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Of plants & healing

DIPANKAR ROY with ANDREW EAGLE

Naznin Akhter Nipa's garden in Katianangla, in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila, is full of weird and wonderful plants. Some, like pineapple, hydrangea, basil, neem, tulsi, asparagus and aloe may be familiar. Others have names that sound altogether otherworldly, even menacing: Indian snakeroot, devil's cotton, devil's trumpet, skunkvine... What all 2,000 species of the 50,000 featured plants have in common are their healing properties. Nipa's is a one-acre nursery of medicinal plants.

"My husband was a small trader and he used to catch fish," Nipa recalls, "But one day pirates looted his trawler and took his nets. We faced ruin. We were raising two daughters and I had to find a way out of such perilous economic circumstances. Then a local NGO suggested I could run a nursery and at first I planted vegetables around the house."

Nipa wasn't satisfied. "Many people grow vegetables and general nurseries too are common in our area," she says. "I wanted to do something outstanding, something that would enchant people. So, in 2000 I started to plant medicinal saplings instead."

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Naznin Akhter Nipa's garden has a wide range of medicinal plants. Her garden in Katianangla in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila has brought her family solvency and inspired many others.

PHOTO: STAR



India launches 104 satellites at a time

AFP, Sriharikota

India successfully put a record 104 satellites from a single rocket into orbit yesterday in the latest triumph for its famously frugal space programme.

The launch means India now holds the record for launching the most satellites in one go, surpassing Russia which launched 39 satellites in a single mission in June 2014.

Celebrations erupted among scientists at the southern spaceport of Sriharikota as the head of India's Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced all the satellites had been ejected as planned.

"My hearty congratulations to the ISRO team for this success," the agency's director Kiran Kumar told those gathered in an observatory to track the progress of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated the scientists for achieving the feat.

"They have hit a century in space technology," Modi said at an election rally in northern Uttar Pradesh state.

The rocket took off at 9:28am (0358 GMT) and cruised at a speed of 27,000 kilometres (16,777 miles) per hour, ejecting all the 104 satellites into orbit in around 30 minutes, according to ISRO.

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 16
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5-25 12-45 4-30 5-57 7-15
JAMAAT 6-00 1-15 4-45 6-01 7-45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

RADICALISATION OF YOUTHS Families alone are not responsible

Says Belgian mother whose son died fighting for IS in Syria

M ABUL KALAM AZAD

A Belgian mother, now in Bangladesh as part of her world tour against radicalism, said families alone should not be held responsible for the radicalisation of their youths.

"Not only the parents or the families, we all should feel guilty for what has happened to our children. It's because they are everybody's children. They are the children of humanity," Saliha Ben Ali told The Daily Star in an interview in the capital yesterday.

Instead of feeling guilty, the parents and the families should speak out against the scourge and tell everyone how their children were radicalised, Saliha said.

Talking about the trauma her family went through after 19-year old Sabri Refla left home in mid-2013 and joined war in the ISIS-controlled region in Syria and Iraq where he died in December, she said the reactions from her neighbours were different.

"Some Belgians told me that jihad was my religion and that's why I brought up my children as jihadists. Again, there were others who said I was a mother of a Shaheed [martyr] and that I should be patient."

However, she did not pay heed to anyone.

"I decided to tell everyone about my son and his story. I believed it would make people aware of the evil called radicalism and help the cause of counter radicalism and extremism."



Saliha Ben Ali

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Israel should 'hold back' on settlements

Says Trump

CNN, Washington

President Donald Trump told Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday that the US was going to push for a peace deal with the Palestinians and asked Israel "to hold back" on settlement construction.

"I'd like to see you hold back on settlements for a little bit," he said, a stronger opposition to the controversial building in the West Bank than he's previously articulated.

Trump made the statements at a news conference welcoming the Israeli leader to the White House for their first face-to-face meeting since the inauguration.

"The United States will encourage a peace, and really a great peace deal. We'll be working on it very diligently," Trump said. "But it is the parties themselves who must directly negotiate such an agreement."

To achieve that deal, the President said, "The Israelis are going to show some flexibility" and "they have to show they really want to make a deal."

For the Palestinians, he said, "You can talk about flexibility there, too," saying they "have to get rid of some of the hate

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Creature comforts

Texas couple let giant buffalo live in their home



MAIL ONLINE

He may have nearly killed them several times, but that does not deter Ronnie and Sherron Bridges from keeping their unusual pet indoors.

The couple, from Texas, allow their 2,500lb buffalo, named Wild Thing, to roam free inside their house.

He has his own room so he can watch action movies, and even eat his breakfast from the kitchen table.

And to illustrate how integral he is to their family, Wild Thing was best man at their wedding a decade ago.

Ronnie, 60, and Sherron, 44, sold their herd of 52 buffalo 13 years ago, but opted to keep hold one calf.

Sherron said: "It was my idea to bring Wild Thing in the house when he was a young calf I said we should bring him in. I told Ronnie, he only lives

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'Conspiracy theories'

Trump dismisses claims over contacts between his team, Russian officials

AGENCIES

US President Donald Trump yesterday accused his own intelligence agencies of illegally feeding "conspiracy theories" to the media over his team's alleged links with Russia.

"The fake news media is going crazy with their conspiracy theories and blind hatred. @MSNBC & @CNN are unwatchable. @foxandfriends is great!" the President wrote in an early morning post on Twitter.

"This Russian connection non-sense is merely an attempt to cover-up the many mistakes made in Hillary Clinton's losing campaign [sic]."

"Information is being illegally given to the failing @nytimes & @washingtonpost by the

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Iron rods have been installed on the pavement in two rows on Hare Road in the capital so that motorbikes cannot use the pavement. The photo was taken yesterday near Ramna Park.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

What steps taken to rehabilitate evicted Santals

HC asks officials to report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know what steps have been taken to rehabilitate the evicted Santal people of Gobindaganj upazila in Gaibandha.

It ordered the Gaibandha deputy commissioner and the Gobindaganj upazila nirbahi officer to submit a report to the court on the steps taken for the rehabilitation of evicted Santals within two weeks.

The HC also issued a rule asking the government to explain within two weeks as to why they should not be directed to rehabilitate the indigenous community who became landless after an eviction drive on November 6 last year.

Land secretary, Gaibandha's DC and Gobindaganj UNO and officer-in-charge of Gobindaganj Police Station have been made respondents to the rule.

The HC bench of Justice Quazi Reza-ul Haque and Justice Mohammad Ullah came up with the order and rule on a suo moto move during hearing an earlier rule issued over the legality of damaging evidence of torching the Santal houses, Deputy Attorney General Tapas Kumar Biswas told The Daily Star.

Following a writ petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer Suproakash Datta, the same bench issued a rule on January 8.

In the rule, it asked the government and police to explain why their inaction to initiate legal action against the managing director of Rangpur Sugar Mills in Gaibandha under the penal code for destroying the evidence should not be declared illegal.

The court also asked the managing director to submit a report to it on the reasons for destroying the evidence of setting fire to the Santal houses on November 6 last year.

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