



A farmer couple nurse their tomato field at Durakuti in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

## Veg seed farming benefits 8 Lalmonirhat border villages

S DILIP ROY with ANDREW EAGLE

In eight Lalmonirhat border villages the cultivation of vegetable seeds is bringing about positive change in farmers' lives.

"My 30 decimals will produce tomato and chilli seeds this year," says Nazrul Islam, 42, a farmer from Durakuti village of Lalmonirhat sadar upazila's Mogholhat union. "Vegetable seed production keeps my wife and I busy but we hope to realise Tk 80,000 in net profit."

"The weather has favoured us," says Nazrul's wife Rahima Begum. "We think this year our vegetable

seeds will be of the highest quality."

At least 200 farmers in the district have been trained in the cultivation by seed companies, with companies willing to buy the seeds from each farmer's door.

Lakshmi Kanta Roy, 48, also from Durakuti, says he produces seeds of vegetables including bitter melon, brinjal, pumpkin, cucumber, ladies finger as well as lal and palong shak.

"We can produce up to 1 kilogram of vegetable seeds per decimal," says Roy. "The cultivation expenses are around Tk 3,500, from which we sell seeds worth about Tk 9,000." He has prepared five plots of 60

decimals for producing vegetable seeds this year, he adds.

Seed producer Abul Miah of Fulgachh village meanwhile, says his family faced economic crisis conditions some years ago before they began cultivating vegetable seeds. "Now we have a reputation for being one of the more successful families in the village," he says, adding that dense fog and raids by vermin are the main obstacles faced by vegetable seed producers.

"One of the best features of vegetable seed farming," says Kamla Chandra Barmon, 65, of Kodalkhata village, "is that the seed companies offer advance

payment. We never have any tension about finding a market for our seeds."

According to Mobarak Hossain, a seed company employee in Lalmonirhat, at least 300 plots amounting to 36 acres has been dedicated to seed production across eight villages with the aim of producing up to 2,800 kilograms of various vegetable seeds. "Seed company representatives always monitor these plots and offer farmers advice to ensure quality," he says.

The Deputy Director in Lalmonirhat agriculture extension department, Safayet Hossain, says meanwhile that agriculture officials do likewise.

## WATER LEVEL FALLS

# 30 fertiliser-laden vessels stranded in Jamuna

Adequate dredging needed for smooth supply of the agri input in N dists during peak boro season

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, back from Baghabari, Sirajganj

Around 50 cargo vessels loaded with chemical fertilisers have remained stranded for days at different places of the Jamuna River leading to Baghabari, biggest river port in the northern region, due to the poor navigability in the ongoing dry season.

"Movement of vessels is hampered in the 50 kilometre river route from Aricha to Baghabari port

from January to April every year as huge shoals appear due to fall of water level. Char Latifpur, Bateria Char, Nakalia, Char Safulla, and Hurasagar points see the worst situation," said Md Azmal Huda, Baghabari port officer.

"Fertiliser supply in the northern districts in the peak boro season is likely to be hampered as big vessels carrying 1000 to 1200 tonnes of fertiliser cannot reach Baghabari now. Lighter boats are used to unload

fertiliser from the stranded cargo vessels to enable them to reach the river port," he said.

It adds to the carrying cost of fertilisers, besides causing one or two weeks delay in the work, said the stakeholders.

If smooth movement of vessels cannot be ensured within a short time it will not be possible to meet the increasing demand of fertilisers in the northern districts in the peak boro cultivation period, Baghabari port sources

said, adding that dredging by Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority is too scanty for the purpose.

"Only one dredger is functioning in the 50 kilometre river route from Aricha to Baghabari port whereas three machines should work simultaneously to keep the channel navigable. Despite our request, the higher authority is yet to arrange extra dredgers here," said port officer Azmal Huda.



PHOTO: STAR

Workers unload fertiliser from this vessel that got stranded on the way to Baghabari port on the Jamuna River in Sirajganj district due to drastic fall in water level during the ongoing dry season. Quite a few other fertiliser-laden vessels are also lying stuck at different places of the Jamuna leading to the port due to the same reason.



Mother of deceased two-year-old Habibur Rahman (inset) breaks into tears on the premises of Galachipa Police Station yesterday as the body of the kid, stolen for ransom from their Chander Haola village home in Galachipa upazila under Patuakhali district on March 10, was recovered from a canal in the upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

## Two-yr-old boy stolen for ransom found murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The body of a two-year-old boy, who was stolen from their house seven days ago, was found in Boubazar area under Galachipa upazila of the district yesterday.

The victim is Habibur Rahman, son of Kanchon Ali Sarder of Chander Howla village in the upazila.

Police also arrested three people in connection with the incident, said Abdur Razzak Mollah, officer-in-charge of Galachipa Police

Station.

The arrestees are Belal Hossain and Sona Mia, stepbrothers of the deceased, and Masud Sarder, 30, of the village.

Police said Masud demanded Tk one crore from Kanchon Ali for his son's release over cellphone.

After tracking phone calls, police arrested the three early yesterday. Following their confessional statement, the law enforcers recovered the body from a canal in the area around 3:30pm.

On March 12, a gang demanded Tk 1 crore as ransom from the family after stealing the boy from their home in Galachipa upazila.

The parents alleged that the child was kidnapped by his stepbrothers over property-related feud. The brothers, however, rejected the allegation.

The boy was picked up from their home in the early hours of March 10, said the victim's mother Jainab Begum.

"I along with my hus-

band and son was asleep on the same bed. Around 2:00am, I suddenly woke up hearing my son's screams."

"It was quite dark at that time. Before we could realise anything I saw two masked men taking my son away through the door," Jainab said, adding that they disappeared immediately.

Later, Kanchon filed a case with the police station against his sons Belal Hossain and Sona Mia for their alleged involvement in the crime.

## One killed as poultry farm catches fire

UNB, Faridpur

A man was burnt to death as a fire broke out at a poultry farm at Makarampotti village in Bhanga upazila of the district early yesterday.

Sribas Baroi, in-charge of Bhanga Fire Service, said the fire originated from an electric short circuit at the poultry farm of one Salam Matubbar in the dead of night, when the caretaker Mohsin Matubbar was asleep inside.

Mohsin, 43, son of Raihan Matubbar of the village, was burnt alive.

Later, his charred body was recovered.

## 10 injured as villagers clash in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

At least 10 people were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over a trivial matter at Dhobabila village in Jhenidah Sadar upazila on Wednesday.

Quoting locals, Officer-in-Charge Hasan Hafizur Rahman of Sadar Police Station said an altercation took place between Abdur Rashid and Bakul Hossain of the village when Rashid's goat entered Bakul's cropland and damaged some saplings in the morning.

At one stage, supporters of the two, equipped with sharp weapons, attacked each other in the afternoon, leaving 10 people from both sides injured.

The injured were admitted to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital. Of them, critically injured Amirul Islam was shifted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated.

## None held yet for stabbing baby girl in Nandail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

No one has been arrested in connection with stabbing of a 17-month-old baby girl over land dispute in Nandail upazila of the district on Sunday morning.

Md Shahjahan, alias Puitya Shahjahan, stabbed the baby, daughter of his neighbour day labourer Deen Islam, at Chandipasha village in the upazila.

The victim Bithi Akhtar, is now undergoing treatment at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH).

Police said there was a longstanding conflict between Deen Islam and Md Shahjahan over nine decimals of land.

Deen Islam built a tinshed house on the disputed land a couple of days ago, but Shahjahan and his men vandalised it. When Deen Islam went to rebuild the house there around 11:00am on Sunday, Shahjahan and his men went there and locked in an altercation with him, police said.

At one stage, Shahjahan and his followers attempted to hit Deen Islam with sharp weapons, but he fled the scene.

As the attackers did not find Deen Islam, they entered his house and snatched his daughter Bithi from Sharifa Khatun, a neighbour of Deen Islam, and took her

outside the house. Shahjahan then stabbed the girl in her abdomen, leaving her critically injured.

Deen Islam lodged a case with Nandail Police Station the same night, accusing Shahjahan and 10 others.

Bithi's mother Beauty Begum said the condition of her daughter is improving, but she expressed her anger as the prime accused Shahjahan is yet to be arrested.

Contacted, Md Ataur Rahman, officer-in-charge (OC) of Nandail Police Station, said police drives are on in different areas to arrest the accused.



PHOTO: STAR

The local administration organised a painting competition in Shibganj Upazila Model High School in Chapainawabganj district yesterday marking the 97th birthday of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. The day is also observed as the National Children's Day.