

PATUAKHALI

Watermelon plants dying days before harvest

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Watermelon farmers of the district are facing losses this season as the melon vines are dying in different areas due to 'wilting' disease, just two weeks before harvest.

Alam Gazi, 45, a farmer of Vanra village of Amkhola union under Galachipa upazila, said, "I cultivated watermelons on half an acre of land this year, spending Tk 25,000. The melons would have been ready for sale within two weeks, but some vines suddenly started dying. First, the roots became rotten and then the vines died."

Alam showed some dead vines in his field when this correspondent visited the area yesterday. He added that he had never seen such a disease in the area in the 10 years he has been cultivating watermelons.

Abdur Razzak Howlader, another farmer of the same area, said, "there was heavy rainfall in the area about 15 days ago, and the disease was detected after that."

Sahil Dhalee of the same village said cultivating watermelon is profitable as there is great demand for the fruit all over the country.

Many wholesalers from



PHOTO: STAR

Dying watermelon vines at a field of Amkhola village in Galachipa upazila under Patuakhali district.

Dhaka, Rajshahi, Khulna and other areas come to the area to buy watermelons, but this year the vines are dying just before the melons ripen, he said.

This disease is found in different areas in the district but is rampant in Rangalali and Galachipa upazilas.

Department of

Agriculture Extension (DAE) sources in Patuakhali said a total of 17,020 hectares of land in all eight upazilas of the district were cultivated with watermelons this year, a slight rise from last year.

Watermelon farming is popular as it is a profitable crop due to good water

availability, favourable weather and suitable land, said M A Mannan, Galachipa upazila agriculture extension officer.

'Wilting' disease is caused by increasing salinity, he said. "We are advising farmers to irrigate the whole field to prevent the disease," he added.

12 back from Indian jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Twelve Bangladeshi people returned home on Tuesday through Benapole check post after serving four years in an Indian prison.

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) handed them over to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) at night.

The returnees include nine teenage boys, two women and a kid.

Four years ago, the 12 entered Indian territory without valid documents through Jessore border in search of jobs.

Later, Indian police arrested them from Kolkata Railway Station in West Bengal. A case was filed against them.

An Indian court sentenced them to four years' imprisonment each for illegally crossing the border, said a BGB official.

Man to die for killing wife in Comilla

UNB, Comilla

A court here yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his wife in 2000.

Convict Sadek Mia, son of Malu Mia of Chandina upazila, was tried in absentia.

According to the prosecution, Sadek Mia killed Rokeya Begum following an altercation over dowry on June 28, 2000. Later, the body was recovered from a canal on July 4 the same year.

The following day, Sahad Ullah, maternal uncle of Rokeya, filed a case with Chandina Police Station.

Main Uddin, sub-inspector of Chandina Police Station, submitted a charge sheet against Sadek Mia.

After examining witnesses and record, Additional District and Sessions Judge Nur Nahar Begum found him guilty and pronounced the verdict.

Sand trader hacked to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kustia

A sand trader was hacked to death by unidentified criminals at Sadar Char village in Pangsha upazila of Rajbari district on Tuesday night.

The dead was identified as Ameer Sikdar, 45, of Char Ramnagar in the upazila.

Abu Shama Md Iqbal Hayat, officer-in-charge (OC) of Pangsha Police Station, said a gang of 4/5 people waylaid Ameer when he was returning home from his shop at Sadar Char around 11:30pm. They hacked him with sharp weapons, leaving him dead on the spot.

Locals found Ameer's body in the morning and informed the police, who later sent it to Rajbari Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

The OC said Ameer was accused in two cases for bombing filed with Pangsha Police Station. He was running sand trade, illegally occupying a large area of the river.

Ameer's wife Asma Khatun filed a murder case with Pangsha Police Station yesterday.

2 fish traders fined for selling jatka

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manihganj

Two fish traders were fined Tk. 5,000 each for selling jatka (hilsa fish less than 10 inches long) at a fish market at Aricha Ghat under Shibalaya upazila of the district.

They are Ujjal Hossain, 40, and Nayan Hossain, 35.

A team led by Upazila Nirbahi Officer AKM Galib Khan conducted a drive at the market yesterday morning and seized two maunds of jatka from there.

The seized jatka were later distributed among orphans, he added.

Bhuapur, Gopalpur Upazilas in Tangail

AL faces 20 rebel candidates in 10 of 13 unions, expels 9

BNP sets single candidates in the unions

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Contest by 'rebel' candidates in the March 31 union parishad elections has become a matter of concern among the local Awami League (AL) leadership in 10 unions of Bhuapur and Gopalpur upazilas under the district.

BNP, on the other hand, has been able to nominate single candidates in all 13 unions under the two upazilas and it gives them a certain advantage in the polls race, said party sources and local observers.

The AL has already expelled nine activists in four unions of Gopalpur upazila as they are contesting against the party nominated candidates, said M o h a m m a d Halimuzzaman Talukder, president of Gopalpur upazila unit of AL.

The expelled are Abdul Hye (Dhopakandi union), Abdul Kader, Aminul Islam, Hossain Mohammad and Mostofa Liton ((Hadira union), Mizanur Rahman and Shamsul Islam (Jhaoil union), Julfiqar Ali and Rawshan Khan Ayub

(Hemnagar union), he said.

In six unions of Bhuapur upazila, eleven AL men are contesting as 'rebel' candidates but no organisational step has been taken against them so far, said a top leader of Bhuapur upazila AL, seeking anonymity.

Fifty-three people are in the race for chairman post in six unions of Bhuapur and seven unions of Gopalpur.

Sixty-two people had submitted nomination papers but nine of them later withdrew candidature.



PHOTO: STAR

Dinajpur district unit of Bangladesh Shishu Academy organises a painting competition for children yesterday on the eve of the 97th birthday of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

GANG-RAPE OF EDWARD COLLEGE GIRL

Teachers, students give 24-hr ultimatum to arrest culprits

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Teachers and students of Pabna Edward College in the district town yesterday gave a 24-hour ultimatum to police to arrest the rapists of a female student and warned of tougher movement if the law enforcers fail to nab the culprits.

They came up with the ultimatum at a rally held on the college premises in the morning, said police.

People from all walks of life including journalists, politicians and activists joined the demonstration

programme.

The demonstrators also put up barricade on Hamid Road, the main street of the district town, around 11:00am to press for the demand.

Head of history department Dr Md Shajahan, president of Pabna Press Club Shibojit Nag and president of the district unit of BCL Ruhul Amin, among others, spoke.

Addressing the rally, the speakers questioned the role of police as they failed to arrest the rapists within four days of the incident.

The angry students later withdrew the barricade around 12 noon following an assurance by Additional Superintendent of Police Liton Kumar Shah of taking immediate steps to arrest the culprits.

A 21-year-old Hindu girl, a second year student of history department of Pabna Edward College, was gang-raped on Sunday. She is now undergoing treatment at Pabna Medical College Hospital.

When she was going to attend a religious programme at Punduria village in Santhia

upazila of the district on Sunday night, a gang of 4/5 raped her, said the victim at the hospital bed on Tuesday.

The victim's father filed a case, accusing four people, said Officer-in-Charge of Santhia Police Station Nasir Uddin.

The accused include Faridul Islam and Hafizul Islam, residents of the village, the OC said, adding that they went into hiding soon after the incident.

On Tuesday night, police arrested one Md Chand Ali in connection with the incident, he said.

CASE FOR TORCHING AL OFFICE IN BOGRA

Charges pressed against 60 BNP-Jamaat men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Police yesterday pressed charges against 60 BNP and Jamaat men in the case for torching Dupchanchia Awami League (AL) office on February 23 last year.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Zahid Hossain of Dupchanchia Police Station submitted the charge sheet to the Judicial Magistrate's Court, against 27 named and 33 unnamed accused.

Abdul Gani Mondol, chairman of Dupchanchia Upazila Parishad and a Jamaat leader, Mottaleb Hossain

Mintu, vice-chairman of the same upazila parishad and a BNP leader, Moazzem Hossain, chairman of Sadar Union Parishad and a BNP leader; Abdul Hamid, president of the upazila unit of BNP; Abu Naser, acting secretary of the unit, Monsur Ali, ameer of the upazila unit of Jamaat, and Motiur Rahman, secretary of the unit, are among the accused.

Gaziur Rahman, senior assistant superintendent of police, said the accused were charge sheeted under the Special Powers Act and the Explosive Substances Act.

The ASP said most of the charge-sheeted accused are now on bail. Law enforcers have been conducting drives to arrest the accused who have been absconding since the filing of the case, he added.

Dupchanchia upazila Awami League office was torched on the night of February 23 last year. Abu Sayeed Fakir, a leader of the AL unit, lodged a case with Dupchanchia Police Station the following day, accusing 27 identified and 100-150 unidentified BNP-Jamaat leaders and activists.

Nizami to seek SC review

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Motiur Rahman Akanda, a defence counsel for the Jamaat-e-Islami chief, told reporters after meeting him at the Kashimpur jail-2 yesterday.

As per the law, Nizami will get 15 days to file a review petition. If the petition is rejected, the last option for him will be seeking presidential clemency.

Leader of infamous Al-Badr force in 1971, Nizami was given the capital punishment by the International Crimes Tribunal-1 for committing crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971. The SC on January 6 this year upheld his

death penalty and released its full verdict on Tuesday.

Upon receiving the full verdict, the International Crimes Tribunal issued Nizami's death warrant the same night and sent it to Dhaka Central Jail. Copies of the warrant were also sent to the Dhaka district magistrate for "necessary action" and the home and the law ministries for "information."

Prashanta Kumar Banik, senior jail super of Kashimpur jail-2, where Nizami is an inmate, told The Daily Star that they received the warrant from the authorities of Dhaka Central Jail around 9:30am yesterday. The jail authorities read

out the warrant to Nizami around 10:15am. Nizami himself also read the copies of the warrant and the SC verdict, he said, adding that the Jamaat chief said he would seek review in consultation with his lawyers.

"He [Nizami] looked pale at that time," said Prashanta, adding that Nizami's son Mohammad Nazibur Rahman and two lawyers had talks with him for around 40 minutes.

After the talks, his lawyer Motiur Rahman Akanda said, "He [Nizami] got the copy of the verdict. After going through a little part of it [the judgement], he said the verdict has been given on the basis of

[something that is] false and untrue. Review petition must be filed against the verdict. He directed us to file a review."

Four war criminals, who have already been executed for their war-time crimes, had filed petitions seeking review of the SC verdicts only to be rejected.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam on Tuesday said scope for allowing a review in such cases is very limited. Usually, a review appeal is entertained for consideration in case of serious factual mistakes in the verdict or wrongful application of the law, he added.



PHOTO: STAR

His Excellency Thomas Prinz, German ambassador to Bangladesh, and Peter Dietzel, executive director of German-based international NGO NETZ, amid children of Freedom Fighter Mostafa Kamal Anandalok School at Binbina Char of Kolokundo union in Gangachara upazila under Rangpur district on Tuesday. They also saw the development of living condition of the poor char people in different areas of Rangpur and Kurigram districts through the livelihood programme of NETZ in cooperation with local NGO Jagarani Chakra Foundation.