



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers plant tobacco saplings on a land that was earlier used for winter vegetable cultivation as tobacco companies are enticing farmers to grow the item in fresh areas of Lalmonirhat district.

Fresh areas targeted for tobacco cultivation

Companies providing free seeds, fertilisers to encourage Lalmonirhat farmers

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Several companies are encouraging farmers to grow tobacco with free seeds and assurance to purchase it from the fields for fair prices as fresh areas of Kaliganj, Aditmari and Sadar upazilas under the district have been targeted for cultivation of the harmful item this season.

"I have prepared tobacco seedbed on four decimals of land for farming tobacco on three acres of land this year as a tobacco company has given me seeds free of cost. They also assured providing fertilisers for free," said Nazrul Islam, 55, a farmer of Sarpukur village of Aditmari

upazila.

"I and some other farmers of the village have prepared tobacco seedbeds for cultivating it on huge fresh areas this year as a company has given us the hope of getting windfall profit from it," said Shamsul Islam, 60, a farmer at Baninagar village of Kaliganj upazila.

"I grew tobacco on three acres of land last year but I have prepared 10 seedbeds on six decimals of land for cultivating it on six acres of land this year as I want to earn more profit," said Delowar Hossain, 55, a farmer of Karnapur village in Lalmonirhat Sadar.

Sources of different tobacco companies in

Lalmonirhat said around 8,000 targeted farmers in three upazilas of the district cultivated tobacco on 25 thousand acres of land last year and the number of tobacco farmers is likely to increase much this year.

The companies provide cards to the targeted farmers, enabling them to enjoy different facilities, said sources of tobacco companies and farmers.

However, the figures mentioned in the tobacco companies show only one fourth of total tobacco farming lands as a good number of tobacco farmers do not get cards from the companies.

Besides, tobacco compa-

nies only take into account the lands for cultivating Virgin variety, although Jati and Mathiar varieties are also cultivated on huge lands in the district.

Tobacco companies always provide support to encourage farmers to grow tobacco as the soil of Lalmonirhat district is suitable for its cultivation, said a representative of a tobacco company, seeking anonymity.

Admitting the situation of tobacco cultivation in the district, Aditmari Upazila Agriculture Officer Hamidul Haque said, "Agriculture officials often conduct awareness campaign among farmers not to cultivate tobacco on their lands."



PHOTO: STAR

Fish cultivation in net cages set in the Mahananda River in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila is gaining popularity. The photo was taken from Bhagabanpur in the upazila on Friday.

SADAR UPAZILA OF C'NAWABGANJ

Fish farming in cages a boon for many farmers

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

Fish cultivation in cages has come as a boon for many farmers, especially those living near open water bodies in Sadar upazila under the district.

Some enthusiastic youths are engaged in cultivating monosex tilapia in cages in the Mahananda River adjacent to Namorajapur, Namorajapur, Police Line, BGB Camp, Shaheber Ghat, Bhogobanpur and Horipur area in Sadar upazila.

Now over 170 floating cages in the river are used for tilapia cultivation as it is profitable due to low pro-

duction cost and easy farming method.

"In 2010, seeing a newspaper write-up about fish farming in cages, I decided to be a fish farmer. I took Tk 15,000 as loan from an NGO and started fish farming in ten cages along with my seven friends the same year," said Humayun Kabir, 26, of Bhogobanpur village in Sadar upazila, who earlier worked as a mason.

"Each cage, costing Tk 5,000, lasts for years. We invested more Tk 12,000 to 13,000 per cage in a couple of months.

"Later we started fish farming individually. Now I have 15 cages in the

Mohananda River, near my house. I earned handsome money after selling fish in last few years," he said.

Shahidul Islam Mithun, 35, of the same area, invested Tk 3.5 lakh for cultivating fish in 35 cages and he makes a profit of around Tk 3 lakh after every three months.

"Seeing our success, many youths are taking to fish farming in cages," he said.

Fish cultivation in 20 cages can easily earn a farmer Tk 40,000 to 50,000 per month, said Alamgir Hossain, a farmer of Namogachhi Moholla in Chapainawabganj munic-

ipality.

Wives and other family members often help in the work, serving feed in the cages and taking care, said the farmers.

"Tilapia cultivation in cages requires a small investment and effort but brings good profit. We give required suggestion to the farmers for cultivating fish in cages," said Dr Aminul Ehsan, fisheries officer of Sadar upazila.

The cage cultivation method produced 18 tonnes of fish in 2013 and 74 tonnes in 2014 while the expected output this year is at least 150 tonnes of fish, he said.

MP Liton's bail further extended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A court here yesterday further extended interim bail of Manjurul Islam Liton, ruling party lawmaker from Gaibandha-1 constituency, till January 17 in a case for shooting a school kid of Sundarganj upazila in the district.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Muniruzzaman Sikder passed the order when Liton appeared before the court with a petition seeking permanent bail of the accused, said his lawyer Sirajul Islam Babu.

Prior to last parliament session, the lawmaker was in jail for 24 days and released on November 8 to allow him to join the session. The judge granted interim bail in favour of him until the prorogation of the parliament session.

On November 24, the same court granted interim bail until December 8 to Liton when his lawyer filed a petition, seeking permanent bail for him.

On October 2, the lawmaker allegedly shot a school kid, Sourav, for no reason from his car while returning home from Sundarganj. Liton went into hiding soon after the incident.

The incident took place when Sourav was walking with his uncle at Gopalcharon village. The boy sustained bullet injuries in both legs.

The following day, the victim's father filed an attempted murder case against Liton.

Law enforcers arrested the lawmaker from his sister's house at Uttara in Dhaka on October 14 and handed him over to Gaibandha police the following day.

Later, he was produced before a court that sent him to jail, rejecting his bail prayer.

Man injured in cellphone explosion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

An employee of a medicine shop sustained burn injuries as his cellphone blasted suddenly in Saidpur municipality area of the district yesterday afternoon.

The victim is Akbar Ali, 25, son of Hazrat Ali of Neamotpur Adani area in the municipality.

He worked at Smrity Medical Store at Saidpur Plaza Supermarket on Sher-e-Bangla Road in the area.

Locals said when Akbar was busy selling medicine at the shop, the cellphone kept his right pocket blasted with a big bang, causing panic among the shop owners at the market.

Akbar was later rushed to Saidpur 100-bed Hospital with burn injuries.

The lower portion of Akbar's body was burnt severely, said Abdur Rahim, resident medical officer of the hospital.

Nine drug peddlers jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sherpur

A mobile court in separate drives yesterday sentenced nine people to different jail terms for keeping illegal drugs in the town.

The convicts are Rubina Begum, 45, and Rakibul Islam, 25, of Barakpara area, Md Helal, 18, Sujon Mia, 20, of Chawkpathak, Jamal Hossain, 57, Billal Hossain, 25, and Balam Mia, 25, of Paschimsheri, Ariful Islam, 19, of Chapatoli, and Abdul Awal, 70, of Khunuacharpara of the town.

Of them, Rubina and Rakibul were sentenced to two years' imprisonment and the others to six months.

SHAHEED M MANSUR ALI COLLEGE OF PABNA Suspended principal asked to return Tk 66.70 lakh embezzled from college

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education has asked a suspended principal of Shaheed M Mansur Ali College in Pabna to refund Tk 66.70 lakh that he had embezzled from the college fund.

Md Helal Uddin, assistant directorate of the directorate, issued a notice on December 2, asking former principal Md Abdul Mannan to deposit the embezzled amount to the college fund.

"Both local and revenue audits of the college found that former principal Md Abdul Mannan illegally deposited Tk 66 lakh 70 thousand and 198 of the college fund to his personal account, causing financial loss to the institution," Helal Uddin stated in an audit report.

On November 10 of 2013, Abdul Mannan was suspended from the post of principal on charge of embezzling huge amount of the college fund through misuse of power, said Md

Saidul Haque Chunnu, president of Shahid M Mansur Ali College governing body.

And finally, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education found the allegation of his corruption true after two audits, said Chunnu, also administrator of Pabna Zila Parishad.

This correspondent tried to contact former principal Md Abdul Mannan through his cell phone but he did not receive the call.



PHOTO: STAR

This brick kiln, illegally set up on a farmland at Khailyan village in Amtali upazila under Barguna district, affects crops of surrounding fields and poses health hazard to the people of nearby areas.

PATUAKHALI, BARGUNA

Brick kilns set up on agricultural land, flouting rules

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Brick kilns have been set up on agricultural land in different areas of Patuakhali and Barguna districts.

According to the Brick Making and Kiln Establishment (Control) Act 2013, nobody can set up a brick kiln on agricultural land, but a section of influential people have done so in the two districts, defying rules.

Golam Faruque set up a brick kiln, named M/s South Brick covering eight acres of agricultural land at Khailyan village beside the Patuakhali-Kukata road under Amtali upazila of Barguna district in 2014.

Abu Hanif, a local farmer, said the brick kiln owner also closed a canal which was a source of water for cultivation. Crops on land

adjacent to the brick kiln are being badly affected, he added.

In Patuakhali Sadar upazila, another brick kiln was set up covering five acres of land at Dharandee village. "I set up the kiln here as the site is beside the river, which is convenient for transportation. I leased the land from local farmers," said Quayyum Ahmed, owner of the kiln.

Abdus Salam, chairman of Kamalapur Union Parishad under the upazila, has also set up a brick kiln occupying agricultural land.

Lincon Bayen, Barisal district coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA), said many people are setting up brick kilns, violating the existing law and also polluting the envi-

ronment. Local administration should take immediate steps to keep the environment free from pollution, he added.

Md Mizanur Rahman, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Amtali upazila in Barguna district, said, "I have nothing to do about setting up of the brick kiln. Only the deputy commissioner's (DC) office can give permission to set up a kiln."

Contacted, Mir Jahirul Islam, DC of Barguna, said, "We are conducting mobile courts in different areas of the district. We will take steps if anyone violates the law."

Sukumar Roy, director of the Department of Environment in Barisal said, "We issued environmental certificates for setting up brick kilns, imposing certain conditions."

Three fake DB men arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police arrested three fake members of the Detective Branch (DB) of police from Rupdia Bazar under Jessore Sadar upazila on Monday night.

The arrestees are Imran Hossain, 32, son of Arafat Mallick of Hariyadara village, Asaduzzaman, 31, son of Nuruzzaman of Krishnanagar village in Jhikargachha upazila, and Royal Hossain, 26, a private car driver.

Police said the trio went to the shop of Tariqul Islam at Rupdia Bazar at around 8:00pm, identified themselves as members of the DB police and demanded Tk 2 lakh from him.

At one stage, other shop owners of the Bazar came to Tariqul's shop and asked the three about their identity. Challenged by the shop owners, the fake DB men tried to flee the scene, but they caught the three and later handed them over to Narendrapur police camp.



PHOTO: STAR

Freedom fighters and cultural activists accompanied by locals bring out a colourful procession in Pirojpur town yesterday, marking liberation of the area from the Pakistan occupation forces in 1971.