

Zianagar UNO transferred

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Jakir Hossain Bachchu, upazila nirbahi officer of Zianagar in the district, was transferred to Bamna upazila of Barguna yesterday, district administration sources said.

The transfer order came apparently as a sequel to his remaining present with upazila Chairman Masood Sayedee, son of convicted war criminal Delawar Hossain Sayedee, at the Victory Day programme when Masood gave gifts to local freedom fighters including Mahabubul Alam Howlader, complainant and main witness in the case against Delawar.

The Indurkani Police Station OC was closed to Pirojpur Police Lines centring the same incident on Monday.

Upazila AL President Motiur Rahman and General Secretary Mridha M Moniruzzaman were also present at the programmes.

PUST admission test tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The admission test for BA honours at Pabna University of Science and Technology (PUST) under 2016-17 session will be held tomorrow in 12 institutions in the district headquarters.

A total of 37,778 admission seekers will appear in the admission test against 880 seats in 20 departments this year, according to a press release of the university.

The admission test will be held in four shifts. The admission seekers are asked to be at the examination hall at least half an hour before the starting time.

Youth arrested with Yaba tablets

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a youth and seized 150 contraband Yaba tablets in Badalgachhi upazila of Naogaon on Tuesday.

The arrestee was identified as Bokul Hossain, 30, son Afzal Hossain of Haludbihar village in the upazila.

Sources said acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-5 from Joypurhat raided Bokul's house at the village on Tuesday evening and seized the Yaba pills from his possession.

The elite force members later handed him over to Badalgachhi Police Station the same night, said Major Hasan Arafat of Rab-5.



Shafiquel Islam holding a beehive at a bee colony he set up near a mustard field at Sabilapur in Melandah upazila of Jamalpur.

PHOTO: STAR

Mustard boon for beekeepers

Around 180 tonnes of honey were produced in Jamalpur between mid-November and mid-December

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Around 180 tonnes of honey were produced by the bees from the mustard crop in the district between mid-November and mid-December, making growers hopeful of getting a good earning.

This amount is six times more than that of last year, said sources at the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in the district.

Fifteen farmers of the district, along with 45 farmers from Tangail and 15 from Satkhira, had been engaged in honey extraction in the district since mid-November, said president of Jamalpur unit of Bangladesh Honey-growers' Welfare

Association Aminul Islam Siddik.

Due to favourable weather, the number of farmers increased this year to 75, while there were only five farmers in the district and 40 in other districts last year, he said.

Farmers set up 9,000 bee-colonies near mustard fields in different villages of the district where there was good flowering, and got around 20 kg of honey from each colony in four weeks, the growers said.

The farmers said they were able to sell one-third of the honey to local people and wholesalers at around Tk 150 per kilogram, and are waiting for business companies to buy the rest.

"We will be able to make good

profit if the companies buy our honey for Tk 150 to Tk 200 per kg," the growers said.

"I got 25 maunds of honey from my 50 bee-colonies in Sabilapur village under Melandah upazila. I sold eight maunds to locals. Now I am waiting to sell the rest to a company at a good price," said Harunur-Rashid, a farmer in Madarganj upazila.

A number of growers said the same, adding that they have to spend about 50 percent of the earning to meet the cost during extraction and of feeding the bees during the off-season.

Deputy Director of DAE Dr Rafiqul Islam said mustard was cultivated on around 20,000 hectares of land in the district, and there

was good growth of the crop due to favourable weather.

As a result, honey farmers were encouraged to set their bee-colonies beside mustard fields across the district and were able to collect a large amount of honey, he added.

"We are motivating honey growers and crop farmers to increase cultivation of mustard as honey bees help to increase the output by more than 20 percent to 25 percent through pollination," he added.

Meanwhile, the growers from Tangail have started leaving Jamalpur for Tangail to set up bee-colonies near mustard fields as the flowering stage of the crop has begun.

ELECTION CODE VIOLATION AL candidate blames rebels in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Awami League (AL) supported chairman candidate in Jamalpur district council polls Advocate HR Zahid Anwar has alleged massive violation of the electoral code of conduct by the party's rebel candidate Faruque Ahmed Chowdhury, also general secretary of the district AL.

"Three other chairman candidates -- Faruque's wife Anjuman Ara Begum, district unit AL's Vice-president Sohrab Hossain Babul and Joint General Secretary Sarwar Jahan are merely dummy contestants, engaged in wooing voters for Faruque," he told a press conference at the party office in the town yesterday.

"Their aim is to provide electoral agents in polling centres to influence the polls in favour of Faruque.

"Their men are obstructing the election campaign by threatening my supporters, and attempting to purchase votes with money. They are pressurising the voters to cast votes openly in front of the agents of the four chairman candidates," Zahid said.

Expressing fear of rigging in the district council polls, Zahid alleged that a state minister and lawmaker, who is a close friend of Faruq, is working to ensure the latter's winning in the polls.

Teesta chars turn green

Many landless farmers producing crops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Char areas of the Teesta river are covered in green now as vast tracts of the dried-up riverbeds have been turned into crop fields by the landless char people who have been cultivating various crops there in recent years.

Char farmers are happy as the chars, deposits of alluvial silt, have given them the opportunity to cultivate various crops and vegetables.

According to sources in the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) and NGOs working in the char areas, over 25,000 hectares of dried-up riverbeds could be used to cultivate vegetables, wheat, maize, mustard, boro and other crops this season.

"Crop cultivation on these lands has been taking place as the drying up of the rivers has led to the emergence of massive silt deposits," said Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Enamul Haque.

Nurul Islam, 55, of Cokunda village in Lalmonirhat Sadar said, "I do not own land, but I have cultivated vegetables on one bigha of dried-up Teesta river bed in the

area. I got bumper production of vegetables from abandoned char land last year," he said, adding that many landless char people like him have got an opportunity to cultivate different crops on dried-up river beds this year.

"My ten bighas of char lands were abandoned for years in the past, but those have been giving me different crops for the last three years," said farmer Meher Ali, 60, of Kalmati char village.

Azziul Islam, 62, a landless farmer of Char Teesta village, said they have been growing onion, garlic, maize, boro paddy, wheat and different vegetables in the abandoned char areas, and they are getting expected production. "Agriculture officials and NGO staff give us support for farming crops on char land," he added.

Deputy Director of DAE in Lalmonirhat Bidubhuson Roy said the dried-up riverbeds in certain areas have an eye-catching greenish look, and the char lands now contain more alluvial sediments as a result of the last monsoon, which has encouraged farmers to cultivate different crops.



Growers have cultivated onion and garlic on vast abandoned char lands beside the Teesta Bridge in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, with a hope of bumper yield.

PHOTO: STAR

Khirai an early winter windfall for farmers

Farmers in Chandpur say Khirais produce a high yield and bring good profit

ALAM PALASH with ANDREW EAGLE

Delicious in salads, a good source of hydration and helpful in reducing body fat, crispy *khirai*, a small variety of cucumbers, are everybody's friend. But farmers in Chandpur's Matlab Uttar upazila are particularly enthusiastic about *khirais* these days, as the early winter crop of both local *ufshi* and hybrid varieties delivers healthy profits.

"*Khirais* produce a high yield and good profit," says farmer Kabir Hossain of Baidyanathpur village. "It cost me around Tk 10,000 to grow *khirais* on 24 decimals of land, with an additional Tk 5,000 for labour."

"From the first week's harvest alone I have earned Tk 21,000," he continues. "I expect to realise another Tk 45,000 from the crop before the season is done."

Chandpur farmers have been busy with their *khirais* since mid-October when fields are ploughed and treated with pesticide,

ready for the *khirai* crop. Within a fortnight of seeds being sown the seedlings are visible; within a month both male and female flowers are in bloom: on track to produce succulent *khirais* ready for an early winter harvest.

According to Matlab Uttar upazila's Department of Agriculture Extension office *khirai* cultivation this season has exceeded targets, with *khirais* being grown in all unions and in particular in river char areas.

"*Khirai* cultivation can bring farmers a rapid return with a good profit from a small investment," says Mohammad Abdul Kaiyum Mozumdar, Matlab Uttar upazila's agriculture officer. "That's why growing *khirais* is attractive to them."

Farmer Abdul Hannan is exceptionally pleased with his crop. "I will grow *khirais* again after harvesting aman rice this season," he says.

The current market price for *khirais* in Chandpur is between Tk 30 and Tk 35 per kilogram.

ATTACK ON HINDUS AL leader's son among three held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police on Tuesday arrested a local Awami League leader's son and two others on charge of vandalising houses and business shops of Hindus in Manda upazila of Naogaon on Saturday.

The incident triggered a wave of protest in the upazila.

The arrestees are Md Mohidul Haque Badsha, 45, son of upazila AL president Emdadul Haque Mollah, and his aides -- Md Ashrafur Islam, 27, son of Abdul Kalam of Borobelaldah village, and Sumon Kumar Ghosh, 24, son of late Bizon Kumar Ghosh of Buridah village in the upazila.

Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Manda Police Station, said they arrested Badsha from Mohanpur area in Rajshahi while Ashrafur and Sumon were held at Shimuldia bazar in Kazipur upazila of Sirajganj.



Farmers process *khirais* after harvesting from their field at Baidyanathpur village in Matlab Uttar upazila of Chadpur. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR