



PHOTO: STAR

Huge quantities of mung bean arrive at Kalaia Bazar in Baufal upazila under Patuakhali district as the area sees increased cultivation and good yield of the popular pulse this season.

# Mung bean farming sees rise in Patuakhali

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Cultivation of mung bean sees gradual increase in the coastal district as it brings good profit.

A total 72,310 hectares of land has been brought under mung bean cultivation in Patuakhali district this year while it was about 62,000 hectares last year.

Of the land, 20,500 hectares is in Baufal upazila, 13,740 hectares in Patuakhali Sadar, 12,000 hectares in Dashmina, 10,800 hectares in Rangabali, 8,500 hectares in Galachipa, 3,000 hectares in

Mirzaganj, 2,250 hectares in Dumki and 1,520 hectares in Kalapara upazila, said a source of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Patuakhali.

"I cultivated mung bean on two hectares of land this year. The weather is favourable and I hope to get 25 to 30 maunds (a maund = 40 kg) of yield this year. The crop sells for good prices," said Abdul Mannan, a farmer of Hetalia village in Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

Abu Jafar Sarder of the same village said he cultivated mung bean on five hectares of land and already

harvested 35 maunds from half of the land.

Now the harvesting of mung bean is going on in full swing.

This correspondent saw many farmers and workers engaged in collecting mung bean at fields of Badorpur village in Patuakhali Sadar.

"I can collect 10 to 14 kg of mung bean daily and I get one-seventh of the collected crop as wage," said Helena Begum, a farm labourer.

Local farmers are very interested to cultivate mung bean in the dry season as it is more profitable than other

crops in the area, said Abdul Salam, sub-assistant agriculture officer in Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

Farmers got 900 kg to 1,200 kg of mung bean per hectare of land by cultivating high yielding varieties, he said, adding that per kg mung bean is selling at Tk 90 to 100.

Abdul Malek, a wholesaler who was buying mung bean at Hetalia Badghat Bazar from farmers, said he buys mung bean at Tk 3,600 to 4,000 per maund and sends it to different districts including Dhaka, Rajshahi, and Khulna.



PHOTO: STAR

Torture victim Anwara Begum getting treatment at Nilphamari 100-bed Hospital.

# Brutally tortured, couple land in Nilphamari hospital

It followed the same on their teenage son

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A poor woman and her husband are groaning in pain on the floor of Nilphamari 100-bed Hospital, as they were badly beaten allegedly by relatives of a union parishad (UP) member on Monday evening.

Anwara Begum, 36, and her husband Abed Ali, 42, a day labourer of Monsapara village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila, faced the brutality as the woman protested torture on her son, after 'false allegation' of stealing a bicycle.

Following the allegation by villager Babul Hossen on

Friday morning, Motiar Rahman, younger brother of local Kundopukur UP member Asgar Ali, blamed Anwara's son Anwarul Islam, 14, for the theft and cycle owner Babul and his men beat the boy mercilessly, although there was no evidence to support the allegation, locals said.

The seriously injured boy was admitted to hospital where he took treatment for two days.

"The false blame and torture on my son shocked me. When Motiar was going through a road beside my house on Monday evening, I went near him and protested his cruelty on my innocent son," said Anwara

Begum, lying on hospital floor on Tuesday.

"At this, Motiar became furious and called his relatives Razzak, Hannan, Alamgir, Anwar and a few others through cellphone call. They forcibly took me to Razzak's house 250 metres away from the spot and beat me mercilessly making me almost unconscious," she said in a choked voice.

Hearing the matter, the victim's husband Abed Ali rushed to the spot to rescue her but he was also beaten severely.

With serious injuries, both of them were admitted to Nilphamari 100-bed Hospital the same night and

they are undergoing treatment there.

The woman has injuries on the chest and other parts of the body and it would take a few more days to be cured, said attending nurse Sharifa Akhtar Sharmin.

Preparation is on to file a case regarding the matter, Shahjahan Pasha, officer in charge of Sadar Police Station, said, adding that he will take action after receiving the victims' written complaint.

Contacted, UP member Asgar Ali said, "The housewife slapped my brother when he was going somewhere. The allegation of beating of the woman by my brother is false."

# Earthworms bring solvency to Jhenidah village women

AZIBOR RAHMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

Earthworms: they're not much to look at, unless you're another earthworm; but earthworms have had a profound impact on the natural environment and human civilisation since their appearance on the planet some 600 million years ago.

Myth or fact, it is said that Cleopatra so revered the earthworm and their contribution to soil fertility in the Nile Valley that she made it a crime punishable by death to remove earthworms from Egypt. In 2009, a book that set out to rank all life forms according to their impact on planet Earth awarded first place to earthworms, five ranks higher than the humble human.

In Neamotpur union in Jhenidah's Kaliganj upazila earthworms might not be revered exactly, but Thai, Indian and African earthworm species are proving themselves invaluable. Around 1,000 women in 13 villages have become self-reliant through vermiculture: using our annelid friends to make compost.

With key ingredients such as rotten plantain trees, cow dung and water hyacinth, the work of 500 grams of earthworms can create around 15 kilograms of fertiliser per month, with the number of earthworms also increasing during the process. A kilogram of compost fertiliser currently sells for around Tk. 10 while a kilogram of earthworms will fetch Tk. 2,000, prices that are good news for earthworm entrepreneurs.

"I earn around Tk.15,000 per month selling earthworms and compost fertiliser," says Monoara Khatun of Mostabapur village. Having completed training from Japan-based NGO Hunger Free World, Monoara has been able to build a brick home and purchase a dairy cow thanks to her earthworm enterprise.

She now grows organic vegetables too.

Morzina Khatun of Balarampur village meanwhile, picked up the earthworm trade during a visit to Vietnam in 2013. "Our compost association has around 1,000 members," she says. "From compost production I'm able to cover the cost of college education for my son and daughter. I earn about Tk. 20,000 per month."

"I've been involved with vermiculture for the last twelve years," says Razia Khatun of Mostabapur. "I have since purchased 45 decimals of land and built a brick home." As her husband is currently physically impaired, earthworms have given Razia the means to maintain her family. "More and more women are taking up vermiculture," she says.

Earthworms bring benefit to soil in three ways: biologically they convert large pieces of organic mat-

ter into nutrient rich humus; chemically, through their digestive tracts, they further break down nutrients into particles that can be more readily absorbed by plants; and, physically, earthworm burrowing contributes to soil aeration and drainage. For soil health, it's all good news.

"Vermiculture compost is more effective as a fertiliser than chemicals," says Balarampur farmer Golam Rasul, "especially as a means to restore fertility to the land. Our crops are greener and fresher with vermiculture compost."

Dr. Gul Hossain, former director of technology transfer at the Bangladesh agriculture research centre in Dhaka agrees. "Compost contains many times the levels of key soil nutrients like nitrogen, phosphate and potash," he says. "With compost, depleted soil has the chance to recover. It also removes disease."

"Compost helps maintain ecological balance," says Jhenidah environmentalist Masud Ahmed Sanzu, "Healthy soils are essential for strong biodiversity. While chemical fertilisers can harm the soil, compost fertiliser heals it."

The trade translates into benefits for consumers too. "People should not eat any insecticide-sprayed vegetables within 14 days of its application," says Jhenidah civil surgeon Dr. Abdus Salam. "Compost fertiliser facilitates the production of chemical free vegetables and also protects the crop from diseases."

Neamotpur chairman Sazedur Rahman Liton is proud of the success of vermiculture in his union. "Vermiculture is alleviating poverty," he says, "Traders come to our union to purchase compost nowadays and in the process unemployed women are finding their financial feet."



PHOTO: STAR

Monoara Khatun weighs natural fertiliser made with earthworm at her Mostabapur village house in Kaliganj upazila under Jhenidah district, to sell the item at Tk 2,000 per kg. The area sees gradual increase in vermiculture.

# Parts of 192 insecticide sprayers stolen from govt hospital

The machines used to kill kala-azar carrier fly now lying inoperative in Bhaluka

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

All the 192 machines meant for spraying insecticides to prevent kala-azar in Bhaluka upazila under the district have become dysfunctional as brass levers of the machines went missing from a government hospital.

Consequently, spraying of insecticides to destroy the bloodsucking sand fly that causes the disease in the area could not be started on the scheduled day Friday, said sources.

Authorities, however, started spraying the insecticides on Tuesday after arranging 95 machines from four upazilas of Mymensingh and Gazipur districts, said Dr Md Hafizur Rahman, Bhaluka upazila health and family planning officer.

When the staff of the hospital went to the observation room on the ground floor of Bhaluka Trauma Center on Thursday morning to bring out the machines for cleaning, they found brass levers of all the machines missing and informed the authorities, said Dr Md Hafizur Rahman, Bhaluka upazila health and family planning officer.

On information, a team led by Mymensingh Civil Surgeon Dr Mustafa Kamal visited the spot on Thursday night.

A three-member probe body headed by Dr Sheikh Abu Zafar, and comprising Dr Mustaq Ahmed and Dr

Masud Helali Ruman was formed on Friday to investigate the matter.

The machines, each worth Tk 25,000, were procured from World Health Organisation six years ago, said hospital sources.

These were used to spray medicines to prevent kala azar in vulnerable areas, mostly places with mud houses, twice a year, they said.

Each time the spraying continues for four weeks.

During the remaining ten months of the year, the machines are kept at the observation room of Bhaluka Trauma Center as there is no suitable store room at Bhaluka Health Complex, said Dr Hafizur.

A general diary was lodged with Bhaluka Police

Station on April 21 night.

Md Mamun-or-Rashid, officer-in-charge of Bhaluka Police Station said, "The stealing shows that there was not proper security arrangement for the machines. A section of office staff might be involved with the act. We are conducting drives to recover the stolen brass levers."



PHOTO: STAR

These machines, meant for spraying insecticides to destroy sand fly that causes kala-azar, are lying useless in Bhaluka Trauma Center in Mymensingh district, as the levers of the devices went missing from the government-run centre.