

Mixed gardening sees success in Madhupur

Farmers use the same plot for growing several fruits and vegetables

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Mixed gardening, the practice of growing different fruits and crops on the same land, sees success in Madhupur garh area of the district.

The hilly lands in the region are suitable for the innovative cultivation that brings extra profit, said farmers and agricultural officials.

Ainal Haque of Jangalia village in Madhupur upazila earlier cultivated pineapple on his 60 decimals of land and got around Tk 60 thousand as profit from the yield after 18 months.

Now, the 25-year-old youth is cultivating pineapple, banana, papaya, ginger,

turmeric, arum, and green chilly at the same time on the same land, following suggestions from local agricultural officials.

"I hope I can sell the yields of the seven fruits and crops for Tk 1.2 lakh to Tk 1.5 lakh this season," Ainal said.

However, the mixed cultivation requires some more fertilisers and extra care, he said.

Getting pineapple yield needs around 18 months, banana one year, papaya six to eight months, ginger three to four months, turmeric five to six months and green chilly one to two months, said Javed Ali, owner of another mixed garden at the same village.

"Now, I am getting money from the same field throughout the year by selling different fruits and crops at different periods," he added.

Abdul Hakim, 50, a farmer of Aronkhola village, cultivated different fruits and crops including mango, pineapple, banana, papaya, ginger, arum, turmeric, kalomegh (a medicinal plant) and akashmoni (a timber plant) on his orchard covering 420 decimals of land.

"I have already sold ginger, turmeric, arum and kalomegh from the field. Now I am selling pineapple, banana and papaya at Jalchhatra market," he said.

"Mixed gardening is practised on about 2000

hectares of lands in the upazila. As it brings more profit than cultivation of a single item like pineapple or banana, many farmers are showing interest in the mixed cultivation," said Hazrat Ali, upazila agriculture officer of Madhupur.

At a view exchange meeting with the local farmers at Jangalia village on December 11 last year, Director General of Department of Agriculture Extension Hamidur Rahman appreciated the innovative farming in Madhupur.

"As mixed gardening sees success here, it will be extended to other areas of the country where the land is suitable for the same," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

A mixed fruit garden at Jalchhatra in Madhupur upazila under Tangail district.

Malikhali puffed rice made traditionally, chemical-free

HABIBUR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

When a customer goes to the market to buy puffed rice, locally known as muri, they buy it in the knowledge that chemicals were used in processing the muri, making it injurious to health. But in various villages of Malikhali union in Pirojpur's Nazirpur upazila, muri connoisseurs enjoy the same snack worry-free.

In Malikhali's villages muri is still prepared in the traditional way, without chemicals. Muri-making is a tradition that's endured for over a century in the area, locals say. Many families first buy paddy which is processed at home into rice.

Next, they make muri.

"I prepare muri year-round," says Lopa Bashu, 40, of Lawra village. "But of course it's during the month of Ramadan that demand shoots up." Muri is a traditional foodstuff used by Bangladeshi Muslims during the month of fasting.

Bashu says she has been preparing muri from the days of her youth following a technique learnt from her mother. First they fry rice and sand separately in mud pots before pouring the fried rice into the hot sand.

"We don't use any chemicals with our muri," she says, "We don't even know what chemicals others use." Unlike its commercial counterpart, the traditionally

made muri is not pure white or as consistent in form. But it's tasty and more importantly, safe to enjoy.

Bashu recommends enjoying muri with tea or making sweet balls with it.

Like her, other village women are also experts in making traditional muri, a scenario common to the 20 villages of Malikhali union. Indeed, even the village men have been known to help.

"I buy paddy from Sreerumkathi bazaar," says Mihir Basu, 50, a neighbour. "And it's important to choose carefully since muri can't be prepared from all types of rice."

"It's also the men who take the finished muri to the wholesale market

Boithakata bazaar by boat," he says. "That is our main contribution."

According to local muri-makers, four maunds of paddy costing about Tk 3,200 with additional production costs of around Tk 500 can produce 95 kilograms of muri, to be sold in the wholesale market for approximately Tk 65 per kilogram.

Although the profits from muri-making are modest, many village women gain satisfaction from adding to their family's income.

"In the home, we don't have any income source. What we earn making muri is enough for us," said Kanika Rani, a villager of Sachiya village in the union.



PHOTO: STAR

A woman prepares chemical-free muri (puffed rice) at Lawra village in Malikhali union of Nazirpur upazila under Pirojpur district.

Indian smuggler jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A Jessore court yesterday sentenced an Indian national to five years' imprisonment in a case over drug smuggling.

The convict is Kashem Ali, son of Aslam Ali of Habra Tikiapara area under Barobazar Police Station in Kolkata city of India.

The court also fined him Tk 5,000. In default, he is to suffer another six months in jail.

According to the prosecution, on secret information, a police team arrested Kashem with 24 bottles of phensidyl in Dhopakhola area under Sadar upazila of Jessore district on October 7 in 2009.

Later, Tarun Kumar Kar, sub-inspector of Jessore Kotwali Police Station, filed a case in this connection.

After examining witnesses and evidence, Additional District and Sessions Judge Manjurul Imam found Kashem guilty and pronounced the verdict.

9 'robbers' held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested nine members of an inter-district robbers' gang with firearms and lethal weapons in Kalai upazila of Joypurhat district early yesterday.

The arrestees are Md Aftab Hossain Emon, 36, Khairul Islam, 45, Sohel Mandal, 27, Hamidul Islam, 30, Saiful Islam, 30, Nazrul Islam, 27, Abu Bakkar Siddique, 50, Imran Hossain, 32, and Mostaque Ahmed, 36.

Being informed that a gang was preparing to commit robbery near a rice mill of Khaleque Islam of Molamgari village in Kalai upazila, the elite force raided the area and arrested the nine with a pipe gun, a shutter gun, machetes, iron rods and daggers.

The Rab personnel also seized a truck from their possession.

A case was filed, accusing the arrestees in this connection, said Sirajul Islam, officer-in-charge of Kalai Police Station.

Girl raped, NGO worker held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A worker of a non-governmental organisation was arrested on Tuesday night for violating a 10-year-old schoolgirl in Kaharol upazila of Dinajpur.

The arrestee Md Ahsan Habib, 26, of Madhupur village under Badarganj upazila of Rangpur district, is a field worker of Gram Bikash Kendra in Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur district.

Police said the mother of the girl took loan of Tk 18,000 from Gram Bikash Kendra. Md Ahsan Habib went to her house at around 11:00pm to collect the weekly repayment instalment. Finding the woman absent from the house, he allegedly violated the girl, a Class IV student of a local primary school.

Hearing her cry, locals rescued her.

The mother of the girl filed a case with Kaharol Police Station yesterday.

Later locals caught Habib in Paltapur village under Birganj upazila of Dinajpur and handed him over to police.

7 Indian cattle seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) seized seven Indian buffalos from Gaipara village in Shibganj upazila of the district yesterday morning.

However, none was arrested in this connection, said Lt Col Ahmed Junaed Alam Khan, commanding officer of BGB-9 Battalion.



PHOTO: STAR

A large number of sand carrying boats lie stranded near Munshiganj launch terminal as workers went on an indefinite strike yesterday demanding action against extortionists who injured six of their fellow workers on Tuesday. Inset, workers stand on the road with posters imprinted with their demand.



Water transport workers on indefinite strike

Demand punishment of attackers, end to extortion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Munshiganj Water Transport Workers' Union went on an indefinite strike on Tuesday midnight, protesting rampant extortion and attacks on its workers.

Plying of nearly 15 thousand sand carrying boats, locally known as bulks, have been kept suspended since the strike was called.

The workers staged demonstrations in the launch terminal area demanding trial of the culprits who beat

up six bulkhead workers the same day.

A gang led by local criminals Karim, Suruj and Yeamin demanded toll from some water transport workers in Char Kishoreganj area in the Meghna River on Tuesday afternoon.

As they denied paying the toll, the gang swooped on the water transport workers, leaving six of them injured.

Of the injured, Taiyab Hossain, 40, Shahabuddin, 30, Sohag, 35, Shafiq, 28, and Rahman, 25, were

admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with serious injuries, Munshiganj Water Transport Workers' Union President Taijul Islam Badsha said.

The indefinite strike has been called protesting the attack, Badsha, also joint-general secretary of Bangladesh Water Transport Workers' Union, said.

"We will continue our strike until the rampant extortion and attacks on water transport workers are not stopped," Badsha added.



PHOTO: STAR

An education material fair, displaying a variety of items on the Liberation War, national leaders, important installations, science, biodiversity, indigenous art and culture, etc, attracts a large number of visitors including students and teachers at the ground of Primary Training Institute in Munshiganj town. The two-day fair ended yesterday.

Madrasa principal held on rape charge

Locals bring out procession demanding punishment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

The principal of a madrasa was arrested on charge of raping a girl student of the madrasa in Sonatola municipality of Bogra at around 1:30pm yesterday, while another accused is absconding.

The arrestee is Fazlul Karim, 56, principal of Sonatola Fazil (Degree) Madrasa in the municipality, and the absconding accused is Shahabul Islam, 43, an office assistant of the madrasa.

Local and police sources said Fazlul Karim took a girl student to a room on the first floor of the madrasa and allegedly raped her. Hearing the screams of the girl, teachers and students rescued her and detained the principal. They later

handed him over to the police.

Hearing the news, villagers, guardians and students rushed to the madrasa and brought out a protest procession demanding exemplary punishment of the principal. They also threw brick-chips at the office assistant's house, added the sources.

Contacted, Abdul Motaleb, officer-in-charge (OC) of Sonatola Police Station, said a case was lodged, accusing the principal and office assistant of rape. The principal was sent to court in the afternoon, which sent him to jail.

The principal confessed to his guilt, while the other accused has gone into hiding and police are trying to arrest him, added the OC.

Youth held with 118 tortoises

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a youth with 118 tortoises of rare species from Churamankathi area in Sadar upazila of Jessore district yesterday.

Major Abdullah Al Mehedi, commanding officer of Rab-6 Jessore, said, being tipped-off that some rare species of tortoises were being smuggled into the country from India, a team of Rab conducted a drive in the area. They intercepted a three-wheeler and arrested a youth with the tortoises at around 9:30pm, while the driver managed to flee.

The arrestee is Jahangir Hossain, son of late Abdul Gafur of South Burujagan area in Sharsha upazila of Jessore.

A case was filed in this connection.