

Study to acquire knowledge

Zafar Iqbal tells school centenary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Noted educationist and litterateur Dr Muhammad Zafar Iqbal has urged the young learners to learn the texts with good understanding, instead of remaining dependent on guide books and coaching centres.

Knowledge acquired through proper education helps to run the country towards development, he said while addressing the centenary celebration of Baliyuri FM High School in Madarganj upazila of Jamalpur yesterday.

The country will go ahead in different fields through the culture of science and technology, he said, adding that experts from home and abroad are hopeful that Bangladesh will reach the level of developed countries in a foreseeable future.

State Minister for Textile and Jute Mirza Azam MP attended the programme as chief guest.

The school started its journey on January 1 in 1915 with Babu Amulya Chakrabarty as the headmaster, school sources said.

All the eleven students who sat for the entrance (now secondary school certificate) examinations from the school for the first time in 1920 came out successful.

Firearms seized at Harganga dorm

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Police arrested six people, including three students, along with firearms, from two rooms of Shaheed Zia Hall of Harganga College in Munshiganj during a raid yesterday.

The firearms include two foreign made pistols, a pipe gun and an air gun, said Md Zayedul Alam, superintendent of police in Munshiganj.

Police also recovered parts of a .303 rifle, three magazines, 96 bullets, pipe gun making materials, a toy gun, two Chinese machetes, seven knives, a hacksaw blade and 33 bottles.

The arms and ammunition were found in rooms 205 and 408, which are occupied by Chhatra League leaders Nibir Ahmed, president of the college unit of Chhatra League, and Alamgir Hossain, general secretary of the unit.

In the absence of the hostel superintendent, lecturers Arifur Rahman and Suvashish Mondol were with the police during the raid.

From rags to riches

As a child worked for meals, now successful orchardist

MIRZA SHAKIL with ANDREW EAGLE

To visit his orchard of 700 malta saplings and 800 jujube trees is to understand that Moslem Uddin, 38, from Kirtankhola Kamarpara village in Tangail's Sakhipur upazila plans a bright future. But more remarkable than where his life is headed is where it's been. From grave poverty Moslem has built success, step by arduous step.

The son of day labourer Join Uddin, a father often unable to meet his five-member family's expenses, a young Moslem could only watch as neighbouring children attended school. In his family, meals were uncertain.

At age 10 he started working in neighbouring households. Duties included housekeeping, cattle-rearing and farm work. Three meals a day was his reward.

Moslem couldn't accept this fate. "From boyhood I thought to do something for my family. Unafraid to face any difficulty, I couldn't tolerate helplessness." Aged 16, Moslem took a Tk 500 loan from a local youth association.

With the money he bought jujubes and asked his mother to pickle them. Moslem, for the first time an entrepreneur, visited schools to sell pickles and snacks. He started selling snacks to bus passengers, riding around on bus roofs.

In 1997 he married and business continued with wife Nasima as chief pickle-maker. In 2002 he relocated, renting a home beside the Dhaka-Tangail highway where passing trade was more.

From a local hawk Moslem heard that trading old books and scrap paper was more profitable than pickles. He purchased used books from schoolchildren, went door to door and travelled to Nimtoly in Dhaka to sell them. Profits were invested in cheaper jujube for pickling, bought from nearby Shambazar.

By 2005 Moslem could rent a shop. As a



Innovative farmer Moslem Uddin at his orchard in Bhabnagar village of Gajaria union under Tangail's Sakhipur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

shopkeeper profits were better still, but Moslem didn't stop dreaming. He hoped for an agricultural venture, since he's always been fond of farming. Then one day Nasima mentioned that lemons from the six trees in their yard were fetching Tk 2,500 per year after the demands of family and neighbours were met. Moslem decided to grow lemons, but lacked farmland.

"A good business idea needs to have good prospects," Moslem says, "but what is possible in current circumstances must also be

considered. Lemons seemed both profitable and possible." In 2013 he returned to the families where he'd worked through childhood, proposing to lease their land.

Moslem secured 6.5 acres on lease for 10 years at a rent of Tk 1.6 lakh per year. He employed labourers to plant 5,500 lemon saplings and sowed papaya between them. With advice from the upazila agriculture officer he learnt how best to fertilise the orchard and invested in modern irrigation. In total, Moslem spent Tk 7 lakh.

After seven months the first papayas sold for Tk 3.75 lakh. Over the next two and a half years, Tk 12 lakh sales came from lemons. In the meantime, Moslem employed skilled labourers to graft lemon saplings, which over three years raised an additional Tk 7 lakhs. Finally, he was confident to leave pickles and scrap paper behind.

Nowadays along with fruit trees planted on an additional 4.5 acres leased in Bhabnagar, Moslem grows black gram, locally called mashkalai dal, with one acre devoted to ginger. The first jujube harvest is due in December. The malta will bear fruit after two years.

Moslem employs nine labourers at salary of Tk 10,000 per month each. He's bought his own land to build a home. His two sons study in class 12 and class 2. "Moslem isn't only solvent," says Bhabnagar teacher Habibur Rahman, "he's popular. He inspires many farmers and unemployed youths."

According to Moslem, the key to a better life is not to give in to frustration and sit idle. "If an idea is big or small doesn't matter," he says, "Start with what you have, create something, work sincerely and be positive. Consider how to support others. Better days must come."

Sakhipur upazila agriculture officer, Faizur Rahman Bhuiyan, says though there are many farmers in the area, Moslem is unique. "His innovation makes him an example," he says. "I'm hopeful we can allocate him some vacant public land to further his dreams and encourage others."

And dream he does! Moslem wants to cultivate near-extinct fruits. He's interested in timber. "There are thousands of acres of government land in the upazila," Moslem says. "If farmers could use some on condition of returning profit, so much more could be produced." With goodwill, self-confidence, hard work and perseverance, Moslem believes, anything can be achieved.



A teacher couple grows mandarins at their orchard in remote village Pashchim Saradubi under Hatibandha upazila of Lalmonirhat.

PHOTO: STAR

Teacher couple's success in mandarin farming

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

A couple in a remote village under Hatibandha upazila has successfully grown mandarin for the first time in the district.

Headmaster of Milon Bazar Mozammel Hossain High School Khalilur Rahman and his wife Fatema Khatun Majumder, assistant teacher of Purbo Para Government Primary School, started growing mandarins in their orchard in 2011.

In the first year, they planted only 50 trees, which they increased to 350 trees on 150 decimals of land in 2013. They are getting a good quantity of the fruit from 50 of the trees, and have also set up a nursery in the orchard for selling mandarin plants.

Khalilur said, "I asked myself why mandarins could not be grown in our soil. Thereafter, I and my wife started a mandarin orchard near our homestead as a hobby." "We got 800 pieces of mandarins from 50 trees this year," he said.

He said he sells mandarin plants from the nursery for Tk 15 to Tk 20 per piece. Interested people from different villages

purchase the plants to grow them in their homesteads, he said, adding that he will expand their mandarin orchard.

Fatema said, "Our mandarins are sweet and juicy, like the imported ones, and our dream has come true this year as we got good yield. Many villagers come to us for getting advice on how to grow mandarin."

Taherul Islam of the village said he was astonished by the taste of the mandarins grown in the couple's orchard.

"I purchased 20 mandarin plants for Tk 400 after observing their success," said Nurnabi Mia of the same village, adding that he will also try mandarin farming.

Delwar Hossain, a local farmer, said, he has started farming mandarins on 100 decimals of lands following the teacher couple's advice.

Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension in Lalmonirhat Bidubhuson Roy said, "The teacher couple has set a successful example that it is possible to grow mandarins in our soil," adding that many interested people have started farming mandarins in the district.

Sex worker found dead at brothel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A sex worker was found dead at a brothel in Patuakhali yesterday.

Victim Sonia Begum, 22, lived at a house owned by Shandya Rani, one of the female pimps of the brothel.

Police said she went to go to sleep at night and did not wake till noon. Being informed, police went to the spot, entered the room by breaking the lock and recovered the hanging body from there.

The body was sent to Patuakhali General Hospital morgue for autopsy, said SM Tariqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

Some sex workers of the brothel suspected that Sonia was a drug addict.

Trapped birds freed, hunter caught

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Residents of Khata Modhupur village under Saidpur upazila of the district yesterday caught a bird hunter red-handed and rescued some wild birds and seized bird catching traps from his possession.

The hunter is Md Atiar Rahman, son of late Yakub Ali of Rambala village in the upazila.

Chairman of Khata Modhupur Union Parishad (UP) Jewel Chowdhury said Atiar hunted birds in the marshy lands and paddy fields in the villages, and sold them at high prices.

He added that the villages and their surroundings have turned into a sanctuary

for birds as they strictly resist bird hunting. The villagers protect the birds also because they eat insects that harm the crops, Jewel said.

Villagers, led by Setubondhon volunteer Alamgir Hossain, caught Atiar red-handed and handed him over to the police.

Police produced Atiar before the mobile court of executive magistrate, also assistant commissioner (Land) in Saidpur upazila, Ahmed Mahbulul Islam and the court sentenced Atiar to six months' imprisonment and fined him Tk 500.

The magistrate also ordered burning of the three bird catching traps on the spot and released the eight captured birds.



Wild birds, rescued by some bird friendly volunteers at Khata Madhupur village in Nilphamari's Saidpur upazila, being released yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

'Bring killers of Tonmoy to book'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Students of Mymensingh City Collegiate School at a rally yesterday demanded capital punishment of the killers of an SSC examinee of the institution.

The victim was Ishtiaq Ahmed Tonmoy, 15, son of Farid Ahmed of Sherpur. He used to live with his mother in the town's Naumohol area.

The speakers at the programme also urged the police administration to bring the killers to justice as soon as possible.

Earlier on the day, they took part in the gayebana janaza on the school premises for the slain student.

On Friday, Tonmoy was killed just for a cellphone in Ram Babu Road area of the town.

When Tonmoy was sitting in the area around 6:30pm, some of his friends led by Farabi and Sagor pressed him to give his new mobile set but he did not. Angered by this, they later stabbed Tonmoy following a scuffle.

Critically injured Tonmoy later died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

The following day, police detained one Bappi, 18, for interrogation, said police.



Risky ride in Kuakata

Boat with 10 tourists capsizes in Bay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Illegal plying of speedboats on the Bay at Kuakata point puts the tourists at risk when they swim in the Bay or go for a ride on the speedboats.

A fishing trawler rescued 10 tourists, including five children, when a speedboat carrying them capsized in the Bay on Saturday.

This correspondent tried to contact the driver of the boat but he fled after the incident and his cellphone was switched off.

Five speed boats have been plying illegally at Kuakata for long. Tourists can enjoy a ride on the sea by paying Tk 100 to Tk 200 each, but all the boats are driven by unskilled drivers, as a result, accidents often take place.

Afzalul Haq Khan, a tourist from Dhaka, said, "I and my family boarded a speedboat to take a ride, but it stopped after six to seven minutes as its engine got

caught in a fishing net, and water started entering the boat. Fortunately, a fishing trawler rescued us."

Md Saidul Majhee, driver of the trawler, said, "I was returning to Mohipur fish landing station from the Bay and saw that some people were shouting for help. I rushed to the boat and rescued them."

Md Khokon from Khulna said, "I took a swim in the Bay, but I was afraid all the time because the speedboats were running here and there. The swimming places should be kept free from all hazards as most tourists from home and abroad want to swim here."

Abul Hossain Joni, a resident of Kuakata, said separate places should be designated for swimming and for taking rides on speedboats.

President of Kuakata Speedboat Owners' Association Md Billal Khalifa said they have registered

with the department concerned to provide the service. But he did not give the registration number when this correspondent called him on cellphone yesterday.

"We have life jacket for all the passengers to ensure their safety, and we have stopped the boat that capsized on Saturday from plying," he added.

Mayor of Kuakata Municipality Abdul Bareq Mollah said some local people provide speedboat service without permission from the municipality. "We will take steps to provide speedboat service at Kuakata point, he added."

Additional Superintendent of Tourist Police in Kuakata Mir Fosiur Rahman said, "We asked the speedboat owners not to ply their boats at Kuakata point from Saturday, but they ignored it and are continuing the service."

"I will take steps over the matter soon," he added.