house tutor at Jhukuria village in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The accused is Shipon Hossain, 24, son of Kazimuddin of the village.

The victim's mother said Shipon came to teach her daughter, a student of Class IV of a local school, at their house around 8:00am.

At one stage, he violated her in absence of the family members, she alleged.

The girl was sent to Manikganj Sadar Hospital for medical test, said police.

The victim's mother filed a case under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act, said Aminur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

Shipon went into hiding soon after filing of the case, said the OC.

Student hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A college boy was hacked to death by criminals at Bherakhali village in Harinakundo upazila early yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Kamruzzaman, 22, son of Selim Miah of the area. He was a second year student of Alamdanga Agriculture Diploma College.

Ershadul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Harinakundo Police Station, said a gang attacked Kamruzzaman with sharp weapons while he was asleep. He died on the spot.

Family members found the body in his bedroom in the morning and informed police.

The law enforcers recovered the body and sent it to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.



PHOTO: STAR

People of Garati enclave in Panchagarh Sadar upazila engage in merriment yesterday after hearing the news that Indian Rajya Sabha had passed the bill for the implementation of Bangladesh-India Land Boundary Agreement that would allow the people of the adversely located area, like 161 other enclaves of the kind, to enjoy basic civic amenities as citizens of the respective countries.

Low paddy price irks Sherpur farmers

UNB, Sherpur

Paddy farmers in the district have started harvesting the Boro crop, but its price remains very low at the growers' level.

One maund of Boro paddy is selling at Tk 300 - Tk 420 at the growers' level, and between Tk 400 - Tk 600 at the local markets in the district, though the production cost this season is estimated to be around Tk 800.

Although the government declared it would begin paddy procurement from May 1-- offering Tk 32 per kg for rice and Tk 22 per kg for paddy -- it has failed to create an impact on the paddy price in the

district.

Dulal Mian, a farmer of Bhatshala village in Sadar upazila, said he is selling paddy at Tk 400 per maund, whereas the wage for each of the day labourers who have been hired for harvesting the paddy is Tk 500.

"I've spent about Tk 32,000 for growing paddy on one acre of land, and harvested about 70 maunds of paddy that is selling at Tk 400 per maund. Though the production is good, it is causing me a huge loss," he said.

According to officials at the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), as more lands in the district were brought

under Boro cultivation this season compared to the previous season, the output is also going to exceed the target of 3.55 lakh tonnes.

DAE deputy director Dr Md Abdus Salam said the price of paddy at the growers' level is low, but is expected to increase with the start of the government's procurement drive in the district.

Farmers, however, expressed their doubt over the prospect of increase in the paddy price with the initiation of the procurement drive because the government will collect the rice and paddy from the traders, not from the farmers.



PHOTO: STAR

Houses of three Hindu families at Nadpara village in Shailakupa upazila under Jhenidah district lie abandoned as they left the area following threat from extortionists.

FEARING ATTACK BY EXTORTIONISTS

Three Hindu families leave homes in Shailakupa

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Three Hindu families of Nadpara village under Shailakupa upazila left their homes recently, fearing attack and extortion. Nobody knows where they have gone.

Neighbours, seeking anonymity, said two brothers, Samoren Mondol and Bipul Mondol, sold 12 decimals land on April 25.

Since then, a gang of criminals had been trying to extort money from them.

The extortionists came to their houses on motorbikes and threatened them. Fearing an attack, the two siblings left home with their families last Friday. Their mother, Nirmala Mondol, has taken shelter at a neighbour's house.

A month ago, Debendra Nath of the same village left home for the same reason.

Mahmudul Hasan Mamun, chairman of Sarutia Union Parishad under Shailakupa upazila, said some criminals of

Charaushia and Aushia village had been pressing the Hindu families for money but the victims did not complain to the police, although he had asked them to meet him.

Hashem Ali, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Shailakupa Police Station, said he heard about the matter on Tuesday, but nobody complained to the police. If they file a case he will take necessary step in this regard, the OC added.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Moinul Islam of Shibanj Police Station said at least 10 cases were filed against the chairman this year and in 2013 and 2014.

Shibganj UZ chairman suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'nawabganj

The Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives has suspended Shibganj Upazila Parishad Chairman Keramat Ali as he is an absconding accused in a number of criminal cases.

A letter issued by the ministry in this regard on April 30 reached the upazila nirbahi officer's office on May 4.

UNO office sources said upazila chairman Keramat Ali, also naye-e-ameer of

Chapainawabganj district unit of Jamaat-e-Islami, was wanted in the cases for vandalising vehicles and attacking law enforcers in the district.

The ministry suspended him as he has been absconding for long, the sources added.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Moinul Islam of Shibanj Police Station said at least 10 cases were filed against the chairman this year and in 2013 and 2014.