

# 'Arrest killers of Hajj guide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Local people formed a human chain at Narundi Bazar in Sadar upazila yesterday, demanding immediate arrest and exemplary punishment to the killers of local Hajj guide Moulana Abdul Haque.

Jamalpur Sadar Upazila Parishad Vice-Chairman Kazi Mashiur Rahman, a leader of Jamalpur Hajj Foundation Alhaj Shafiqul Islam, and local Awami League leaders Lutfor Rahman and Khalilur Rahman, among others, addressed the one-hour-long programme.

The speakers urged the district police administration to arrest the killers of Moulana Abdul Haque, a moallem (Haj guide) of the upazila, and give exemplary punishment to them.

The deceased, Abdul Haque, son of late Yusuf Ali of Mahishura village, went missing from Itail Bazar area on Friday.

He went out of his house with Tk 10 lakh but did not return, police quoted Haque's wife Mariam Begum as saying.

# Six highway 'robbers' held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Police arrested six suspected highway robbers from Sirajganj and Pabna early yesterday.

They also seized a microbus used for robbing and looted goods from their possession.

The arrestees are Md Al Mamun, 28, of Manikganj Sadar, Jhontu Sheikh, 35, Hamidur Rahman, 26, Ekram Hossain, 24, Abdul Alim, 30, and Abdur Razzak, 33, of different villages in Pabna.

OC of Solonga Police Station Md Abdur Rafique said highway police seized a microbus carrying five people from the Hatikumrul intersection in Sirajganj.

They also seized money and few mobile sets from their possession, he said, adding that during primary investigation, they confessed their involvement with robbery.

Another robber was held in Pabna town, said the OC.

# Zahid's innovative mango farming

SHYKH SERAJ

Those of us who live in cities, often dream to be involved with nature, greenery, have a small garden in the yard or terrace etc. However, we aren't able to do it for many reasons. Some can't gather the equipment needed or the terrace might belong to multiple owners etc. Nonetheless, that dream has always been nurtured. Only a few are able to fulfil that dream. On the other hand, there is a story where an individual is helping others to fulfil this dream. Zahid Chakladar, a man from Dhaka, is implementing this dream of others in the villages of Ranisankail and Pirganj, two outlying areas of Thakurgaon, a northern district of Bangladesh. Say, you want to own a mango orchard, Zahid will make you one. I am going to tell you the interesting story of how he is making dreams true for others.

Nowadays, we buy apartments. Developers get lands, fill rivers and canals and build concrete apartments. One buys an apartment there. However, Zahid will make you an owner of a mango orchard. So, you will be able to be involved with greenery, nature, fruits and crops. He will give you a land. You will be the owner of it. There will be plenty of mango trees there. You will produce 100% chemical free mangoes from



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turned into a rich mango orchard and quite a few people have bought plots or mango orchards here.

A young man from Dhaka, Mohiuddin, has a plot here. I had a conversation with him regarding how and when he got interested.

"I personally own two plots," says Mohiuddin.

"When did you buy?" I asked.

"In 2013," he replied.

"How many times did you get fruits?" I asked Mohiuddin.

"Two times. This will be the third time. How many mango did you get from your orchard? 96 kg per plot," Mohiuddin replied with a smile on his face.

Many people bought mango orchards by following the others. All of them became owners of mango orchards while residing in the capital. Even some organizations bought mango orchards here.

Zahid Chakladar is following a particular technique in making this mango orchard.

"I saw that city people invest in cities -- in different industries. I realised that if anyone buys a land here with a little money, then the agriculture sector will develop," says Zahid.

"If I provide the support, say, make the orchard myself, look after it, and let the owners be involved if they want to, then the dream of getting chemical-free mango will come true," added Zahid.

Zahid has seen a few people make orchards in the terrace. However, not all can do that. People in apartments cannot do it.

"As I surveyed lands and discussed with people, many others supported me. At first I bought three acres of land in this area. Now I have orchards over seven acres of land. The

good news spread very fast," he said.

So, how's he managing the seven acre area?

"I have made units comprising five decimals each -- 60 feet long and 36 feet wide," says Zahid who now has 131 mango orchards on his seven acre land. Already he sold 90 orchards each at 2.50 lakh taka. His deed says the owners of the plot aren't allowed to go for any construction on the plot for 20 years. This is a great method to keep the area green for a long time. The owners can come and pick mangoes on their own but if they want to get the mangoes at home Zahid will arrange it for a service charge of Tk 500 only. Zahid will take care of the production as well. Each five-decimal orchard has 54 mango trees. He is growing mainly Amropali, Lengra, Haribhanga mango varieties here. It's a gradual growing process.

Agriculturalist Sanwar has given his own explanation behind Zahid's initiative.

It might sound unbelievable that there are 54 trees in five decimal lands. It is being done temporarily with dense plantation method. Although 54 trees are planted, there is a layout. It says after ten years Amropali will be moved away and replaced by Lengra and Fazli. So, the method is correct," says Sanwar.

According to Sanwar, it is similar to relay crop of a certain period. Yes readers, you may call it intercropping. Only instead of cultivating something else in the mango orchard, Zahid is planting smaller sized mango plants.

Zahid gives credit to his friend Delwar Hossain for helping him out in the project and also the local people.

Those who bought mango orchards here

agree that every promise that has been made from the start have been met. Thus, their faith is increasing day by day.

When one buys an orchard here, the rest of the family gets interested in buying too. Like this, the orchards here have become a family venue and of course a get-together spot.

Zahid Chakladar is a great ambitious young man. His initiatives are agriculture-friendly and wide-ranging. With high hopes for this project, he has been working with sincerity. This initiative of Zahid is very acceptable to the people of the area too. This orchard has opened eyes of many.

Dear readers, initiatives of collective business or helping to fulfil others' dreams are appreciated worldwide today. It is very promising that such kind of creative ideas have come to the young people of our country. Zahid's project has many positive aspects. The initiative is entirely agriculture-friendly and people get the opportunity of having completely chemical free healthy mangoes throughout the year. Besides, people can reside here and keep up the works at the orchards.

I believe, many more initiatives like this will be taken. Many will be able to fulfil their dreams by participating in one's innovative idea. Zahid's revolutionary initiative excites me greatly. I believe there are possibilities of young people like Zahid getting involved with agriculture who will bring creative and effective ideas to make people happy about farming, greenery and show the people the real roadmap to sustainability.

Those who bought mango orchards here

# Journos

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interest and the image of the country", the person must be identified and such negative activities must be reported back to the ministry immediately.

The ministry instructed all its missions to take the matter seriously.

The letter was signed by Md Lutfor Rahman, director general of the External Publicity Wing of the ministry. The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter.

It says the decision was made in line with the recommendations of the parliamentary standing committee on foreign affairs.

At its 20th meeting early this month, the parliamentary watchdog said any Bangladeshi journalist travelling abroad should be monitored. If their activities are found to be against "the interest of the country", the foreign missions should report back to the ministry about it.

The letter also mentioned that the House body voiced concern over "the negative activities of Bangladeshi journalists abroad as such activities give wrong information on Bangladesh in the international arena".

According to sources, at its 20th meeting, the parliamentary body expressed concern over some Bangladeshi journalists' frequent visit to Pakistan at that country's invitation.

Mahjabeen Khaled, one of the committee members, alleged that the Bangladeshi journalists visiting Pakistan are spreading propaganda and giving misleading information about 1971 genocide.

The issue was raised at the meeting following some Bangladeshi journalists' visits to Pakistan at that state's invitation.

# BUMPER LITCHI PRODUCTION IN PABNA, MAGURA

# Good price, big smiles

STAR COUNTRY DESK

This year's bumper production has changed the lot of Magura and Pabna litchi farmers.

Growers of Hazipur, Hazrapur and Raghobadri unions in Magura Sadar upazila are very delighted as they cultivated a large quantity of the juicy fruit.

Of the areas, Hazrapur is widely known as litchi village where every family has trees of the juicy fruit, Magura Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) office sources said.

About 570 hectares of land in the district have been brought under litchi cultivation, Partho Pratim Shah, deputy director of DAE said, adding that Tk 12/15 crore litchis are sold from the district every year.

Nitai Ghosh, a grower of the village in Hazrapur union, said there are around 1000 families in the area. There is no family without litchi tree.

He is expecting 80,000 litchis from his 35 trees, the farmer said, adding that he will earn Tk 2.40 lakh by selling the fruit.

He had to spend Tk 60,000 for the cultivation, said Nitai.

Another grower Subash Ghosh, owner of 25 trees in the village, expects that he will get Tk 1.80 lakh by selling 60,000 litchis this year.

He has already sold 20,000 litchis at Tk 300 per hundred. They will earn good amount as the price of the fruit is higher than the previous year.

Litchi grower and trader Shahidul Islam said he has 100 trees this year. He has already sent the fruit to the capital for sale.

DD Partho Pratim Shah said the soil of Magura is very favourable for litchi farming. The farmers are happy this year as they are earning good amount.

Litchi cultivation has brought

smiles to a good number of farmers at many villages in the district, with a bumper yield of the juicy summer fruit this season, he said.

Our Pabna Correspondent adds: bumper yield and high price has brought smile to the litchi farmers in Ishwardi upazila, said Rawshan Jamal, upazila agriculture officer.

Ishwardi upazila is the highest litchi producing area in the district as well as second highest litchi producing area across the country, according to agriculture office.

There are at least 3 lakh litchi trees in the upazila, said the agriculture officer.

"We are likely to get 2500 to 3000 crore litchis because of bumper production of the juicy summer fruit this year due to the favourable weather," she said, adding that the farmers of the area are likely to earn Tk 400 to 500 crore this summer.

During a recent visit to the upazila, this correspondent found that the litchi farmers and traders have become busy with harvesting, packaging and marketing of the fruit.

"At least, 30 to 50 trucks loaded with different varieties of litchis are being supplied across the country from Ishwardi every day for the last couple of weeks," said Sheikh Mehedi Hasan, a litchi farmer of Shahpur village.

"This year, I bought a small orchard of nine trees at a cost of Tk 52 thousand expecting to sell the produce for Tk 90,000 to 1 lakh," said Samsul Alam, a litchi trader of Awtapara village.

There is a good demand for litchis produced in Ishwardi as well as in Pabna due to their taste, colour and size, said grower Md Imran Hossain of Solimpur village in the upazila.



Traders pile up chillis under a makeshift shop at Pagli Ma market in Domar upazila of Nilphamari. PHOTO: STAR

# Chilli brightens farmers' life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Pagli Ma chilli market has changed the socio-economic condition of the growers here as it has reduced transportation cost of the spice as well as harassment by the extortionists.

A group of enthusiast young farmers took an initiative to set up the chilli market at their remote Mela Panga village near the mazar of woman saint known as 'Pagli Ma' in Domar upazila.

Chilli farmers could not get good profit as they had to give money to extortionists on the way and bear high transportation cost to take their produce to distant markets.

Hormuj Ali, 80, told an interesting story about how chilli became the most popular crop here.

He said, "Many decades ago, a farmer brought some chilli for household cooking. There were some rotten chillis which his wife threw away in the yard. The seeds in them sprouted and gave good yield without any care."

"Seeing the unexpected high yield, farmers started cultivating chilli. In the course of time, Mela Panga turned into a chilli village," he added.

"We faced additional cost and wastage of time for transporting chilli to markets situated 15 km to 20 km away. We also had to give money to extortionists and could not even realise production cost," said farmer Abu Bakkar.

In such a situation, local youths Moklasur Rahman Dulal, Delwar Hossain and Shamsul Islam at the advice of the village elders formed a committee two years ago to set up a market in the village.

They set up shamianas in an open space next to the mazar of a woman saint called 'Pagli

Ma' with the consent of the mazar authority, and named it Pagli Ma chilli market.

Market committee president Moklesur said, "We launched a door to door campaign, asking the farmers to take their chilli to the new market, which created a lot of enthusiasm."

"We also contacted chilli traders of different districts and the market soon became popular as it is situated beside the Domar-Dimla road and also due to the huge amount of chilli here," he said.

Chilli trader Shadidul Islam said the market committee members are friendly and traders from other districts do not feel insecure.

The market is now the upazila's biggest as 2,500 to 3,000 maunds of chilli are sold daily and it is easy to carry to many other districts, said market adviser and zila parishad member Ferdous Alam. The market sits seven days a week.

Now, farmers from surrounding villages like Bhogdaburi, Kektibari, Gomnati, Horinchara and Dimla bring their produce on rickshaw-vans and three-wheelers.

Entazul Huq said, "I cultivated chilli on two bighas of land this year and sold 100 maunds for Tk 60,000 at the market without paying any carrying cost and toll. I'll build a tin-roof house like many farmers of the village have."

Two daughters of farmer Hossain Ali study in high school as he can now afford their education.

Market committee secretary Delwar Hossain said they decided to donate their land attaching it on registration as the market is expanding. They have submitted a petition to the deputy commissioner, requesting him to include it in the government's market list.



A litchi farmer harvesting from his orchard at Hazrapur village in Magura Sadar upazila. Right, trucks loaded with the juicy fruit in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila going to different districts in the country. PHOTO: STAR



Trucks loaded with the juicy fruit in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila going to different districts in the country. PHOTO: STAR