



PHOTO: STAR

Pest attack caused massive damage to sunflowers in different areas of Barguna and Patuakhali districts this season. The photo was taken from Chaora Badhghat in Amtali upazila under Barguna district.

FARMERS IN PATUAKHALI, BARGUNA WORRIED

# Pest attacks sunflowers just a month before harvest

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Sunflower farmers in the coastal districts of Patuakhali and Barguna are facing losses this season as leaves are dying due to an infestation of 'larvae leaf cutter,' a kind of insect pest, just a month before harvest.

Shahidul Islam, 40, of Sekanderkhali village under Amtali upazila of Barguna district said "I cultivated sunflowers on one acre this year, spending Tk 20,000. They would have been ready for harvest within a month, but some leaves suddenly

started dying due to the pest attack."

The pest eats leaves, which become dry and then die he said. Shahidul showed some affected leaves in his field when this correspondent visited the area on Wednesday. He added that he had never seen such a disease in the five years he has been cultivating sunflowers.

Ataf Hossain, another farmer of nearby Bandra area under Kalapara upazila, said the disease was detected after heavy rainfall in the area about a month ago.

Saber Howlader of the same area said cultivating sunflowers is profitable as there is demand for the seeds to produce sunflower oil.

This disease is found in different areas, but is rampant in Kalapara, Rangabali and Galachipa upazilas in Patuakhali, and in Amtali, Barguna Sadar and Taltali upazilas in Barguna.

Sunflower farming is popular as it is a profitable crop and can be cultivated easily due to favourable weather and suitable land, said Md Moshir Rahman,

Kalapara upazila agriculture extension officer.

"We are advising farmers to kill the insects in the fields and then burn the attacked leaves. Weeds should be removed from the field and sunflower seed beds should be burned to prevent appearance of the insect in the next crop," he added.

A source of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Patuakhali said a total of 530 hectares in all eight upazilas were brought under sunflower cultivation this year.

# 3 siblings to die for killing BCL man in Bogra

## Man gets death penalty for fratricide in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

A Bogra court yesterday sentenced three brothers to death and three others to life imprisonment for killing a BCL activist in Bogra town in 2009.

Md Hafizur Rahman, judge of the Additional Sessions Judge Court 1, handed down the verdict against the six in the afternoon.

The death penalty awardees are Roni Mondol Roni, Masum Parvez Masum, and Masud Parvez Munna, sons of Abdul Majid of Nataipara in Bogra town.

The lifers are Jahangir Hossain, son of Ramzan Ali, Md Khokon, uncle of the three brothers, and their father Abdul Majid.

Police said Masum Parvez Masum, Khokon and Abdul Majid were tried in absentia and the rest are now in jail.

According to the prosecution, the convicted people hacked BCL activist Faruk Hossain Shabuj to death on January 5 in 2009 over establishing supremacy in

Nataipara (Krishnapara) area.

Shabuj's father Abdul Gafur lodged a murder case with Sadar Police Station the same day, accusing the six.

Monjurul Islam Bhuiyan, sub-inspector of the police station, pressed charges against the six on September 30, 2009.

After examining 12 witnesses and the case record, the judge handed down the verdict.

Away in Patuakhali, a court here yesterday sentenced a man to death for killing his elder brother at Purbo Kawkhali village under Rangabali upazila of the district four years ago.

Abul Kasem Md Mostafa, district and sessions judge, delivered the judgment at around 11:00am.

The convict is Feroz Howlader of the village.

According to the prosecution, someone called Bashir Howlader out of his house at around 8:00pm on October 23, 2012. When he didn't

return after a long time, Bashir's wife Nurunnahar Begum and his father-in-law went searching for Bashir.

They found Bashir's body in a jungle near a fish farm at around 2:00am. Nurunnahar filed a murder case with Rangabali Police Station the next day, alleging that her husband might have been killed over a land dispute.

Later, police arrested Feroz Howlader, brother of Bashir, suspecting his involvement in the murder.

Feroz later gave a confessional statement to the court under Section 164. In his statement, Feroz said his elder brother Bashir Howlader beat up him as he had an illicit affair with his (Bashir's) wife.

Out of anger, Feroz called his brother to the fish farm and hacked him to death with a sharp weapon, the statement said.

Police submitted the charge sheet against Feroz to the court on January

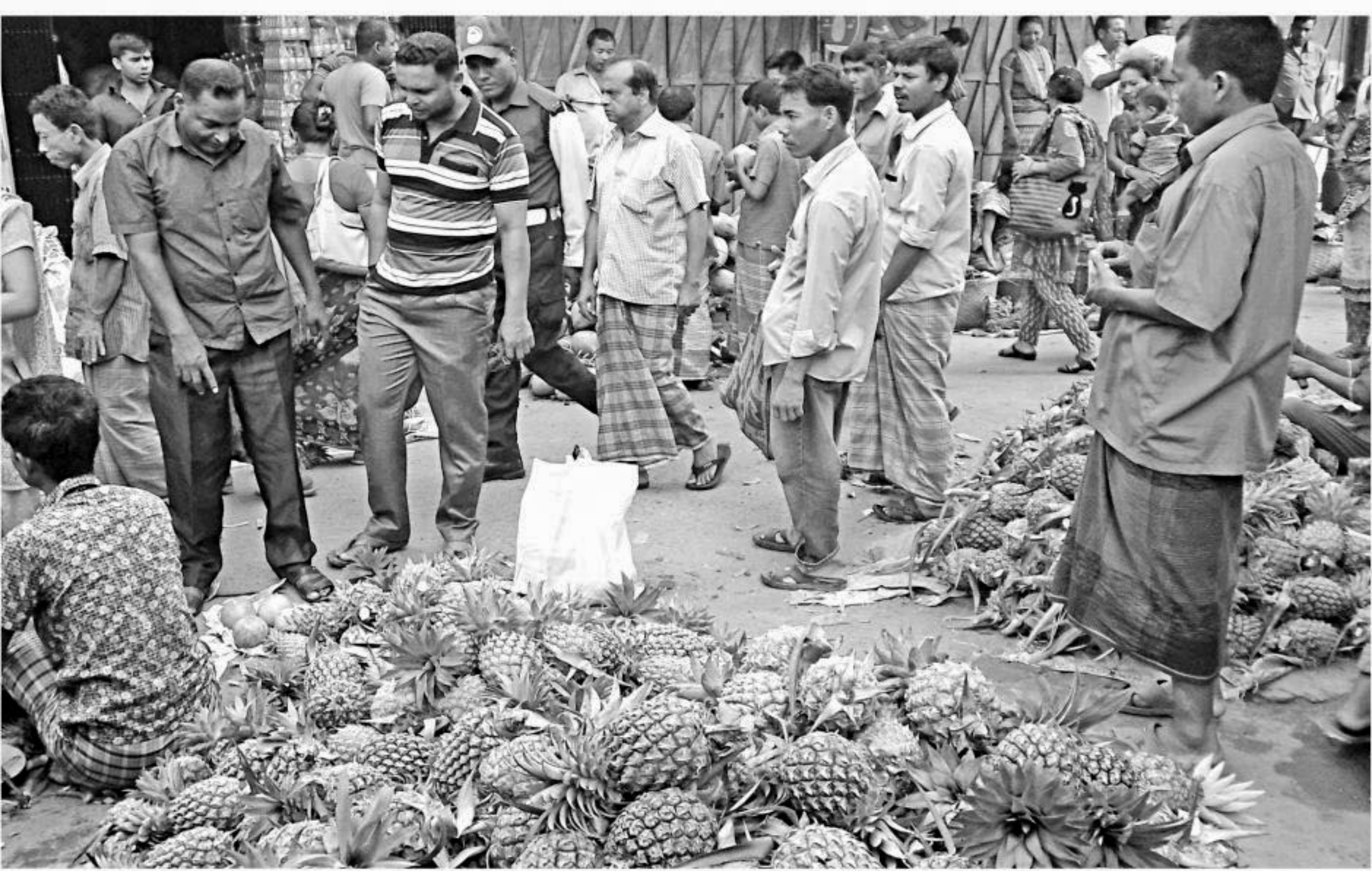


PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Huge pineapples arrive at Masjid Road in Khagrachhari Bazar as the hill district saw good yield of the popular fruit this season.

# A nearly extinct Dhanshiri

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL with ANDREW EAGLE

"I shall return once more to the banks of the Dhanshiri," wrote poet Jibananda Das, "Perhaps not as a man, but in the guise of a white hawk or shalik." Unfortunately, were Das to return as either man or bird to experience the beauty of this most poetic of rivers, he must be disappointed. Clogged by silt and plagued by land grabbing, the Dhanshiri River has all but dried up.

Only a decade and a half ago the Dhanshiri still flowed with strong currents. It was teeming with fish, and sailboats routinely plied its waters. The 14 kilometre river which flows from Rajapur to Jhalakathi town links the Jangalia River to the broad Sugandha, and a century ago even ships en-route from Dhaka and Chittagong to Mongla used the waterway.

"The river used to be very wide with high waves and mighty currents," says

Md Abdul Jalil, retired assistant headmaster of nearby Bagri High School, while standing on the Dhanshiri's bank. "There were all sorts of boats, even fishing boats, when I was young."

Jalil can recall how his father and grandfather used to carry goods by steamer from Kolkata via the Dhanshiri.

"The river is of vital importance for agriculture in the riverbank villages and it's linked to many canals that were dug from the river," says Abu Bakar Siddik, Jhalakathi's deputy director of agriculture. The irrigation of thousands of hectares will be badly affected if the river is lost completely, he warned.

Yet the Dhanshiri is on the verge of disappearing.

"We don't get enough water for agriculture in the dry season," says Mokammel, a farmer in Bagri. "In the past it was available but now there's a crisis of water in the

river." "Much of the river is only knee-deep," says deputy director of fisheries in Jhalakathi, Md Rezaul. "There used to be plenty of fish but now there are hardly any. For siltation and land grabbing the river will soon lose its current."

Retired fisherman Rafique meanwhile, says that over a hundred fishermen once earned their livelihoods on the Dhanshiri, but nowadays there are none. "Immediate action is needed," he said, "to stop the river disappearing altogether."

One decisive hit to the river's health came in 1986 when the then-government allotted one of its river chars (landmass emerging from riverbed) to build Guchchha Gram, a settlement for landless people. A second such project named Ashrayan on Dhanshiri's bank was completed in 1998.

"The two housing projects are major reasons for

the river dying," says Md Jamal Uddin, a lecturer of soil and environment science at Barisal University. "If the river completely disappears the ecological balance of the area will be badly affected."

Newly appointed deputy commissioner to Jhalakathi, Md Mizanul Haque Chowdhury commented that he recently visited the river and intends to write to the Water Development Board to recommend dredging. "I also intend to take quick action to recover grabbed river lands," he says.

Jibananda Das once celebrated the Dhanshiri, ensuring its name resonated in many a Bangladeshi heart to posterity. But these days the river's future is not in the hands of the poet or most of his admirers. The task of saving the Dhanshiri now lies with decision-makers, who will ultimately decide what Das, were he to return in the future as either man or bird, will see.



PHOTO: STAR

Once profusely flowing Dhanshiri River in Jhalakathi district now exists merely as a thin canal. Massive siltation coupled with mindless land grabbing has led to the situation.

## Stay away

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Whenever there is a military ruler in any country, he only speaks against corruption, but adopts it as his policy, the premier mentioned. "It also happened in Bangladesh for which the country could not move ahead after 1975 [assassination of the Father of the Nation]."

She suggested the officials of various BCS cadres to maintain high standard in implementing development projects and ensure better outcome for the targeted beneficiaries.

Quoting some lines from the speech delivered by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman before public servants at the Gono Bhaban on February 1, 1972, Hasina said the new officials would have to perceive the essence of his speech and devote themselves to public service, keeping the national interest above everything else.

Only raising strong voice against corruption would not work as there is a need to take proper steps to curb the menace, she added.

Some 113 secretaries, 609 additional secretaries, 1,411 joint secretaries and 1,434 deputy secretaries have been promoted since 2009, the PM told her audience.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith, Public Administration Minister Syed Ashrafur Islam and State Minister for Public Administration Ismat Ara Sadique also spoke.

Earlier, the PM handed out medals and certificates to 40 best performing participants. Under the programme, the BPATC and nine other organisations provided six-month training to some 728 BCS officials.

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