



Jackfruits infected by fungus at a tree at Nijputia village in Jhenidah Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

JHENIDAH Growers worried as fungal infection affects jackfruits

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Jackfruit farmers in Jhenidah are worried as fungal infection has affected fruits on the trees.

Some orchard owners of Nijputia village under Jhenidah Sadar upazila said large spots develop on the fruit and spoil it. Some farmers said they applied fungicides on the fruits when they noticed the infestation, but that could not check the spread of the

disease.

Alam Hossain of Nijputia village said he did not know about the disease, and even the agriculture officers could not tell them about it or what to do to fight it.

Amjad Hossain, a jackfruit grower of Enayetpur village under Kaliganj upazila, said they would get good profit by selling jackfruit, but due to this disease they are not getting it.

Agriculture officials say

there is no reason to worry as the disease could be managed with fungicides.

Contacted, Dr Khan M o h a m m a d Muniruzzaman, an officer of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Jhenidah Sadar, said the attack could be controlled by applying anti-fungal medicine during the immature stage of the jackfruits.

The DAE official said most farmers, especially the orchard owners in the area,

are not aware enough about orchard management as the fruits in the area are not produced on a commercial basis on vast tracts of land like in the surrounding districts.

The DAE has been providing training to the orchard owners on plant management through farmers' field days (FFD) and training so that they could save the plants from attacks by pests and diseases, the UAO said.



PHOTO: STAR

Schoolgirls practise martial arts at the field of Paharpur-Lakhipur High School in Mirpur upazila under Kushtia district, thanks to the initiative of Bangladesh Nari Progati Sangha to boost confidence of young girls with self defence techniques.

Thanks to martial arts, girls can take care of themselves

AMANUR AMAN with ANDREW EAGLE

Any parent finds cause, now and then, to wonder at the lives of their children. How times have changed! It's not always a matter of electronic gadgets; as easily new outside activities can surprise. In Kushtia there are many parents who have watched a positive transformation in their daughters since martial arts training came to town.

"It was beyond my thinking," says Kabir Uddin of Paharpur village in Mirpur upazila. "Why would my daughter learn martial arts and how could it help her?" His daughter Keya Khatun is a Class VIII student at Paharpur-Lakhipur High School.

"But now I realise," Kabir continues, "I've seen the change in her. How many times has she told me that if she ever has to face any tricky situation, she is ready?"

Martial arts tuition has helped not only Keya, who has to walk 2 kilometres to school each day, to gain self-confidence. Girls of the 20 schools participating in the programme have developed a heightened sense of security at home or school or on the street, finding that safety is to a greater degree in their own hands.

The 400 students aged 10 to 15 and including students from the most remote villages, learn basic martial arts techniques that can be useful in any untoward situation. The programme arranged by Bangladesh Nari Progati

Sangha as part of the Safe School, Safe Community initiative funded by the UN trust fund to end violence against women is now in its third year.

"I've learnt some jujutsu moves," says a proud Keya, referring to the martial art originally developed in feudal Japan as a means of combat for defeating armed samurais.

"It's changed the way I feel," she adds. "The fact that I know what to do if I ever face a bad situation makes me feel better, even if it is mostly mentally." At Keya's school, 20 girls are enrolled in the martial arts classes.

Martial arts trainer Md Alauddin says the training isn't only focused on defence but also on minimising the possibility of assault and needing to engage in physical confrontation in the first place. "With this training almost anybody can learn practical self-defence in a fairly short time frame," he says, "without needing to become an expert fighter."

Teachers, parents and villagers alike have come to appreciate the classes and more particularly the newfound confidence it has instilled in the girls. "Our students were interested to learn it," says the headmaster of Keya's school Zihad Ali Khan, "so we let them."

Local union parishad member Hamidul Islam also sees benefit in the training. "I hope it can increase the girls' sense of security and their ability

to protect themselves from realistic threats such as street assaults, kidnapping, rape or other menace."

The training is also appreciated by veteran writer and leading intellectual Dr. Rashid Askari who is a professor of English in Kushtia Islamic University. However, he believes other measures such as improved policing and better protection for victims in the legal system are also needed in order to properly combat sexual violence in Bangladesh.

Indeed the UN trust fund initiative under which the martial arts training falls also has a broader focus that involves teaching 8,000 schoolgirls about gender and legal issues, their rights and the types of oppression they can face.

Nowadays well-established, as can happen with many initiatives, the programme did face some opposition in its early days, especially from the more religious minded. "We took the time to inform everybody of the positive sides of the programme," says district coordinator Hasan Iqbal Rasel, who says that these days the programme is broadly accepted.

Regardless, schoolmates Keya, Afroza, Samia, Shanta and the rest of the martial arts class are enthusiastic, happy to know more about their rights in society and in the country, and well-satisfied with the basic martial arts techniques they've mastered.

Man gets life for killing son

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A court here yesterday sentenced a man to life term imprisonment for killing his three-month-old son in 2005.

Lifer Jahidul Islam, 48, of Chalk Barul village in Gaibandha Sadar upazila, was tried in absentia.

Additional Sessions Judge Shariful Islam also fined him Tk 5000. In default, he is to suffer another six months in prison.

According to the prosecution, Jahidul strangled the baby boy following an altercation with his wife Parul Begum on December 18 in 2005.

The following day, Parul filed a case with Sadar Police Station, accusing Jahidul.

After examining evidence and witnesses, the judge found Jahidul guilty and pronounced the verdict.

Former UP chairman among 7 held with Yaba

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Police arrested seven people, including a former union parishad chairman, from Gouripur upazila of the district early yesterday and seized Yaba tablets from their possession.

The arrestees are Dulal Ahmed, 50, ex-chairman of Sahanati Union Parishad under the upazila, Ripon Miah, 40, Tipu Miah, 40, Milon Hossain, 20, Shababuddin Ahmed, 37, Sourav, 26, and Hosne Ara Begum, 40.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team raided the house of Dulal in Sahanati area and arrested the seven with 575 Yaba tablets, said Md Akhtar Morshed, officer-in-charge of Gouripur Police Station.

The arrestees have been involved in Yaba trading in Gouripur and adjacent upazilas for long, the OC added.

The arrestees were produced before a Mymensingh court yesterday afternoon with a remand prayer. The court didn't hear the remand prayer and sent them to jail.

BCL leader 'assaults' PA to upazila chairman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

The president of the upazila unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) beat up a retired army officer on Harirampur upazila parishad chairman's office premises yesterday afternoon.

The victim, Shahidul Islam Faruk, a retired senior warrant officer, is serving as personal assistant to upazila parishad Chairman Md Saiful Huda Chowdhury Shatil.

The incident took place when the upazila chairman, Vice-Chairman Md Abul Bashar Sabuj and Upazila Nirbahi Officer Rubina Ferdousy were distributing sports items to the educational institutions at a function at the upazila chairman's office.

Contacted, the upazila chairman said the BCL upazila unit president Md Masudur Rahman came to the chairman's office at around 3:00pm and demanded 50 footballs from him.

"We gave him five footballs but he did not take those. He threatened me and my personal assistant Faruk as his demand was not met. At one stage, he beat up Faruk," the upazila chairman said.

Contacted, BCL leader Masudur Rahman refuted the allegation.

Bridge collapse during Roanu causes woe to 20,000 villagers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Over 20,000 people of six villages under Amtali upazila of Barguna district are suffering on the bridge over the Banshbnunia Canal collapsed during the recent cyclone Roanu.

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) built a concrete bridge over the Banshbnunia Canal under Haldia union in 2006 at a cost of Tk 40 lakh. Over 20,000 people of Jogotchad, Moddha Tepura, Dokkhin Tepura, Purbo Tepura, Uttar Tepura and Dokkhin Taktabunia villages used the bridge to communicate with different places, including the upazila headquarters.

Several hundred students of Senerhat Government Primary School and Taktabunia High School used this bridge to go to their educational institutions. The middle portion of the bridge collapsed and communication was snapped totally during cyclone Roanu on May 21.

Locals, including a good number of school going students, have to cross the

canal by country boats, which is very risky.

Ashis Kanti Howlader, headmaster of Senerhat Government Primary School, said accidents often occurred while crossing the river, and boats have capsized at least several times, injuring students and villagers.

Lamia of Class V, Nasir of Class II, Dishari of Class IV, Imran of Class I of the school sustained injuries at different times due to boat capsizing. This has spread fear among the students, he added.

ABM Sobhan, headmaster of Taktabunia High School, said the authorities concerned should take immediate steps to repair the bridge.

Md Shahidul Islam Mridha, chairman of Haldia Union Parishad, said they have informed the LGED about the matter.

Contacted, Md Nazrul Islam, upazila engineer of LGED, said they have already sent a letter to the higher authorities for funds to repair the bridge. "We will take steps to repair the bridge after getting allocation," he added.



PHOTO: STAR

Collapsed during cyclone Roanu on May 21, this bridge over Banshbnunia canal in Amtali upazila under Barguna district is in need of urgent repair or reconstruction to mitigate sufferings of thousands of people in the area.

Bandarban AL leader abducted

District unit of the ruling party blames PCJSS for the kidnapping

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

An unidentified gang abducted a local Awami League leader from Sadar upazila of the district on Monday night.

The victim is Mongpu Marma, joint convener of Bandarban Sadar upazila unit of Awami League.

Kranu Marma, a union Parishad member and also a neighbour of the victim, said a gang of 10 to 12 picked up Mongpu at gunpoint from Jamchhari area at around 10:45 pm.

Protesting the incident, the district unit of the ruling party held a rally in front of Bandarban Press Club yesterday morning. At the rally, district AL leaders claimed that an armed group of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) abducted Mongpu.

They demanded release of Mongpu within the next 24 hours. Otherwise, they threatened to enforce an indefinite roads and waterways blockade in the district.

The rally was addressed,

among others, by AL district unit president Kwe Shwe, and district AL leaders Laxmipada Das, Kajol Kanti Das, and Shafiqur Rahma.

Army and police personnel are trying to rescue the abducted AL leader, said Mizanur Rahman, superintendent of Bandarban police.

Contacted, KS Mong Marma, member of PCJSS central committee, refuted the allegation, saying that his party men are in no way involved in the abduction of Mongpu Marma.



PHOTO: STAR

Mindless encroachment and construction work on the Louhajang River in Tangail town is leading the watercourse to virtual death. The photo was taken from Akur Takur Para in the town yesterday.