

Greening disease, a new threat to citrus plants

AMINUL ISLAM with ANDREW EAGLE

Damaging citrus greening disease, which causes the top leaves of citrus plants to turn yellow and dry out, and is a problem for citrus farmers worldwide, has been confirmed in Bangladesh for the first time.

The symptoms of the disease have long been observed in Bangladesh but were previously blamed on common-place nutritional deficiencies, including inadequate zinc. Recently scientists have been able to isolate the bacterium that causes citrus greening disease from several local samples of mandarin and sweet orange trees, locally known as komola and malta.

"We visited Moulvibazar, Sylhet and Chittagong to collect samples to test," says Prof. Rashidul Islam of the Bangladesh Agricultural University's department of plant pathology, who led the three-member research team. "We found the disease occurring in a high percentage of samples."

According to the research team members, who also represent the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute in Gazipur, the bacterium *Candidatus Liberibacter asiaticus* was first isolated through polymerase

change reaction testing and genetic sequencing processes last month.

The presence of the disease has particular implications for crop expansion via grafting, the scientists warn. "We hope the confirmed detection of this disease will promote further research," says Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute's scientific officer and team member Monirul Hassan Tipu. The ultimate goal is to develop measures to address the threat to citrus production.

Since 2013 the agriculture ministry has undertaken a number of measures to develop and expand citrus production in 67 upazilas of 17 districts. With citrus crops currently covering 2,832 hectares the aim is to bring a further 800 hectares under citrus cultivation by 2021.

Dr. Md Azmatulla, the principal scientific officer at Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute who is also the director of the government's Citrus Development Project says identifying the disease represents a step forward in better managing the citrus fruit cultivation expansion that has been underway for two decades.

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PHOTO: COLLECTED

Prof Rashidul Islam, right, and his research team member Monirul Hassan Tipu working with a plant in Akbarpur in Moulvibazar recently. The team has been able to isolate the bacterium that causes citrus greening disease from several local samples of mandarin and orange trees. Inset, a citrus plant affected by the bacterium.



'Stalkers' beat 8 JSC students for protesting harassment

A CORRESPONDENT, Shariatpur

A group of alleged stalkers beat up eight students, including four girls, for protesting harassment of their classmate in Shariatpur yesterday.

The injured are class-VIII students of Binodpur Public High School and this year's JSC examinees. They were admitted to Shariatpur Sadar Hospital.

The incident happened in Sadar upazila's Dewankandi village in the afternoon when the students were on their way home from their exam centre at Angaria High School.

The victims alleged that one Shamim Dewan of the same village had been stalking one of the female classmates on her way to the exam centre for the last one week.

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Fear and joy after Trump victory

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because she is the most reasonable person to run this country," Fahim said thoughtfully.

Faysul agreed with his friend, pointing out that Clinton has experience in politics but that "thinking about the US' economy, Trump is better."

A Bangladeshi American woman on her way to cast her vote in the last hours of the evening on Election Day, replied with a smile, "Hillary will win. I'll be the happiest person if she wins. Trump said nasty things about women and that ruined his chances."

Later that night, it became apparent that Clinton's chance of winning was slipping away, as Trump won over many swing states. New York City awoke to a gray and rainy morning and to the news that Donald Trump is now President Trump.

Many Bangladeshi Americans are upset with the results of the 2016 election. Ayesha Siddique, a development coordinator for the Girl

Scouts of the USA, expressed her disdain with sarcasm in her voice. "A lot of people who feel left out by the multicultural direction the country is going in, have expressed their views this election.

"America isn't the only place where far right movements have become a problem. It's a global problem. I think there are a lot of disgruntled people that don't feel at home. There's a lot of racism and sexism that's gone undiagnosed."

She said she was frightened by the prospect of a Trump presidency but quickly reasoned, "I think that progressives have to mobilise. America is still not a dictatorship, it's still a democracy. Progressives have to have their voices heard continually."

When a university student in Queens, New York was asked what he would do when Trump is president, he stared off into the distance. He muttered under his breath "not sure". He was unable to imagine a Trump presidency as a reality, one that had just taken place.

Subrata Podder, a 29-year-old Bangladeshi American, was not agonising over Trump's win, however.

"There is no problem with who wins the presidential election," he said while smiling. "Everyone wants someone who can do good for everybody who lives in the USA. Those who are here illegally wanted Hillary to win because she promised that she would take care of illegal immigrants."

"Bangladeshis, even people from Iraq, were scared that they had to leave America. You'll see in the news today that so many people google searched if it was possible to migrate from here to Canada. If Trump can make policies to help illegal immigrants here, then there will be no problem."

Trump's victory has left half of America in fear and the other overjoyed. Bangladeshis must now play a waiting game to find out what kind of a leader they will stay stuck with for the next four years.

UNO's nod for rally lacked foresight

Finds probe body on attacks on B'baria Hindus

MINHAJ UDDIN, Chittagong

A committee that probed the recent attacks on Hindus in Nasiragar upazila of Brahmanbaria found lack of foresight in the UNO's decision to give verbal approval to the rally that instigated the mayhem.

"Those who wanted and planned to carry out such violence utilised the opportunity," said Mohammad Sakhawat Hossain, additional deputy inspector general of police of Chittagong Range and the chief of the four-member probe committee.

The committee was formed on November 1 to find out how the attacks were made the day before and the role of the administration and was asked to give recommendations as to how such incidents can be prevented in future. The investigators were told to file a report in seven days.

Sakhawat said the report was done and would be submitted in one or two days.

About the controversial photo posted on Facebook triggering the mayhem, the committee chief said the same photo had been uploaded and shared from another account two days before the post appeared on Rasraj's account.

The account, from which the photo went viral, says the location of its owner is in Kuwait. "Our team is working to find out whether it is a fake account," Sakhawat said.

He, however, refused to provide details of the account for the sake of investigation.

He said the mobile of Rasraj Das had been sent to a forensic lab to determine if the controversial photo was a fake account.

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Respect, protect people's rights

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integrity and professionalism, the SC said. "On a look into the law and order situation, we have reasons to believe that it [law enforcement agencies] has forgotten its core value that it is accountable to the community it serves, and at the same time the prevention of crime is its prime operational priority."

Law enforcers must earn public respect and this will see crime rate fall in the country, it said, adding that the police department must preserve and advance the principles of democracy.

The custodians of the laws must not only respect but also protect the rights guaranteed to each citizen by the constitution.

"If we deny the rule of law and the right of the people, we will surely disrespect our long cherished independence," said the SC.

The Appellate Division delivered the verdict in May, upholding a High Court judgment against law enforcers' arbitrary use of powers.

The HC verdict delivered on April 7, 2003, asked the government to amend some provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) of 1898.

The verdict came in response to a petition by a group of human rights organisations and individuals after the tragic death of Shamim Reza Rubel, a student of Independent University, in police custody on July 23, 1998.

The then BNP-led government appealed against the verdict and the AL government did the same.

But the SC dismissed the appeal.

"If we cannot maintain the fundamental rights of the citizens of the country and allow police officers [to] use abusive power it will be difficult to establish constitutional law and the rule of law in this country at any point of time," asserted the court.

The SC directed the inspector general of police and the director general of Rab to circulate the guidelines to all police stations and units for compliance by their officers.

It also ordered the registrar general to circulate the guidelines for compliance by the magistrates.

DRACONIAN LAW

The SC said the CrPC was promulgated by the British colonial ruler to consolidate their power through the exercise of abusive powers by the police. There was no constitution at the time and the

fundamental rights of a citizen were a far cry.

"After driving out two colonial powers, one of course by negotiation and the other by the sacrifice of three million martyrs, we cannot detain and prosecute an offender with a draconian law," observed the SC.

The object of the CrPC for which it was implemented then does not exist now. Also, the present procedures for holding trials by magistrates and judges are inadequate and conflicting.

The SC said sections 54 and 167 as well as three chapters of the CrPC dealing with the process for producing documents and other moveable properties and for the discovery of persons wrongfully confined, the trial of cases by magistrates and summary trials are inconsistent with the constitution and the judgment in the Masder Hossain

case.

Some sections of three other chapters of the CrPC dealing with the jurisdiction of the criminal courts in inquiries and trials, complaints to magistrates and appeals are also inconsistent with the constitution and the judgment in the Masder Hossain case, popularly known as the judgment on separation of judiciary.

The apex court however did not declare them illegal.

"In fact the present Code is not at all suitable for the administration of criminal justice after so many changes made in the meantime and it is high time to promulgate a new Code," said the SC.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF LAW ENFORCERS

It should be kept in mind that the very nature of the job of law enforcement agencies is to respect the law even when their lives are at stake, observed the SC.

"A police officer should not exercise his power of arrest on the basis of his whims and caprice merely saying that he has received information of his being involved in a cognisable offence.

"He is required to exercise his power depending upon the nature of the information, seriousness of the offence and the circumstance unfurled not only in the complaint but also after investigation on the basis of information or complaint."

In other words, the police officer shall not exercise the power arbitrarily violating the dignity, honour, liberty and fundamental rights of a citizen, said the SC.

THREE MONTHS' DEADLINE

Under the current CrPC, a magistrate or judge has no power to direct detention of an accused in the judicial custody beyond 15 days from the date of producing him in court over a cognisable offence.

The CrPC, said the court, is totally silent about dealing with an accused allegedly involved in a cognisable offence if the police officer fails to conclude the investigation of the case within this period.

If the magistrate has no power to order such accused person to be detained in judicial custody, he will be left with no choice but to release him on bail till the date of submission of police report.

In most cases the police officers cannot complete the investigation within the stipulated period sanctioned by law and normally they take years together, the SC observed.

The detention or remand of an accused person beyond 15 days is not only an exercise of power not sanctioned by the law but also violative of article 32 of the constitution dealing with protection of right to life and liberty, it noted.

It is, therefore, necessary to take legislative measures authorising the judicial magistrate to direct the release of such offenders in judicial custody if the investigation cannot be concluded within the stipulated time.

"We allow three months moratorium period for the interest of justice and to maintain the law and order in the country, but in presence of specific constitutional provision protecting right of a citizen the court cannot remain a silent spectator for an indefinite period."

Battle for Mosul

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some of the more massive structures remained in place when the jihadists swept through in mid-2014, reports AFP.

Meanwhile, Iraqi government forces killed and tortured civilians south of Mosul, rights groups said yesterday, the first such reports of alleged abuse in a US-backed campaign to retake the city from Islamic State.

Amnesty International said "up to six" people were found dead last month in the Shura and Qayyara sub-districts who security forces suspected of ties to the ultra-hardline jihadist group which seized a third of Iraqi territory in 2014, reports Reuters.

"Men in federal police uniform have carried out multiple unlawful killings, apprehending and then deliberately killing in cold blood residents in villages south of Mosul," said Lynn Maalouf, deputy director for research at Amnesty's Beirut office.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) said at least 37 men suspected of being affiliated with Islamic State had been detained by Iraqi and Kurdish forces from checkpoints, villages, screening centres and camps for displaced people around Mosul and Hawija, further south.

Relatives said they did not know where most of the men were being held and had not been able to contact any of them while in detention, according to the report.

HRW warned that such conduct "significantly increases the risk of other violations", including torture.

An Interior Ministry spokesman denied there had been any violations and said Iraqi forces respect human rights and international law. A spokesman for Iraq's federal police could not be reached for comment.

A spokesman for the Kurdish regional government denied the HRW report, saying any delays in informing families were limited and due to limited resources.

"Nobody has been kept in unknown facilities. They are kept in identified facilities," said Dindar Zebari.

The Mosul operation, involving a 100,000-strong alliance of troops, security forces, Kurdish peshmerga and Shia Muslim militias and backed by US-led air strikes, has entered its fourth week but has so far gained just a small foothold in the city.

For safety

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following a Facebook post allegedly by a Hindu youth, "hurting the religious sentiment of the Muslims".

Neighbourhood watch teams were formed in each of the Hindu-dominated areas of the union after criminals set fire to six houses in Banikpara, Akhrapara, Thakurpara, Hashpatalpara and Dattapara on the nights of November 3 and 5.

One of the five Kasipara youths was Dhonu Das, a third-year student of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University in Gazipur.

"I came to my village this afternoon [Tuesday afternoon] and learnt that someone from my family would be with the vigilance team at night," Dhonu said, adding, "My younger brother was supposed to join, but I decided to do the job as he has a class in the morning."

Kingkar Sutradhar must open his grocery shop in the morning after his time with the team ends at dawn. "I don't mind doing this. I need to ensure the safety and security of my family and neighbours," he said.

A team of eight people comprising representatives from Hindu and Muslim communities were seen guarding Namasudrapara around 12:20am Wednesday.

"About 50 families can sleep as we guard the village," said Sukhlal Sarker, a motor mechanic. He added that they would go round the village every 30 minutes during their watch.

Guarding the village at night is an added responsibility for them.

"We guard the village throughout the night. But we have to work during the day as we have no alternative means of earning a livelihood," said Jamal Hossain, a small trader in Nasiragar.

Mofiz Mia, headmaster of Goalnagar Government Primary School, said, "We don't think about who is a Muslim and who is a Hindu. There are about 20 Muslim families in Namasudrapara, and we guard our village together at night."

Majority of the residents in the Hindu localities are poor fishermen, farmers and small traders, and they depend on their daily earnings to feed their families.

During a visit to Shilpara around 1:00am Wednesday, The Daily Star correspondents saw four of a seven-member neighbourhood watch team having tea, prepared by one of the members.

"We have tea to ward off drowsiness," said Kamol Biswas who works at a barber shop at Nasiragar Bazar.

Dulal Biswas, another barber, was with the team although he knew he has to get to work at 8:00am the next day. "I'll get only two to three hours of sleep, but that's all right," he said.

Ashish Kumer Moloy was the youngest member of the team. A second-year student of Open University, he also works as a motor mechanic.

While patrolling, members of the teams used different words like "Kedai, shabdhan, hushiar" to let others know that they were keeping a watch.

As these correspondents were leaving the village around 1:30am, Moloy started singing a folk song. Singing, he said, helps them stay awake.

They said the night watch at Shilpara began on Saturday after a garage of one Anjan Dev, a resident of adjacent Dattapara and vice-president of Nasiragar upazila parishad, was set on fire.

Members of the vigilance teams and some elderly Hindu people said they decided to keep watch over their areas at nights as they cannot afford another attack on their houses.

"The attacks took place on the nights of November 3 and 5 amid deployment of police and members of other law enforcement agencies at different places, including the villages," said Anjan Dev.

Sanjeeb Dev, leader of a neighbourhood watch team at Namasudrapara, said such vigils were required, especially after midnight when "law enforcers can hardly be seen in the villages".

Nasiragar Police Station's Officer-in-Charge Abu Jafar welcomed the move to guard the villages at nights by the residents.

"This is certainly helpful for us to maintain law and order following the incidents of attacks," he said.