



Bundled string beans ready for being taken to market for sale in Kultura upazila under Moulvibazar district.

PHOTO: STAR

KULaura UPazila IN MOULVIBAZAR

Good prices of string bean make farmers happy

MINTU DSHWARA, Moulvibazar

String bean farmers in Kultura upazila of the district are happy with a bumper yield and good prices for the vegetable this season.

The bumper production of beans this season was due to favourable weather conditions and timely supply of necessary agro-inputs. A total of 200 hectares of land were brought under bean cultivation in the upazila this season.

Saffar Uddin, Kultura

upazila agriculture officer, said Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) provided the farmers with high yielding varieties of seeds, organic fertilisers, insecticides and other inputs to make the programme a success.

Farmers have cultivated the vegetable on their cropland and fallow land as it has proved more profitable than traditional crops and can be cultivated easily.

Alamin Miah, 45, a farmer of Boromchal village said, "I am now self-reliant

growing the vegetable instead of cultivating sugarcane or mustard."

Farmer Masuk Ahmed, 50, of Stripur village said, "Earlier financial hardship used to haunt me round the year. But now I am able to educate my children. Besides, I live in a brick-built house and use a sanitary latrine. This was possible because of profitable bean cultivation on my cropland."

Farmers are now growing the vegetable commercially to reap more profit.

Wholesalers from Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Dhaka and other areas visit our local markets to purchase it. The crop here is sold at satisfactory prices, Masuk added.

Farmer Shafiqul Islam of the village said, "The Department of Agriculture Extension advises growers on how to cultivate the vegetable on their cropland successfully."

"I have cultivated 23 acres of land at a cost of Tk 12,000. I have already earned Tk 25,000 from the cropland," he added.



The ancestral house of legendary peasant leader Ila Mitra at Bagutia village in Shaikupa upazila under Jhenidah district shows all signs of neglect. Inset, the aristocratic woman who shunned personal happiness for establishing the rights of the Santhal farmers.

PHOTO: STAR



Ila Mitra's childhood home may be lost for lack of maintenance

AZIBOR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

So well-regarded was fire-brand peasant leader Ila Mitra, born in 1925 in Jhenidah district, that from her supporters she earned the moniker 'Rani Ma', meaning 'queen mother'. Like her husband Ramendra Mitra who participated in the British-era Tebhaga Andolon movement, Ila was a committed communist.

She earned a reputation as a people's champion in her own right.

Yet sadly, although she lives on in popular memory, her childhood home in Bagutia village of Jhenidah's Shaikupa upazila is all but

forgotten.

Once renowned across the Subcontinent but especially in Bengal, Ila Mitra grew up in the upper middle class home at Bagutia, living there until her marriage, when she left for her husband's house in Chapainawabganj. It was there, in Nachole upazila, that Ila was arrested in 1950 for organising a Santhal peasant movement.

Following arrest she was tortured, found guilty of treason and sentenced to life imprisonment; but four years later Ila was pardoned and allowed to pursue health treatment in Kolkata. Ila Mitra never returned to then-Pakistan, living in

India until her death in 2002.

In an advanced state of decay, her childhood residence is currently occupied by one Kiamuddin Hazi and his family. His son, Abdur Rashid told The Daily Star his father purchased the property from Ila Mitra's successors and that they have valid documents. According to Rashid, maintenance work has not been possible due to frequent attacks by rival villagers.

With maintenance of the property seemingly left unattended for decades, Jhenidah and indeed Bangladesh looks set to lose this historical site.

While Ila Mitra herself

might not, in accordance with her favoured communist ideology, have stored much value in preserving a building of relative privilege such as her family home, local people do.

"The historical residence of Ila Mitra should be reconstructed as an important memorial to her," says Nikhil Kumar Biswas of Bagutia. "She sacrificed her whole life fighting for the peasants. The government should take proper care of this dilapidated building."

Shaikupa's upazila nirbahi officer Didarul Islam advises he has no direction from the government on the matter and will look into it.

121 drug traders return to normal life in Panchbibi

Locals bid goodbye to child marriage, illegal drug trade

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A large number of people of Panchbibi upazila under Joypurhat district witnessed a unique event on Tuesday, saying goodbye to underage marriage and illegal drug trade at a colourful programme held at Panchbibi Stadium.

As many as 121 illegal drug traders of Panchbibi municipality have surrendered to police and vowed to leave the harmful practice for good, said Mollah Nazrul Islam, superintendent of police of Joypurhat, who chaired the programme organised by Panchbibi community police.

Attending the programme as chief guest, Abdullah Al Mahmud, deputy inspector general of police in Rajshahi Range, declared the upazila free from underage marriage and drug trade.

This is a wonderful example of how cooperation between police and locals can help to overcome social problems, he said.

Abdur Rahim, deputy commissioner of Joypurhat, Solaiman Ali, Joypurhat Zila Parishad administrator, Habibur Rahman, mayor of Panchbibi municipality, Mir Shaheed Mondal, a local language movement hero, Abdul Hakim Mondal, president of Joypurhat Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Ashraful Islam, officer in charge of Panchbibi

Police Station, spoke at the programme.

The speakers urged the locals to remain vigilant to prevent underage marriage and drug trade in the upazila.

Later, the DIG handed over easy bikes, sewing machines and rickshaws to 121 former drug traders in Panchbibi upazila as aid for their rehabilitation.

One of them, Md Manik

Hossain, said he left the illegal business as police assured him of cooperation for resuming normal with decent earning.

"I think many illegal drug traders want to leave the act if they get cooperation of police," he said.

"Coming here, I learnt about the bad impact of underage marriage. I will work to prevent child marriage, which is against the law," said

Nurjahan Begum, 55.

Later a jubilant procession was brought out in Panchbibi town.

In Kalai upazila of Joypurhat last year, around 100 drug traders surrendered to police and returned to normal life.

There police is also conducting an awareness campaign so that people do not fall into the trap of traders of human organ.



PHOTO: STAR

PLEDGE FOR DECENT LIFE: A large number of people take oath to work for preventing child marriage and drug trade at a programme organised by the police administration at Panchbibi upazila headquarters in Joypurhat district on Tuesday.

Independents

FROM PAGE 20 Bangladesh in one UP.

Candidates of the Communist Party of Bangladesh, Bangladesh National Awami Party, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, Zaker Party, Bangladesh Jatiya Party, Bangladesh Tarikat Federation, Jamiat-e-Ulamaye Islam Bangladesh, Bangladesh National Awami Party (Bangladesh-NAP), Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh, Khelafat Majlish and Bangladesh Nationalist Front failed to win a single chairman seat in the polls.

Money and muscle power play a key role in any election in the present scenario of Bangladesh's electoral culture, Election Working Group Director Abdur Alim told The Daily Star.

As small parties are weaker in terms of money and muscle power, they cannot defeat big political parties.

Elections to some 643 UPs will be held on March 31 in the second phase, 680 UPs on April 23 in the third phase and 2,200 UPs in three other phases until June.

25pc professors

FROM PAGE 20 would be eligible to get promoted to grade 1.

However, a maximum of 25 percent professors in grade 2 will be promoted to grade 1.

Yesterday's meeting also decided that all the public university professors will get promotions under the same policy. Representatives of the FBUTA were present at the meeting.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, FBUTA General Secretary Prof Maksud Kamal said the government's decision fulfilled their long-standing demands.

"We are happy now," he added.

The meeting was informed that the education ministry and the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh will jointly prepare a proposal on promoting university professors to the grade of senior secretaries. The government will make a decision in this regard after reviewing the proposals.

According to the latest statistics of the education ministry, a total of 12,047 teachers are employed in 32 public universities in the country. Of them, 3,395 are professors.

Missing Pabna schoolboy found murdered

Fellow students stage demonstration demanding immediate arrest of killers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The body of a boy, who went missing on the way to school on Wednesday morning, was found at a litchi orchard in Singra area of the district town in the evening.

The deceased, Habibullah Hasan, was a Class VIII student of Pabna Collectorate Public School and College, and son of Mohsin Alam Salam of Mehedinagar village in Santhia upazila of the district.

He was living with his family members in a rented house in Pabna town.

Locals found Habibullah's body at the orchard at around 7:00pm and informed the police, who rushed to the spot, recovered the body, and sent it to Pabna Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy yesterday morning.

Abdullah Al Hasan, officer-in-charge of Pabna Police Station, said the victim was strangled and his

hands and legs were tied with a rope.

A case was filed yesterday morning, the OC said. Police are trying to unearth clue to the murder, he added.

Protesting the murder, students of Pabna Collectorate School and College brought out a procession yesterday morning and paraded the main streets of the district town.

They also formed a human chain demanding arrest and punishment of the killers, and warned of tougher agitation if their demand was not met.

Classes were suspended at the institution protesting the murder of Habibullah, said Prof Shibojit Nag, principal of the school.

"It is a matter of sorrow that we do not keep our children safe in the society," the principal said, demanding capital punishment of the killers.

Away in Chapainawabganj,

the Body of a youth, who went missing on Saturday night, was found on a field of Gosra village under Sadar upazila on Wednesday night, reports our correspondent.

The victim was identified as Akhter Ali, 22, son of Horof Ali of Tero Roshia village under Shibganj upazila in the district.

Mazharul Islam, Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station, said villagers found the body at around 7:30pm and informed the police. Police went to the spot, recovered the body and sent it to Chapainawabganj Adhunik Sadara Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Akhter went missing while he was going to his rented house at Kalayanpur in Chapainawabganj municipality area from Udayan intersection in the district town, police said.

Victim's father filed a murder case with Sadar Police Station yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Pabna Collectorate School and College bring put a procession in the town yesterday demanding punishment of the criminals who killed after abduction Habibulla Mishu, a Class VIII student of the school on Wednesday.

