

# Joypurhat Sugar Mill staff unpaid for 3 months

## Sugar, molasses worth Tk 42crore rotting in store

KONGKON KARMAKAR, Dinajpur

The salaries of the officials and employees of Joypurhat Sugar Mill have remained unpaid for the last three months as the mill's sugar and molasses produced in last three seasons have remained unsold, causing cash crisis.

Around 1,500 staff of the mill are passing days amid hardship due to the situation.

Around 9,596 tonnes of sugar worth Tk 35.5 crore and 5,045 tonnes of molasses worth Tk 6.5 crore are lying in its store, said official

sources.

The items were produced in three production seasons since 2011-12.

Of them, 4,500 tonnes of sugar was produced this season.

The mill staff blamed the import of sugar by the government for the situation.

Early this month, the mill authority started marketing of their stocked sugar in attractive packets, a one-kg packet being priced at Tk 42.

But the initiative failed to attract any significant number of buyers.

The locally produced sugar is brownish and less sweet than the imported

sugar that looks while, said Md Barakat Ali, a grocer on Thana Road in Joypurhat town.

Besides, buyers are suspicious of the standard of the sugar that had remained in the store for three years.

Officials said the sugar mill was established in 1963 on 100 acres of land in Joypurhat town.

But the mill started incurring losses since 1990 and now it has a cumulative loss burden of Tk 200crore, officials said.

Abdus Salam, managing director of Joypurhat Sugar Mill, admitted that payment of the staff has remained

suspended for three months.

He declined to make any comment regarding the unsold sugar.

Afzal Hossain Talukdar, president of Joypurhat Sugar Mill Workers Union, said sugarcane growers are reluctant to supply the item to the mill due to non-payment or insufficient payment of their produce while the sugar produced in the mill does not sell well due to its higher price compared to imported sugar.

The mill's production cost per kg of sugar stands at around Tk 100, sources said.



PHOTO: STAR

Huge quantities of sugar remains stockpiled at the warehouse of Joypurhat Sugar Mill as the product of last three crushing seasons are mostly unsold.

# Lalmonirhat farmers grow chemical-free vegetables

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Farmers of 10 villages under Lalmonirhat Sadar, Aditmari and Kaliganj upazilas are growing chemical-free vegetables, using vermicompost.

They are getting expected output and are also earning windfall profit after meeting the cultivation costs.

Farmers at Panchagram, Sindurmati, Selimnagar, Mahendranagar, Khedabag villages under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila; Kamlabari, Hajiganj and Palashi villages under Aditmari upazila, and Kakina and Baninagar villages under Kaliganj

upazila; are producing vermicompost with earthworms and cow dung.

Vermicompost producer Basanti Rani, 55, wife of Harish Chandra Roy of Panchagram village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said she purchased 200 earthworms from a local NGO and produced the fertiliser. "I produced 56 kgs of vermicompost with 200 earthworms. I cultivated bottle gourd, cucumber and coriander on 16 decimals of land beside our homestead by using vermicompost this year, and I got expected production," she said.

Mohana Rani Devnath, 45, wife of Narayan

Chandra Devnath in Sindurmati village of the upazila said, "We have been producing chemical-free vegetables, using vermicompost. We are also selling some vegetables in the local market after meeting the family's demand."

Bijo Rani, 44, wife of Krishna Kanto Roy of the same village, said she purchased 430 earthworms and has been producing sufficient vermicompost for farming vegetables on her 35 decimals of land at the village.

Babul Chandra Roy, 35, a farmer at Panchagram village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said chemical-free vegetables are in

high demand at the village, and locals purchase the vegetables at higher prices.

Shyamol Chandra Barmon, 50, of Sindurmati village said he cultivated red leafy, bottle gourd, carrot, snake gourd and napa shak on 40 decimals of land by using vermicompost. He doesn't go to the local market for selling the vegetables as villagers come to his home to purchase them giving high prices, he said.

If all the farmers grow chemical-free vegetables by using vermicompost in their lands, it will meet people's demand for chemical-free foods.

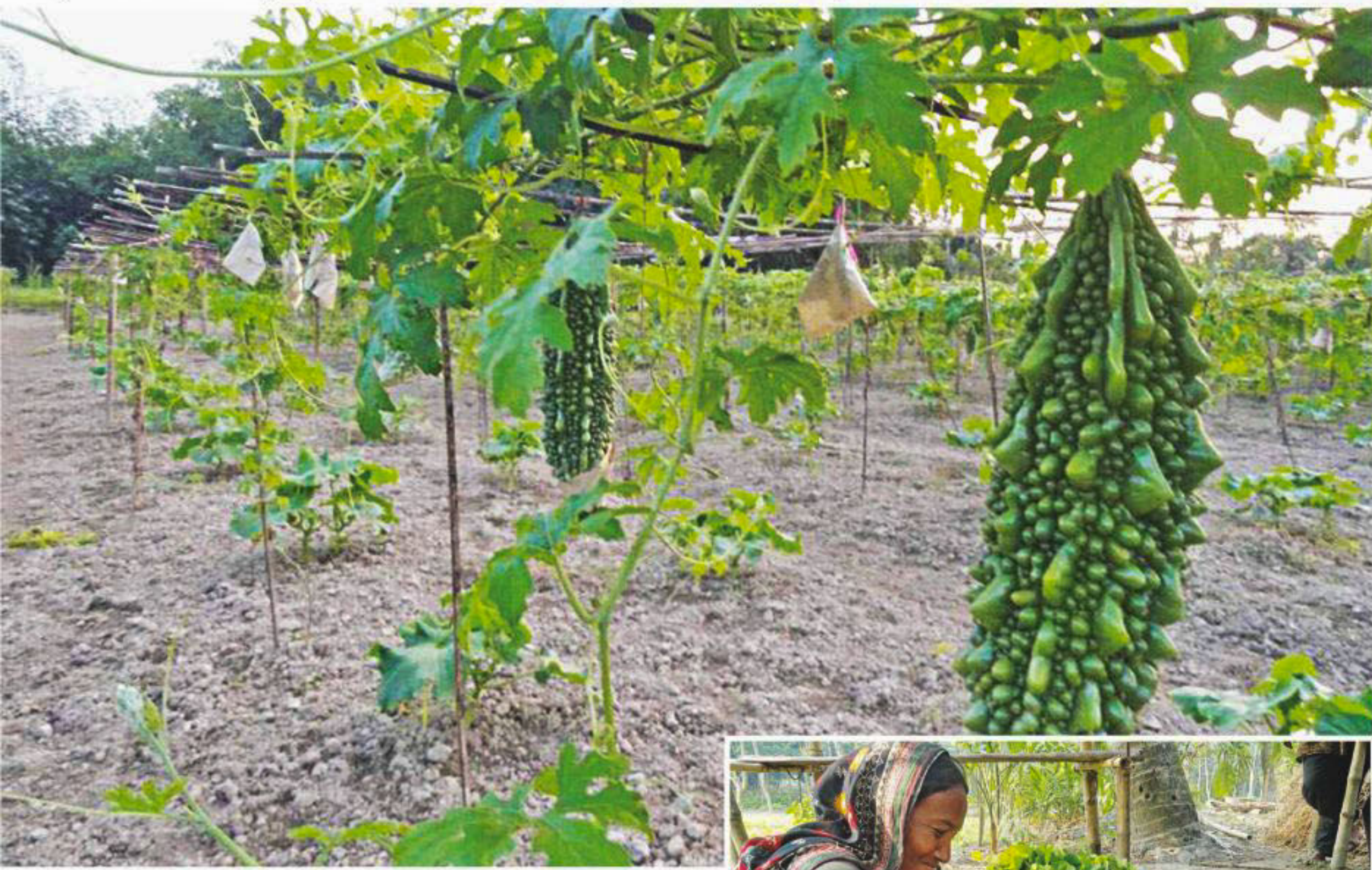


PHOTO: STAR

Bitter gourd grown at a garden of Panchagram village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, using vermicompost. Inset, a woman prepares the environment-friendly non-chemical fertiliser at Sindurmati village in the same upazila.



# AL leader hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

An Awami League (AL) leader was killed by unidentified miscreants at Balaishpur village under Laxmipur Sadar upazila on Tuesday night.

The deceased was identified as Mafij Ullah, 57, joint general secretary of Bashikpur union unit of the ruling party.

Police and locals said an unknown gang waylaid Mafij while he was returning home at the village from a local market at around 9:30pm.

The gang hacked him with sharp weapons and slit the throat. He died instantly.

Being informed, police rushed to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Laxmipur Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

None was arrested in connection with the murder as of 5:00pm yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Workers on Saturday fell a mango tree that died of dieback disease at Court Bagan of Chapainawabganj town a few days ago. Seventeen other mango trees at the same orchard also died of the disease that has spread in several orchards of different areas in the district during this season.

# Three get life for killing schoolboy

UNB, Netrakona

A Netrakona court yesterday sentenced three people to life imprisonment for killing a schoolboy in Kalmakanda upazila in 1998.

The lifers are Jewel Bhoomik, son of Nilkamal Bhoomik of Dattakhila village, Maloy Dutta, son of Manindra Dutta, and Maloy's mother Suniti Rani Dutta of Nagargati village in the upazila.

Of the convicts, Jewel Bhoomik was tried in absentia. The court also fined the trio Tk 20,000 each. In default, they are to suffer two years more in prison.

The court also acquitted three other accused as charges brought against them could not be proved.

According to the prosecution, the trio killed Pritish Kumar Chakraborty, son of Jatish Chakraborty of Boroinda village in Kalmakanda upazila, at Nagargati village on August 11, 1998 over previous enmity. Pritish was staying at his maternal uncle's house.

A case was filed with the police station concerned, accusing six people the following day.

After examining the witnesses and case record, Additional District and Sessions Judge Abdul Hamid handed down the verdict.

# Youth returns from Indian prison

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A Bangladeshi national returned home on Tuesday through Burimari border in Patgram upazila of the district after serving 26 months in an Indian jail.

Indian police handed him over to Burimari immigration police in presence of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

The returnee is Mohanta Roy, 24, son of Jhantu Roy of Nawdabash village under Hatibandha upazila of the district.

Police and BGB sources said BSF arrested Mohanta while he was entering India illegally through Doikhawa border of Hatibandha upazila 26 months ago.

When asked why he had gone to India, Mohanta said he went to look for a job in Delhi where many Bangladeshis work at brick fields and the construction sites.

# Jamaat leader arrested

UNB, Rajshahi

Police arrested a local Jamaat leader at Baneshwar in Puthia upazila on Tuesday.

The arrestee is Mostafa Jalal, ameer of the district unit of Jamaat.

He was arrested on charge of carrying out subversive activities in the area, said police.

# Dieback disease worries mango growers in Chapainawabganj

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

Hundreds of mango trees in the district have been affected by dieback disease, locally known as aga mora, much to the worry of growers in the area famous for producing a variety of quality mangoes.

At least 17 trees that died of the disease were removed from the orchard of the district administration at Court Bagan in Chapainawabganj town recently.

The disease usually affects trees from the tip and spreads downward, causing cracks on the infected stem and numerous pycnidia are formed on dead twigs.

Twigs die, giving a scorched appearance to the limb.

The young green twigs start withering first at the base and then extend upwards along the veins of leaf edges, said scientists of

Regional Horticulture Research Station in Chapainawabganj.

The affected leaf turns brown and its edges roll upwards. Leaves scorch and fall, leaving a dead branch.

In severe condition, branches dry one after another and the whole tree dies eventually.

It is a fungal disease caused by lasiodiplodia-theobromae, scientists said after observing the affected trees at different places in the district.

The disease, which normally spreads from November to March, has affected quite a few orchards in the district, causing death even to old trees.

If the disease could be detected at initial stages, the trees could be saved by using Bordeaux paste, said Dr Shorof Uddin, a senior scientific officer of the research station.

"The pathogen can live on dead wood and bark of

dead trees and twigs where the spores are released by air and spread to healthy trees. Spread of the disease can be checked by removing dead trees," he said.

Regular monitoring and integrated pest and disease management techniques can help reduce loss of mango yield, he added.

Mango is the most important cash crop in Chapainawabganj that produces nearly 350 varieties of the delicious summer fruit, said sources at Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) and Regional Horticulture Research Station.

Some of the well-known commercially grown varieties are gopalbhog, khirsapat (himsagar), fazli, langra, lakkhanbhog, and ashwina.

Last year, 2.30 lakh tonnes of mango was produced from 18.50 lakh trees on 24,250 hectares of land in the district, DAE sources said.



PHOTO: STAR

Large chunks of concrete scattered just in front of Zero Point of Kuakata sea beach poses risk to visitors, especially while taking bath during the high tide that submerged the area, making the chunks invisible.

# Remains of building cause trouble for Kuakata tourists

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Remains of a damaged building create problem for tourists walking or taking bath in picturesque Kuakata sea beach.

People often get hurt while bathing as the chunks of concrete go under water during the high tide.

A bio-gas plant cum rest house owned by Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in the beach area got damaged during the onslaught of super cyclone Sidr in 2007, said locals.

Later LGED sold the

damaged building in auction.

But large chunks of concrete remained scattered as the boundary wall of the building had totally collapsed and got covered by sand.

Remains of the boundary wall recently emerged, creating problems for tourists walking or taking bath there during the high tide.

"While taking bath in the beach during the high tide, I got injured," said Azmal Hossain, a tourist from Khulna.

The sea beach should be

kept neat and clean considering the interest of a large number of tourists from home and abroad, said Aman Ullah, another tourist from Dhaka.

Akash, a trader in Kuakata, said they put red flags marking the materials in the beach to warn the tourists.

When contacted, Kalapara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Jahangir Hossain, also chairman of Kuakata beach management committee, said they are taking steps to remove the scattered concrete chunks from the beach.