

# Landless farmers make sandy land green

**S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat**  
Many sandy chars of Teesta, Dharla and Brahmaputra rivers have turned green as thousands of landless char farmers are growing pumpkin on those chars in Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha, Nilphamari and Rangpur. Landless farmers at Dharla Char in Kurigram Sadar upazila said they are given training on using char land for farming crops, especially pumpkin, by a non-governmental organisation (NGO) Practical Action Bangladesh (PAB), which also provides technical and input support. Earlier, they did not use char sandy land as they thought no crops could be cultivated on such land, but PAB showed that they were wrong, they said, adding that chars give them bumper production of crops every year.

Atiar Rahman, 55, of Brahmaputra river char in Chilmari upazila, said he and many other landless farmers have been farming pumpkin in sandy char lands for the last few years. "I have cultivated 300 pumpkins on 24 decimals of land this year. My target is to produce 500 to 700 pumpkins weighing about 2,500 to 3,500 kgs. Delowar Hossain, 63, of Teesta river char in Lalmonirhat Sadar said they dig a hole two to three feet deep and put organic fertiliser in it for farming pumpkin in chars, adding that a regular supply of water is needed. "We get technical and input support from PAB but not from the government. If the government provides support to us we can use more idle char lands every year," said Nurul Islam, 58, of Teesta river char at Kaunia upazila. Kurigram District Coordinator of

PAB's Extreme Poverty Programme SM Mutakabbirul Haque said they provide seeds, fertiliser, irrigation water and training to landless char farmers for growing crops in abandoned chars. "Each of the 2,100 beneficiary farmers is cultivating pumpkin on 24 decimals of char land, and 130 chars are covered with pumpkins now," he added. Assistant Director of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rangpur Shah Alam said at least 10,000 landless char farmers are engaged in pumpkin farming on the chars in the Teesta, Dharla and Brahmaputra river char areas in five districts. About 35,000 to 40,000 tonnes of pumpkins are produced in these chars every year. Pumpkin farming brings solvency to the landless char people, Shah Alam said, adding that they also grow other crops in the char areas during the dry season.



Farmers tend a pumpkin field in a Dharla char area of Lalmonirhat. PHOTO: STAR

## 'Drug peddler' killed in 'gunfight'

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole**  
An alleged drug peddler was killed in a 'gunfight' between two rival groups in Sikri Bottala area under Benapole Port Police Station yesterday. The dead was Selim Mia, 35, son of Abu Taher of Bhoberber village in Benapole. Apurbo Hasan, OC of the police station, said Selim had been running illegal drug business in Benapole area for long. Two groups of drug peddlers engaged in a gunfight around 3:30am. On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the body of Selim. However, others managed to flee the scene. A foreign made pistol and two bullets were seized from the spot.

## AMAR EKUSHEY IN DISTRICTS



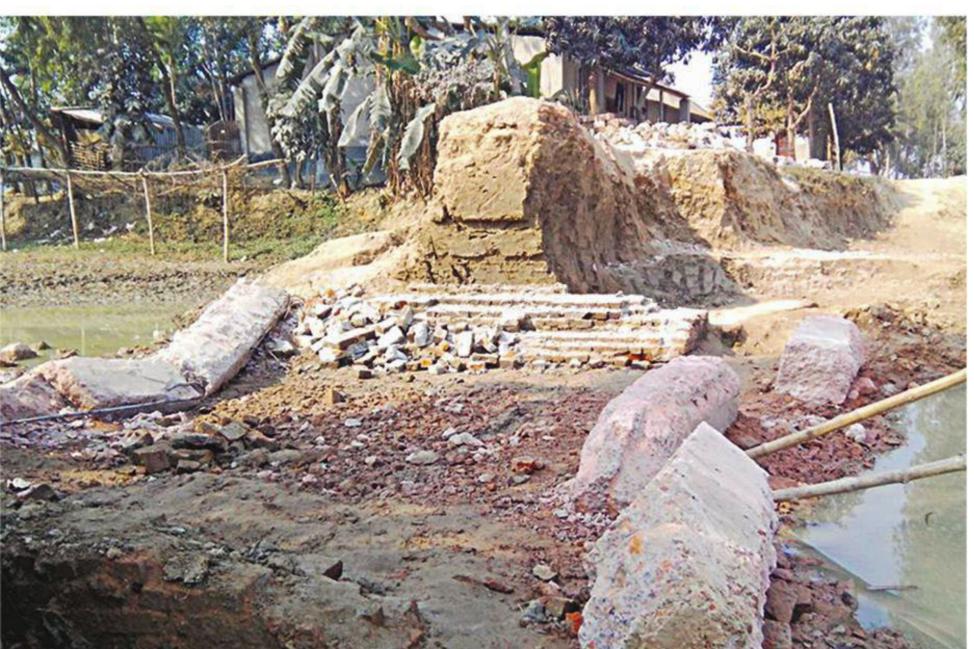
FROM TOP: 1) A child places wreath at the central Shaheed Minar in Munshiganj town early yesterday, 2) people take part in a large procession from the central Shaheed Minar in Rangpur, 3) people at a programme organised by Pahari Chhatra Parishad stand in solemn silence in Khagrachhari town in honour of the Language Movement martyrs, 4) students and locals pay respect to the martyrs at a makeshift memorial on the premises of Rangamati High School in Dinajpur's Fulbari upazila as there is no permanent Shaheed Minar, and 5) Kidney Awareness Monitoring and Prevention Society arranges a free medical camp at Talimnagar in Sakhipur upazila of Tangail yesterday. PHOTO: STAR

## UP chairman's whim costs bridge

### Taher dismantles an old bridge to loot bricks, iron rods

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur**  
A union parishad chairman here dismantled an old bridge and took away its bricks and iron rods without prior permission of the authorities concerned, causing suffering to the villagers. The bridge is located near Uttar Laximpur Bazar on Mohipur-Laximpur road in Phulbari upazila of the district. Abu Taher, chairman of Khoyerbari Union Parishad, said he was unaware about the open tender for selling the debris of the old bridge. Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Ehtesham Reza said the chairman dismantled the old bridge on his own without any prior permission from the upazila administration. He said his office is seriously looking into the matter. Nabab Ali of Mohipur village said, "The bricks and iron rods of the old bridge should be sold through an open tender, but the chairman took those away." He said the

chairman did not even build a diversion road, he added. Project Implementation Officer of Phulbari upazila Tazul Islam said the Ministry of Relief and Rehabilitation has allocated Tk 32.52 lakh recently for building a new bridge on Mohipur-Laximpur road at Uttar Laximpur Bazar. He, however, refused to make any comment on dismantling the old bridge. Taher dismantled the bridge and took away the bricks and iron rods in a bid to embezzle those, said local Awami League leader Murad Hossain. Taher kept the bricks and iron rods in his house and at the house of his close aide Aminul Islam, he said, adding that the market value of the bricks and iron rods is around Tk 5 lakh. Meanwhile, the local people on Tuesday submitted memorandums to the deputy commissioner of Dinajpur and the Phulbari upazila UNO containing their demands about the irregularities and for investigation into the incident.



The site of dismantled bridge at Uttar Laximpur Bazar in Phulbari upazila under Dinajpur. PHOTO: STAR

## Mystery shrouds death of Jubo League man

### Family says murder while drug rehab centre claims it is suicide

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria**  
Police recovered the body of a Jubo League leader from Prattyasha drug addiction recovery centre at Ghatura Goutampara in Sadar upazila Monday. The body was sent to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. The dead was Sohel, general secretary of Jubo League Ward no 5 unit, and son of Elem Miah from Chhatain village in Budhal union. Family members alleged that Sohel was tortured to death. On the other hand, Md Jamal, a director of the drug addiction recovery centre, claimed that he committed suicide. However, he could not say anything specific about the cause of 'suicide'. Tension has been prevailing in the area after the incident. The victim's cousin Farid Miah, a member of Budhal union parishad, said Sohel was admitted to the centre on Sunday noon. On Monday evening, they came to know that Sohel was dead. However, they think he was killed. Sub-Inspector Mehedi Hasan Khan of Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station said the body was found lying on a bed of the centre. Whether it is a case of suicide or murder will be confirmed after getting the autopsy report, said the SI.

## Three Jamaat leaders held

**Two crude bombs seized**  
**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur**  
Police in separate drives arrested three leaders of Jamaat-e-Islami in Raninagar upazila of Naogaon on Monday. They arrestees are Abdul Motin, 50, a union level Jamaat secretary, Saidur Rahman 40, of Bandaighara village in Atrai, and Belal Hossain, 37, of Shilgram in Manda upazila. Saidur and Belal are members of upazila committee. Police arrested Motin from his shop with two crude bombs and sharp weapons around 7:30pm. In another drive, Saidur and Belal were held from their homes in the evening, said Police Superintendent Mozammel Hossain.

## Woman kills herself after strangling son

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar**  
A woman allegedly committed suicide after killing her child following a family feud at Gilatoli village in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj on Monday. The deceased were Mili Deb, 21, wife of Pintu Deb of the village, and her two-year-old son Pathik Deb. Md Sazedul Islam, officer-in-charge of Madhabpur Police Station, said Mili took her life from the ceiling of her room after strangling Pathik. Informed by family members, police recovered the bodies from the spot and sent them to Habiganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.