

The largest nursery of Jhenidah gains popularity



Workers busy taking care of plant varieties at Shah Nursery, the largest and most resourceful nursery of Jhenidah by the side of the Naboganga river. (Inset) Dr. Shaiful Islam, the man behind Shah Nursery and the President of National Nursery Society (NNS)

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Shah Nursery, the largest and the most resourceful nursery of Jhenidah by the side of the Naboganga river attracts the nursery owners, agriculture firms and tree lovers of Bangladesh. Md. Dr. Shaiful Islam, son of Adv. Golam Mozid of Sharabaria village under sadar upazila established this nursery in 2007 at the cost of Tk 2.15 lakh on 4.57 decimals of land. At present he is the president of Bangladesh Nursery Samity. He visited around 40 countries in his pursuit to collect rare species of trees. Shah Nursery is playing a vital role in producing quality plants from mother trees and supplying them to many parts of Bangladesh.

Dr. Shaiful Islam has nurtured his childhood love and hobby for trees and has eventually created this massive nursery on nearly 5 acres of land at Mothurapur village of Kannadah union in Harinakundu upazila. He brought mother trees from BARI, Bangladesh Agriculture University Mymensingh (BAU) and some horticulture centres and tested the fruits of the mother trees in his own nursery. Then he began to distribute

them. "There are around 50 species of mother fruit trees, 50 species of fruit plants, 100 species of flower bearing plants, 24 species of woody plants and about 100 species of medicinal plants in the nursery now," said Shariful Islam, Manager of Shah Nursery. Five workers take care of the nursery, of them, one is the manager, one caretaker, one waterman and two night guards.

Dr. Rahim, a teacher of BAU, visits the nursery every three months and supervises the activities there. Plants of various species from the Shah Nursery are sold every year around the country; many government officials also take plants from the nursery, sources said.

Shaiful, who completed his PhD in Horticulture Nursery Management from USA is also the President of National Nursery Society (NNS) comprising of 15,000 owners of nurseries across the country. He is also a member of the standing committee of National Technology Project (NATP) of the World Bank in Bangladesh. Mr. Islam said they had supplied quality plants to nearly 150

nurseries in Bangladesh over the years. The Swiss government is providing the NNS with funds, and they are expecting to get financial assistance from the Netherlands government very soon as well. Shaiful mentioned that there is no separate ministry of horticulture, or a university of horticulture in our country while in India, there is a separate ministry for horticulture. "In other countries, lemon orchards are made on hills, and I wish to buy lands on the hills and make a big lemon garden there," he said. Shaiful has a plan to establish a private agriculture university near his nursery in the future.

An elderly man, Siraj Uddin Mondol of Sharabaria village said that Dr. Shaiful Islam is concerned about the betterment of the local people. Hundreds of traders throng at the nursery during the rainy season to collect fruit saplings. The nursery is famous and enriched in a variety of saplings. The sales of the nursery was about 14 lakh taka in 2014. The nursery often distributes plants to the needy and underprivileged people every year for free.

Oracle Students' Library in Kurigram

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

The Oracle Students' Library in Araj Palashbari village of Halokhana union under Sadarupazila of Kurigram has been making a difference in the lives of students. Students involved with the library are conducting various social activities besides their studies, such as collecting books for the library, teaching dropout students, providing coaching for local students, developing computer skills, tree plantation and creating a platform for resisting early marriage in the community.

Eight students led by Mojahedul Islam, who is now a Senior Officer of Sonali Bank Ltd, set up the library called 'Oracle Students' Library' with some books in Mojahedul's house in 2000 at Araj Palashbari village. In the beginning, about ten students who had passed their SSC started to frequent the library. They conducted reading sessions and free coaching for school students at the library. Student Jahangir Alom, who is a now Warrant Officer of Bangladesh Army, played the main role of organising local students.

As the number of students of the library increased, the people behind the library constructed a two-storied tin-shed house beside Tapurchar Government Primary School at Araj Palashbari village in October 2008. To create a pleasant learning atmosphere, they have made a garden

around the library.

There are over 400 books of various types including study books, story books, books on computers, books on general knowledge, books on freedom fighters and biography of noble men at the library. The books were collected from ex-students and local people. The ex-students have been providing four newspapers including the Daily Prothom Alo and the Daily Ittefaq for over six years. Now, over 120 students, including 55 girls, visit the library regularly. The library is open from 6 am to 8 pm everyday and about 60 to 80 students study there every day. There are classes for local students in two shifts, first from 6 am to 8 am and then from 4 pm to 5:30 pm every day. Ten senior students, including four girls, teach the classes without any financial gain.

To beautify Halokhana union, the students planted over 2,000 plants of Krisnachura tree in all wards of Halokhana union since 2008, but only about 450 of the ones planted are alive. Shahida Akhtar, a reader of the library and BA (honours) student of Kurigram Government College, said, "We are facing a shortage of chairs, tables, book-shelves, books and accommodation for the library now that we have so many readers. We (girl students) have no scope of studying in the government public library of Kurigram town. At least 15

girl students of Araj Palashbari, Tapurchar, Subharkuthi and Char Subharkuthi villages of the union study in the library. We are in need of help with books and furniture for the library."

"A non-resident Bangladeshi Anwarul Islam Bakshi who lives in Australia donated two computer sets to the library in October 2013 when he visited. The students take training on basic computer skills at the Halokhana Union Digital Centre accordingly and learn in groups between 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm every day," said Jahangir Alom, General Secretary of the library.

"Halokana union is a poor area in Kurigram district. We have been able to conduct the library's activities because we are fortunate enough to receive volunteers who offer their services for free for the betterment of the community. Our main aim is to establish Halokhana as an ideal and educated union. We hope many others are inspired by our model and establish libraries like Oracle Students' Library in other rural areas of the country," said Saiful Islam, President of the library. "We need more books and furniture, but we do not receive money directly from donors for library activities. We need agriculture-based books and journals – we get a lot of requests from people who come to read newspapers and books every day," said Saiful.



PHOTO: STAR

Students studying at the Oracle Student's Library in Araj Palashbari village of Halokhana union at Kurigram



PHOTO: STAR

A huge quantity of pineapple is on sale at Srimangal town in Moulvibazar district as the area sees bumper yield of the popular fruit this season.

Bumper pineapple harvest in Srimangal

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Indigenous farmers have achieved bumper production of pineapple at 30 villages in Srimangal upazila of the district this season.

Locals said the juicy and delicious fruit has been growing abundantly since long in the area, which is known as 'pineapple village.'

Growers said they have been cultivating different kinds of fruits, including pineapple, at Tipracherra, Jerin, Harincherra, Biddabeel, Alubari, Kalacherra, Fulcherra, Longlia, Modonmohonpur,

Sisilbar, Kanlenji villages since Pakistan period.

Growers did not make profit out of pineapple cultivation at that time. The situation has changed now and farmers are cultivating it on a large scale and in a planned way. Locally grown pineapple has a great demand outside the district, they said.

About 300 hectares of land of around 2,000 farmers have been brought under pineapple farming this year. The village has about 30 orchards where four lakh pineapple plants were grown, said locals.

MohanDebborma, a pineapple cultivator, said

his late father had started cultivation of different fruits, mostly pineapple, on 300 bighas of land in 1965. "I sold pineapples worth about Tk two lakh this season," he said.

Another cultivator, Dilip Nayek, said he cultivated about 2,500 pineapple plants on his three bighas of land this year. He said he was happy as the production is satisfactory. Local sources said that traders from outside the district are coming to the village everyday to buy pineapple.

At present, pineapple is being sold between Tk 2,300 and Tk 3,000 per

100-piece in the wholesale market in Srimangal Pura Bazaar.

Contacted, Srimangal upazila agriculture officer Sukolpo Das said pineapple has been cultivated on a large scale at 30 villages in the upazila since long. Four thousand tons were produced this season, he added.

Though small in size, the locally produced pineapple is very tasty he said, adding that the Department of Agriculture Extension provided necessary assistance to the growers to make pineapple cultivation a success.

4 die after inhaling toxic gas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Four people died after inhaling poisonous gas inside a septic tank of a house in Goali village of Naogaon Sadar upazila yesterday.

The dead are Raton Islam, 32, of Raghunathpur village, Imtiaz Hossain, 22, Babu Hossain, 30, and Dilbar Rahman, 45, of Goali-Madhyapara village.

The accident happened around round 6:30am when Raton, a local construction worker, went inside a newly-built septic tank of a one-storey building, said Zakirul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sadar Model Police Station.

The house belongs to Taijuddin.

Suddenly, Raton stopped responding to Imtiaz, who was standing near the tank. Imtiaz too went inside the structure to rescue Raton but both fell sick, said the police officer, quoting witnesses. Later, Babu and Dilbar, Imtiaz's neighbours, entered the tank but stopped responding to those outside.

Later, locals broke the tank and found Raton dead and the others unconscious.

The injured were rushed to Naogaon Sadar Hospital where doctors declared them dead, said the OC.

4 die after inhaling toxic gas

2 kids drown in pond

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

Two siblings drowned in a pond in Nauapara village under Shailakupa upazila of the district on Monday.

The kids, Riti Khatun, 8, and Nirob Hossain, 4, are children of Sajib Hossain of Nadpara village in the upazila.

Locals said Riti and Nirob came to their grandfather's house a few days back. They were playing by the side of a pond and suddenly fell into it.

Relatives found the duo floating in the pond at around 4:30pm. They were taken to Shailakupa Upazila Health Complex where the doctors declared them dead.

Teesta devours homesteads, croplands in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

With recession of floodwater, erosion by the Teesta River took a serious turn in the last three days, devouring over 100 homesteads and a vast tract of croplands at 15 villages in Hatibandha, Kaliganj and Aditmari upazilas of the district.

The affected villages are Talermor, Dhubni, Gaddimari, Sindurna, Dawabari, Doyani, Haldibari, Bichhandoi and Char Dhubni of Hatibandha upazila, Bhotmari, Sholmari and Kalikapur of Kaliganj upazila; Kutirpar, Balapara and Gobordhan of Aditmari upazila.

At least 110 homesteads, 10 fruit orchards, four bamboo clusters, 200 bighas of farmland and a road have been eroded by the river during the period, said local Water Development Board (WDB) sources.

Abu Nur Hossain of Talermor village in Hatibandha upazila said, with recession of floodwater, the river devoured Barakhata-Hatibandha bypass road.

"We the villagers are trying to protect the road from the erosion by building bamboo piling," he said.

Delwar Hossain, an affected villager of Char Dhubni, said at least 20 families in the area have been rendered homeless due to the erosion.

Lalmonirhat WDB Sub-Divisional Engineer Al Mamun said they have already taken steps to thwart the erosion.

In Mymensingh, erosion by the Old Brahmaputra River devoured hundreds of homesteads and a vast tract of croplands at 20 villages in Sadar and Gouripur upazilas of the district in the last few days, reports our correspondent.

The affected areas include Char Nilaxia, Char Bhabakhali, Bhatipara, Bhangnamari, Gazariapara, Kashiar Char, Morichar, Namapara, Taanpara and Bottola Bazar, said the erosion-hit people.



PHOTO: STAR

Villagers build an embankment with bamboo piling to save Barakata bypass from erosion by the Teesta River in Hatibandha upazila of Lalmonirhat district. The photo was taken on Monday.