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GROWTH HORMONE ON PINEAPPLE

Health hazards ignored for profiteering

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Oblivious to potential health hazards and ruining its taste, pineapple growers are spraying hormones untimely and excessively on pineapples in Madhupur of Tangail to increase the size of the fruit.

As a result of this practice, the Madhupur variety of the fruit is also losing its natural sweet taste and aromatic flavour.

Madhupur pineapple is a rainy season fruit traditionally harvested during July and August.

About 16 years ago, the government gave the pineapple growers permission to use the hormone so that they could get yield all the year round and before the harvesting season, agricultural officials said.

Hormones are supposed to be used 15 days before and 15 days after the budding stage for better flowering of the plant and preventing the flower buds from shedding, they said.

"The local farmers, however, use hormones in an excessive amount on mature fruits to make these bigger in the hope of better profits," said Mahmudul Hasan, Madhupur upazila agriculture officer.

"Some dishonest pesticides shop owners encourage farmers to use these hormones on the fruits, untimely and excessively, to increase the sale of their chemical and earn a profit from it," he said.

"Using excessive hormone on the fruit makes it tasteless and watery," he added.

Some pineapple growers in Madhupur, however, said they use hormones on the fruit as buyers prefer big and yellow pineapples to the natural-sized ones. The growers thus can charge a higher price for the bigger fruits.



Growth hormones are supposed to be used 15 days before and 15 days after the budding stage. But in an orchard in Digholbaid village of Madhupur upazila, Tangail, the chemical is being sprayed on almost matured fruits. Inset, the bottles of the growth hormone. The photos were taken on May 22. PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMINGS

Ramadan	June	Sehri	Iftar
12	18		6-51
13	19	3-39	6-52
14	20	3-39	6-52

SIBL
Social Islami Bank Limited
PRAYER TIMING JUNE 18

	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	3-45	12-45	5-00	6-51	8-15
JAMAAT	3-50	1-15	5-15	7-01	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

2,500 Bangladeshis sent back home

Malaysia says the undocumented workers were deported in last 4 months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Malaysian government in the last four months deported around 2,500 undocumented Bangladeshi workers for not having valid work permits, said sources at the Bangladesh High Commission in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

"Every month we are issuing travel permits to 500 to 600 undocumented workers who have no valid work permit to stay in Malaysia," an official at the mission told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi on Thursday in the country's parliament said that a total of 32,803 illegal foreign workers had been deported between February 15 and June 13.

After checking the documents of 91,075 workers, some 27,369 were found to be staying in Malaysia without documents, reports Malaysian The Star, quoting the minister.

Zahid Hamid, also the Malaysian home minister, said 1,24,279 undocumented workers had been rehired under a rehiring programme.

The Bangladesh mission officials said some 30,000 undocumented Bangladeshis have been registered for the rehiring programme, which started in February. But this does not mean that they will be rehired, they added.

"Actually, we don't have any information on the number of rehired Bangladeshis. Until the Malaysian Immigration Department declares them legal to stay here, it cannot be confirmed that they are rehired," said a mission official, wishing not be named.

The ongoing rehiring programme will end on June 30 and after that it will be possible to know the fates of the registered Bangladeshis, the official added.

Rampal power cost to rise significantly

Says foreign study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The proposed coal-fired Rampal power plant is heavily subsidised and its electricity generation cost would be 32 percent more than the average power prices in Bangladesh, said a financial analysis report on the plant.

The project should be cancelled as it would set the country back, said the report by Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA). It suggested that Bangladesh should invest in solar energy.

"We suspect the project is being promoted as a means to sell Indian coal to Bangladesh and as a way to skirt Indian policy against building a coal plant so near the Sundarbans, a protected forest and World Heritage Site," the US-based research organisation said.

The report titled "Risky and Over-Subsidised: A Financial Analysis of the Rampal Power Plant" was published on IEEFA's website yesterday. It is expected to be released at a programme in Dhaka today.

Jai Sharda, managing partner of Equitorial India, and Tim Buckley, director

Hospital uses robot to greet patients

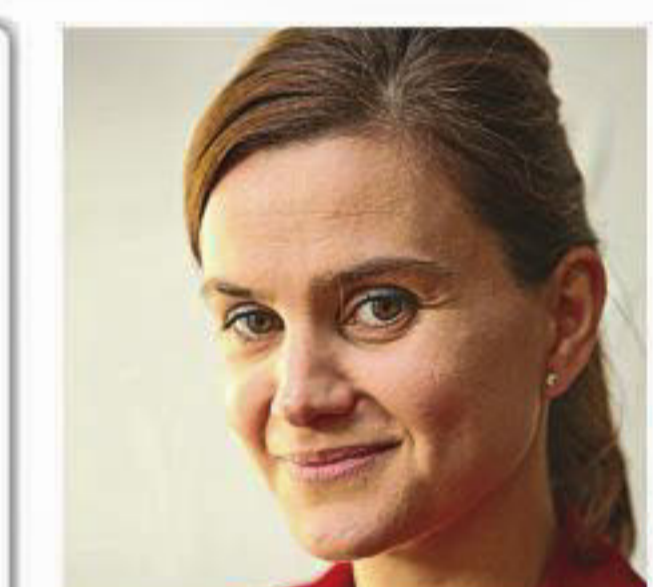
REUTERS, Ostend

A Belgian hospital has just welcomed its newest staff member: Pepper, a humanoid robot that speaks 19 languages.

Developed to improve social and health care by the Belgian company Zora Bots, Pepper joined the medical team as a receptionist at Ostend hospital AZ Damiaan.

Pepper will introduce visitors to the hospital, provide information and guide visitors and patients to the correct floor and room.

With a speed of just 3 km/h (1.8 mph), Pepper is also able to guide slower patients. Fully charged, it can work for up to 20 hours on its own.



LAWMAKER'S MURDER

UK PM urges tolerance

AGENCIES

A sombre British prime minister yesterday urged greater tolerance in public debate and recalled parliament to pay tribute to Jo Cox, the MP whose brutal killing has caused shock in Britain and further afield.

David Cameron and opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn added bouquets to a massive floral tribute to Cox in the northern village of Birstall, where she was gunned down on Thursday.

And with only a week until a referendum on whether Britain should leave the EU, which has split

2 killed in clash over fishing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two people were killed and 25 others injured in a clash between two groups of villagers over fishing in a water body in Anuhadi village of Phulbaria upazila yesterday.

The dead are Abdul Halim Fakir, 28, son of Hossain Ali Fakir, and Amsar Ali, 40, of the village. Halim is the secretary of Rangamatia union unit Jatiya Chhatra Samaj, pro-Jatiya Party student body.

Quoting locals, Rifat Khan Razib, officer-in-charge of Phulbaria Police Station, said there had been a longstanding conflict between Rustom Ali and Amsar of Anuhadi village over catching fish in Borovilar Beel, a water body.

The two groups got locked in an altercation over fishing in the water body around 8:00am



Eid shoppers have started to crowd the shopping malls in the capital though it is still over two weeks to go before the festival. The New Market area, a major destination for shoppers, was heavily congested on the weekend yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

2002 GUJARAT MASSACRE

Indian court jails 11 for life

AFP, Ahmedabad

An Indian court jailed 11 Hindus for life yesterday over the massacre of dozens of Muslims in Gujarat state 14 years ago, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi was chief minister.

The court sentenced 12 others to seven years in jail over the murder of 69 Muslims who were hacked and burnt to death in a residential complex in the city of Ahmedabad in Gujarat, among them women and children.

Another was given a 10-year term for rioting and arson.

The massacre at the Gulbarg Society housing complex was one of the single worst losses of life in the week-long violence that left more than 1,000 people dead.

Several Muslim families had taken shelter in the complex when it was stormed by a mob of attackers angered by the deaths of Hindus in a train fire.

Zakia Jaffri, whose husband was killed in the massacre and who has campaigned for those responsible to be brought to justice, said the sentences were too lenient.

"After all the horrible things they did to so many people, they still gave such flimsy sentences," Jaffri told reporters.

"I do not like this at all. The law has done grave injustice to me."

Prosecutors had sought the death penalty, arguing that those targeted were all "innocent people".

"We had pleaded before the court that if you are not convinced about giving the death penalty, at least give life