

## Criminals damage paddy

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Criminals damaged newly transplanted aman paddy plants on about five bighas (one bigha = .3306 acres) of land at Boikanthapur village in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila early Thursday.

Local sources said Moslem Uddin of the village transplanted aman plants on about 5 bighas of his land few days ago.

Criminals damaged paddy plants of the land early yesterday.

"I incurred a loss Tk 50 thousand," Moslem said, adding that the incident might be a sequel to a previous enmity.

He alleged that he had a long standing dispute with Johirul Islam, Sadequ and Samad over a piece of land.

Chairman of local union parishad Subrata Kumar Barman said he visited the spot and gave assurance of legal assistance.

## Kid's body found

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Police recovered the body of a minor boy from a betel nut storehouse in Kawkhali upazila under the district yesterday.

The deceased was Md Yasin, 8, son of Md Mahbubur Rahman Hawlader of Hogla Betka village. Locals said Yasin's mother married Mahbubur after the demise of his father and they stayed at a rented house in Kawkhali launch terminal area.

On Wednesday afternoon, as the victim's stepfather scolded him, he went out of the house.

The following day, the body was found inside a betel nut storehouse.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Pirojpur Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Local people suspect that toxic chemical used in the betel nut might have been the reason behind his death.



PHOTO: STAR

Singpart Mro of Cramadi Mro Para of Bandarban is now synonymous with success as a mango grower in the area that traditionally sees jhum cultivation by the indigenous people.

# Mro mango orchardists head for a bright economy

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA with ANDREW EAGLE

Being born into the hill-tracts-based Mro community means to inherit a rich culture of age-old tradition, including the agricultural practice of jhum cultivation. But instead of relying on the established ways of his roots, Singpart Mro, 28, of Cramadi Mro Para in Bandarban's Chimbuk Road area is following a new tradition. He's begun farming mangoes.

"I had 5 acres of jhum land," he says, "and I invested Tk 1 lakh in establishing a mango orchard there. Already I've harvested 600 maunds of mangoes for which I earned around Tk 8 lakhs."

According to Singpart, the

tastiest and most popular mangoes suitable for cultivation in the hill tracts are the amrapali and rangue varieties; and he notes the assistance he has received from local department of agriculture extension officials in ensuring a favourable yield, especially in the case of his amrapali crop.

"Pest control is crucial to a good harvest," Singpart says, "and the agriculture officers gave good advice on how to use pesticide properly and when."

Singpart has always been ambitious. In 2015 he completed a Masters in Sociology from a university in Dhaka, an all-too-rare achievement in the Mro community. While he thought that, post-graduation, he would

obtain a job back home, he decided instead that self-employment would not only be a means to support his family but also help to inspire others.

Singpart's enterprising efforts are widely appreciated in his community; but he's hardly alone. In the past few years many indigenous families in Bandarban have left jhum cultivation in favour of fruit orchards, including mangoes.

"Many growers in Cramadi Mro Para are getting good amrapali and rangue harvests," says local chief Karbari Raing Sang Mro. "Interest among buyers is increasing, especially because our locally-produced mangoes are free from harmful chemicals."

According to the deputy director of the department of agriculture extension, Altaf Hossain, mangoes are offering brighter economic prospects for indigenous farmers than jhum cultivation can hope to achieve.

"Mango cultivation offers handsome returns," he says, noting that around 4,500 hectares of hilly terrain in Bandarban were devoted to mango orchards this year, resulting in production of about 75,000 tonnes of the fruit. "We hope to train local farmers in good agricultural practices so that eventually they can even export mangoes internationally."

## Brutal vengeance on a family

Land-greedy neighbours burn house, injure 12

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

At least 12 people, including 10 members of a family, were injured in an attack allegedly by rival men at Dakkhin Bogarchar village in Bakshiganj upazila early yesterday as the latter got angry as Wadud would not sell a piece of land for a nominal price.

Police and locals said Abdul Wadud, 65, a resident of the village, bought 17.25 decimals of cropland from his neighbour late Mirza Ali, paternal uncle of rival Shalu Miah, 40, at Tk 5,000 20 years ago.

Wadud has recently built two makeshift houses on the land.

Police and locals said for the last three months, Shalu Miah and another influential neighbour Saidur Rahman, 45, jointly have been creating pressure on Wadud repeatedly for selling the land to them at the same amount he (Wadud) bought it 20 years ago.

As he declined to sell the land, the men of Shalu and Saidur equipped with lethal weapons went to the land and torched the makeshift houses there around 12:30am.

On information, Wadud and his family members rushed to the land to douse the fire.

The rival groups attacked them, leaving 12 people including Wadud and his nine other family members injured, said Sadikur Rahman, officer-in-charge (investigation) of Bakshiganj Police Station.

Of the injured, 10 members of the family were admitted to the upazila health complex, said Selim Miah, nephew of Wadud.

The injured include Wadud, his wife Umela Begum, 52, their sons -- Abdullah, 40, Abijal, 30, Lichu, 26, Nabijal, 28, Aminul, 45, and his son Sobhan, 17.

Preparation to file a case was underway in this regard as off filing of this report around 5:30pm yesterday.

## New councillors after recounting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

An election tribunal of Joypurhat on Wednesday declared four defeated councillors of Kalai municipality winners, rejecting the previous result.

The winners are Zannati Begum of Ward No 3, Aminul Islam Khan of Ward-1, Dade Elahi of Ward-2 and Ferdous Alam of Ward-3.

Mamotaz Begum of Ward-3, Mamunur Rashid of Ward-1, Rezaul Karim of Ward-2 and Rezaul Karim of Ward-3 were elected as councillors of

the municipality on December 30 last year.

The tribunal of Jannatul Ferdous Ibne Haque at Joypurhat court complex delivered the verdict on Wednesday afternoon after recounting the ballots. The court also found that the winners had hidden information in the nomination papers submitted before the election.

On January 24, the defeated candidates filed a case with Joypurhat election tribunal bringing allegation of vote rigging and hiding information against the four winning councillors.

## 'JMB den'

FROM PAGE 20

The drives were launched based on "specific information" from Shafiqul Islam, a suspect held over the Sholakia attack on the Eid day, said law enforcers.

During the raid yesterday, the Rab men seized seven crude bombs, a pistol, over 100 bullets, two axes, six sharp weapons, jihadi books and bomb-making materials in the Tongi flat.

Among the seized items were plastic explosives and detonators, Rab Media Wing Director Commander Mufti Mahmud Khan told a press conference at the building.

He said after being recruited in JMB in 2004, Mahmudul gradually gained expertise in making bombs.

"We learnt that Mahmudul provided training for killers who took part in some recent targeted murders."

The killers of Assistant Sub-Inspector Ibrahim Mollah, who was hacked to death at a police checkpoint in the capital's Gabtoli on October 22 last year, and the attackers of Hussaini Dalan bomb blast in Old Dhaka on October 24 were trained up by Mahmudul, the official added.

As part of militant training, young recruits are given training in physical activities, operating firearms, self-defence tactics and gather-

ing information, Khan told newsmen.

Of the arrestees, Mahmudul was a student at Jessore University of Science and Technology, Ashikul at Rangpur Prime Medical College and Shariatullah at Jessore MM College. Shakib completed his Alim studies from a Gazipur madrasa and was waiting for enrolment in a university, according to Rab.

### TWO ARRESTED IN KUSHTIA

The Rab in Kushtia arrested two men and recovered firearms from their possession in Daulatpur upazila early yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The two are Abu Daud Hasan Pappu, 22, a Qawmi madrasa student, and Firoz Pramanik, 40, an alleged activist of outlawed Biplobi Communist Party.

Speaking at a press conference in Kushtia, Shahabuddin Khan, commanding officer of Rab-12, said a Rab team raided Pappu's house at Kazipur village of the upazila around 3:30am and arrested him.

The law enforcers seized a pistol, a revolver and 22 bullets from him.

The crime-busters picked up Pramanik from his house at the same village in the morning and recovered a rifle from there.



PHOTO: STAR

Such structures, encroaching on the river beside Kalapara Bazar in Patuakhali district are now a common sight, thanks to the callousness of a section of people and authorities' failure to take action.

## Illegal structures built on river bank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Illegal structures have narrowed the Done River in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali, thanks to mindless encroachment by some local influential quarters.

Local people said some influentials in the area are building multi-storey buildings occupying the river bank adjacent to the upazila headquarters.

Thought the spot is about half a kilometre away from the upazila land office the local administration did not take any initiative regarding the matter, they alleged.

While visiting the area recently, this correspondent found one Keramat Hawlader constructing a multi-storey structure occupying 10 kathas of the river

bank near the Nutan Bus Terminal.

This corresponded found construction of its ground floor has already been completed and construction works for the other floors are in progress.

When asked, Keramat said he got the land from his father but failed to show any legal document regarding the ownership of the land.

Dipok Kumar Roy, assistant commissioner (land) in Kalapara, said the authorities concerned will launch an eviction drive soon to remove the illegal structures from river bank.

Kalapara Upazila Nirbahi Officer Masud Hasan Patwary said lawful action will be taken against the grabbers.

## Now the stray elephant moves in Sirajganj shoal

Not rescued in three weeks, the animal gets weaker for shortage of food

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The Indian wild elephant, which was separated from its companions and came into Bangladesh from Assam through Kurigram's Chilmari upazila on June 27, is turning feeble for lack of adequate food for the last few weeks. Although the animal is moving from one place to another for the last three weeks near the Jamuna River, nobody has taken any initiative to rescue it.

Jaidul Islam, station officer of Kazipur Fire Station, said the elephant came to the shoal

area of Kazipur last Tuesday through the Jamuna River from Bogra's Sariakandi upazila. It is now on the shoals of Munshirnagar of the upazila, he added.

"Fire fighters have kept the elephant under watch but we have not enough ability to rescue wild animals, so we have not taken any steps," he said.

"Upazila administration along with the locals tried to rescue the animal but failed. We have asked the regional forest office in Pabna to rescue the animal, but they have not taken any step till now," Md Abdul Halim,

assistant commissioner (land) of Kazipur upazila, told this correspondent.

Locals have kept the animal under watch, the AC land, also the acting upazila nirbahi officer, said, adding that the weak animal sometimes moves to Jamalpur and then comes back to Kazipur shoal.

Asked about the rescue drive of the forest department, the AC land said the forest officials said they have no equipments to rescue the animal. They have not even taken any initiative to rescue the animal till now, he added.



PHOTO: STAR

This impressive open stage titled Bhagedin Akhra at Natshal village in Mohadevpur upazila in Naogaon district saw inauguration on Saturday, much to the happiness of the local ethnic people as they would now be able to hold traditional cultural functions with ease.

## Grabbing of Hindus' land alleged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Some people belonging to Hindu community have brought land grabbing allegation against a union parishad (UP) chairman in Mathbaria upazila of the district.

They came up with the allegation at a press conference at Pirojpur Press Club yesterday under the banner of Bangladesh Jatiya Hindu Mohajoat.

The accused is Md Shahjahan Hawlader, chairman of Tushkhali Union Parishad, and general secretary of the union unit of Awami League.

Amal Chandro Halder, president of Mathbaria upazila unit of the organisation, at the conference alleged that on June 9 this

year, Shahjahan started to make a fish enclosure grabbing 45 kathas of land of five Hindus of Tushkhali village in the upazila.

The victims are Hasi Rani Biswas, Pankaj Kumer Bepary, Prodip Kumer Bepary, Dipak Chandro Bepary and Manoj Kumer Bepary.

On June 12, through arbitration Shahjahan promised to fill up the grabbed land and return it to the owners within ten days.

As Shahjahan did not keep his promise, one of the victims, Hasi Rani Biswas, filed a case with Mathbaria Police Station on June 30, accusing three named people including Shahjahan and 25-30 unnamed men.

Contacted, the UP chairman said the allegation of land grabbing brought against him is totally false and baseless.



PHOTO: STAR

This stray elephant, entering Bangladesh from India on June 27, was seen roaming in Chinnar Char area of Sirajganj district yesterday.