



An orchard of dragon fruits in Rajarampur of Dinajpur. Even though the fruit is widely grown in Southeast Asia, the production of the fruit has recently been introduced in Bangladesh with the northern region taking the lead. Inset, a dragon fruit.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

## Dragon fruits

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saplings in 2013 and early 2014. Six more farmers followed suit in late 2014 and early 2015. Of them, 14 farmers are from Dinajpur, four from Panchagarh, two from Thakurgaon and one from Nilphamari.

Each farmer has planted 80 saplings on their land alongside other crops.

Visiting dragon fruit orchards in Dinajpur early this month, this correspondent found the trees planted in 2013 and early 2014 started flowering.

To maintain the upright growth of the plants, farmers used concrete columns for their support. Each immature plant stems are tied to these columns. And, a circular metal frame is installed over the columns for a balanced growth.

Farmers said the saplings must be planted on an open field so that they can get direct sunlight.

Each plant can continue to bear fruits for 20 years, said horticulturists in Dinajpur.

Farmer Babul Chandra Roy of Sheikhpura village under Dinajpur Sadar upazila said he planted 80 saplings in mid 2014 and one of his plants started yielding fruit this year. "I hope the fruit will be popular in Bangladesh," he added.

Imrul Ahsan, deputy director of

Horticulture Centre in Dinajpur, said dragon fruit is healthy and nutritious. It strengthens the immune system and is used in the treatment of diabetes. Medicine made from its flower and stem improves blood circulation.

The potential of dragon fruit is bright in Bangladesh as it has a high price in countries like Thailand, Sri Lanka and Vietnam, he said, adding that it can be sold for Tk 400 a kg in Bangladesh.

The plant starts yielding fruit between May and November each year, and the fruit can also be preserved for at least two months. It is no wonder that dragon fruit is now dubbed as the new money crop, Imrul said.

There are three types of dragon fruits -- all with leathery, slightly leafy skin. They are *Hylocereus undatus*, red-skinned fruit with white flesh; *Hylocereus costaricensis*, red-skinned fruit with red flesh; and *Hylocereus megalanthus*, yellow-skinned fruit with white flesh, the horticulture expert said, adding that all three types can be grown in Bangladesh.

According to horticulturists, the fruit offers numerous nutrients, including Vitamin C, phosphorus, calcium, fibre and antioxidants. It helps control diabetes and lowers cholesterol. The fruit also helps prevent asthma and arthritis, they claim.

## 'Biggest' haul of narcotics on border

### BSF seizes 10kg cocaine on truck from Bangladesh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Border Security Force on Wednesday seized 10 kg cocaine worth Rs 40 crore from an incoming truck along the Petrapole check post in West Bengal.

Officials said this was the biggest ever seizure of drugs along the India-Bangladesh border in terms of monetary value.

The incident took place along the check post in Uttar Chhabis Parganas of West Bengal when a BSF team conducted a special operation there based on some inputs.

Officials yesterday said a truck with a West Bengal registration number was intercepted as soon as it crossed into

India from Bangladesh in the evening and a bag containing 10 kgs of suspected narcotics was identified and seized.

They said the BSF members subsequently alerted anti-narcotics sleuths who confirmed the seized item to be cocaine.

This is the biggest haul of drugs in terms of monetary value at this border. The estimated cost of the cache is Rs 40 crore as cocaine of this grade sells Rs 4 crore a kg in the international market, added the officials.

The seized contraband was handed over to Narcotics Control Bureau sleuths who also arrested trucker S Shil, 22, under anti-narcotics laws.

## 4 jailed, 23 detained

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studies faculty admission test on October 16.

The Chinese-made device looks like a regular credit card but works like a mobile phone and a tiny wireless ball-like earphone sets one up for two-way communication. One just needs to put the tiny ball inserted in the ear and the device in the shirt pocket or wallet, said DU Prof Mizanur Rahman, who was an invigilator of the exam hall.

Shanto claimed that he had got it from Farhad Mahmud, a final year student of information technology department of the DU. They two had cut a deal in which Farhad was supposed to provide answers to the admission questions through the device and in exchange, Shanto would pay him Tk 5 lakh.

The DU authorities searched Room 608 of Amar Ekushey Hall on the campus where Farhad lives. However, he had already gone into hiding.

A mobile court led by Executive Magistrate Mousumi Mahub jailed Shanto for two years.

During the "A" unit entry test of the JnU that started at 3:00pm, admission seeker Abdur Rahman Majumder was caught for using the same credit-card-like device. Based on his information, the university authorities held his accomplice Kafil Uddin Mahmud from outside the campus.

Another candidate, Masudur Rahman, was arrested for using the device at Dhaka City College centre during the test.

The three were awarded with two years' imprisonment by a mobile court led by Executive Magistrate Nazma Nahar.

About an hour before the JnU admission test, two youths were caught in front of the DU Central Mosque while they were negotiating a deal over leaking the question paper, said DU Proctor AM Amzad.

One of them, identified as Malek Sheikh, is an undergraduate student of psychology at Dhaka College and, according to the proctor, is a member of a syndicate that

leaks question papers for selling them to admission seekers.

The other was a girl, a JnU admission candidate, said she was asked by a teacher of a coaching centre to contact Malek for JnU's "A" unit questions and the answers.

While they were confined at the proctor's office, Malek received a number of text messages containing questions and answers on his mobile phone around 3:00pm when the JnU admission test started, this correspondent witnessed.

Malek claimed the messages sent by Kazi Kaushik, a former ruling party student leader of Dhaka College. He was later handed over to the police while the girl was released.

On Thursday night, detectives detained 12 people including some admission aspirants for their alleged involvement in adopting "unlawful means" to secure entry to the DU.

The law enforcers first caught Zubair Hossain, who passed the HSC from Residential Model College in the capital. He gathered 20 other candidates like him at Tejturi Bazar and was planning to go to a mess in Nakhal Para to meet a fraud gang, said DU Proctor AM Amzad.

The fraudsters had made promises to get the candidates admitted to the DU through some "shady way", he said.

On Zubair's information, detectives later detained 12 people from different places in the capital.

Another 10 people were held from different areas of Old Dhaka yesterday morning for their alleged involvement in selling fake question papers and striking deals to get candidates admitted to the JnU and Jahangirnagar University through illegal means, said Deputy Commissioner (Media) Muntasirul Islam of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Legal actions against them were underway, he said.

A total of 71,350 candidates vied for 1,660 seats in different science departments of the DU while 57,703 students sat for 760 seats of the JnU this year.

## Fencing at JS draws flak

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"But the fence now being installed is not approved by the committee," he said.

Air Commodore (retd) Ishfaq Ilahi Choudhury, a leading security analyst, said such a fence would at best prevent stray animals from entering and would not guarantee any protection against threats.

The fortress-like Sangsad Bhaban itself is secured by design, he said, adding that there were modern devices and means to ensure security as well. The US Capitol Hill complex is always open to the public, who stroll and relax in the adjoining lawns, yet the US parliament is strongly protected.

The people should be allowed to enjoy the open space of the south plaza and the lawns of Sangsad Bhaban and a physical barrier would only keep them away.

Brig Gen (retd) Shahedul Anam Khan, another leading security expert, said it was a ridiculous idea.

Security threats with vehicles could be stopped with hidden

spike strips, blocks and other means without hurting the architectural beauty of the Sangsad, he said.

IAB President Sayeed said it was not comprehensible how such a concrete wall could provide security when the proposed metro rail would go through 200 feet inside the eastern lawn of the parliament complex and when two access roads to the parliament already exist.

The move was inconsistent with the national demand for declaring the Sangsad Bhaban a world heritage site, he said, adding that the sprawling lawns on the east and west and the south plaza must remain open to public as per the master plan of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban.

World famous architect Louis I Kahn designed the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, built on 200 acres of land, which is a part of an 800-acre citadel of 1600-acre capitol complex in Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, said leading architects.

Eminent architect Shamsul Wares said the parliament is a priceless epic masterpiece of architecture and one of the world's best works of all times, considering the use of space,

form, light and its proportion.

Such a physical barrier was not advised in the original design and does not guarantee prevention of any attack, he said, adding that in today's world security was ensured by intelligence and high-tech devices, like surveillance through CCTV and powerful sensors.

"The government's position in this regard is inconsistent, as on the one hand it says that the Bangladesh Secretariat would be built in the parliament complex as per the original design of Louis I Kahn but at the same time it is building such a fence violating the design."

The security concerns are already dealt with in Kahn's original design. For example, the security tunnel in the north plaza was to ensure safe entrance of VIPs, he said.

In the original design, Sangsad Bhaban south plaza is a symbol of democratic space for the people's connection with their elected representatives, he said.

But such a physical barrier would keep people away from the parliament and it would virtually

disassociate them from the foremost democratic institution, he said.

Kahn's master plan for the citadel of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar capitol complex has so far been grossly infringed on thrice -- with the building of residences for speaker and deputy speaker, the mazar of former president Ziaur Rahman, and Bangabandhu International Conference Centre, he said.

Selim Khan, relevant executive engineer of Public Works Department, who has just been promoted to superintendent engineer, said they were implementing the Tk 9.5 crore project. The entire western lawn had already been fenced off and work was ongoing at the north plaza.

Pranab Chakraborty, additional secretary to inter parliamentary affairs and security at the Parliament Secretariat, said it was a "primary security fencing" to prevent any trespassing, particularly during the night and when parliament was in session.

He, however, claimed that the design of the present fence was endorsed by the Nagar Unnayan Committee.

## Shut cargo vessel route

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for vessel operation," Saidul told The Daily Star.

MV GR Raj, on its way to Jessore with 510 tonnes of coal, sank in the Shela river, a sanctuary for globally endangered dolphins in the Sundarbans, on October 27.

The committee, led by Belayet Hossain, assistant conservator of forest in Chandpai range of East Sundarbans, was formed on Wednesday. Gazi Abdul Mannan and Gazi Matiur Rahman were the other members of the committee.

It noted that cargo vessel Raj was "old and unfit" and incapable of carrying a 510-tonne load. It also identified incompetency and negligence on the part of the vessel's cargo master as the cause of sinking.

Though the master noticed a crack developing at the bottom of the cargo, he did not take any cautionary measures, the committee said.

Saidul said the probe committee recommended that the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and Mongla Port authorities should regularly check fitness certificate of vessels plying the international route through the Pasur river.

The forest department filed a case with Mongla Police Station against the vessel owner and the master, seeking Tk one crore as compensation for the damages to the ecosystem of the mangrove forest, the home to endangered Bengal tigers.

Police arrested the vessel's master Bulu Kazi.

## BCL men make headline

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PHOTOS of question papers during the exam, said witnesses.

In Pabna, a candidate for the job was sentenced to two years' imprisonment for cheating in the exam using a mobile phone.

Besides, 104 applicants were expelled and fined for resorting to fraudulent means at various exam centres in Bogra.

Quoting court sources, our Barisal correspondent reported that Rizvi Ahmed and other leaders and activists of BCL allegedly entered the test centre at Government Barisal College and started to distribute answers to questions among other BCL activists during the 1-hour examination from 10:00am.

As police asked them to leave, the BCL men got involved in an altercation with the law enforcers.

After ADC Kazi Hosne Ara Begum arrived there, Al-Mamun, president of the college BCL unit, reportedly misbehaved with her, prompting Rab and police members to chase the Chhatra League men away, added the sources.

Rizvi was arrested during the time. He was sent to Barisal jail after being sentenced to one month's in jail by a mobile court.

Contacted, Suman Sernibat, president of Barisal Chhatra League, told The Daily Star Rizvi had gone to the test centre "just to meet some teachers after the examinations."

**CHITTAGONG**  
During the recruitment test, some members of Chittagong Government City College Chhatra League allegedly entered the exam centre at the college and tried to take photos of the question papers, said witnesses.

The invigilators, however, instantly informed Saiful Islam, on-duty magistrate of Chittagong district administration, of the matter, reports our staff correspondent there.

The magistrate seized the mobile phone of Noman Chowdhury, vice-president of the BCL unit, and informed it to the deputy commissioner (DC) of Chittagong.

The youths left the spot immediately as additional members of police and Rapid Action Battalion rushed there, added witnesses.

The youths along with some 20 others came back to the college again after the test and got involved in an altercation with the magistrate and law enforcers.

The situation became normal after Abdul Hamid, principal of the college, and Mejbah Uddin, the DC, went to

the scene and intervened.

Authorities, however, did not make any comment on the issue.

Noman could not be reached for comments. Mohammad Imtiaz, president of the BCL unit, said he was not aware of the incident. "I did not go to college as it was a holiday," he said.

**PABNA**  
A mobile court sentenced Abu Sayed, 27, to two years' imprisonment for cheating in the recruitment exam yesterday.

Abdullah Al Hasan, officer-in-charge of Pabna Sadar Police Station, said teachers at the test centre of Government Women College found a mobile phone in Sayed's possession during the test.

"The mobile phone had answers to 80 percent of the questions," claimed the OC, adding that the applicant was handed over to the mobile court after the exam ended.

**BOGRA**  
In Bogra, 104 applicants were expelled and fined Tk 500 each at various test centres on charges of cheating.

Officials at the district administration said the on-duty magistrates caught them red handed while they were using mobile phones during the examinations.

## Vienna meet could lead to wider Saudi-Iran talks: UN

AFP, Dubai

Iran's first-ever participation in international talks on Syria could lead to wider negotiations between arch-rivals Tehran and Riyadh on the conflicts in Yemen and Iraq, a UN official said.

"I strongly believe that at sometime there must be direct dialogue between Gulf countries, mainly Saudi Arabia and Iran," said the UN special envoy to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

"They are neighbours and they have every reason to agree," he said in a telephone interview with AFP, asked about the prospects of wider talks encompassing conflicts in Yemen and Iraq.

He was talking as top diplomats from 17 countries, as well as the United Nations and European Union, began talks yesterday in Vienna seeking a political path out of Syria's four-year-old conflict.

Iran, a longtime backer of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, is taking part for the first time in such talks, months after it struck a landmark nuclear deal with world powers.

The UN diplomat said Iran "will open up economically and will need a large market like the Gulf" under the July deal curbing Tehran's nuclear programme in exchange for a lifting of sanctions.

Confessional disputes between Shia-dominated Iran and Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia "appear exaggerated," said Ould Cheikh Ahmed.

The two Gulf heavyweight are at odds in various regional conflicts.

In Syria, Saudi Arabia supports the rebels fighting Assad, who has financial and military support from Tehran, while in Yemen, Riyadh has led a military campaign against Iran-backed Shia Huthi rebels.

## 18 Bangladeshi

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Some 12,500 peacekeepers have been deployed in South Sudan, which has been wracked by conflict since December 2013.