

Giant mango tree

Resembling a spreading banyan, the tree still bears fruits in Gopalganj

SUZIT KUMAR DAS, Faridpur

Standing under the awfully giant mango tree, a newcomer might mistake it for a banyan tree at first glance.

While the people of Hironokandi village in Kashiani upazila of Gopalganj proudly call it their heritage, even the elderly villagers cannot say much about the mango tree, except that their fathers and grandfathers had seen it in a similar condition.

One would get to the extraordinary tree after walking 300 metres on a road towards east from Hironokandi Bus Stand on Dhaka-Khulna Highway, following direction of a signboard.

Although it is locally called a century-old mango tree, several villagers think the tree would be about 200 years' old. Its nine large branches touch the earth like that of a banyan tree around its trunk.

"This mango tree was planted by one of our forefathers. But I do not know who actually the man was. My father and my grandfather also saw this tree in the same condition," said Badsha Sheikh, owner of the mango tree.

"Around 150-200 people come to see this mango tree daily. Sometimes people come here for picnic. On special occasions like

Pahela Baishakh and two Eid festivals, thousands of people gather near this mango tree.

"This old tree still bears delicious fruits. Every year I collect about 500-700 maunds (one maund=40 kg) of mango from it," he said.

Housewife Kulsum Begum said she has seen the mango tree in the same condition since she came to Hironokandi 52 years ago.

"I feel very happy to see that many people come to see this mango tree every day," said Md Sohan Khan, a student of Majra Alhaj AG High School.

Kartik Das, a resident of Faridpur town, who came to see the tree, said, "I did not see any mango tree like it before. I am really happy to see it."

Villagers have demanded that the government take steps to preserve the tree to help it survive for many more years.

Moheshpur Union Parishad Chairman Kazi Abul Kalam Azad said, "This tree is a heritage of our locality. Every day hundreds of people come to see it. I want that the government authorities preserve the tree and make a tourist spot here."

Jahangir Alam, range officer of Gopalganj Forest Department, said he will talk with the higher authorities for preservation and maintenance of the tree.



Visitors awed at the sprawling mango tree, reputed to be around 200 years' old, at Hironokandi village in Kashiani upazila of Gopalganj. PHOTO: STAR

GOVT WHEAT PROCUREMENT DRIVE YET TO START IN NILPHAMARI

Heyday for hoarders, middlemen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Farmers are compelled to sell their newly harvested wheat at low price in local markets as the district food department is yet to start wheat procurement drive, ignoring the government's directive to launch the drive from April 28.

The food directorate in Dhaka had sent a letter to the officials concerned, directing them to start wheat procurement directly from farmers from April 28 at a rate of Tk 28 per kg.

Sub-assistant Agriculture Officer of the Department of Agriculture Extension in the district Anwarul Islam said wheat was cultivated on 15,104 acres of land, producing 18,540 tonnes.

Farmers said harvesting was completed by mid-April, but procurement drive by the government has not started yet. To bear their expenses, they are compelled to sell wheat in the open markets at throwaway prices to hoarders and middlemen, they added.

The district food department sources said the government has set a target to purchase 1,315 tonnes of



wheat this year directly from farmers in six upazilas.

Of the upazilas, 486 tonnes will be purchased in Sadar, 279 in Domar, 228 in Dimla, 161 in Jaldhaka, 93 in Kishoreganj and 68 in Saidpur.

Upazila Controller of Food (UCF) in Sadar Tauhidar Rahman said, "The upazila wheat procurement committee held a meeting a couple of days ago and prepared the purchase target from each of the 12 unions of the upazila.

"We have asked the upazila agri-

culture officer (UAO) to send us a list of wheat farmers as he is the sole authority to certify farmers' eligibility for selling wheat to the government," he added.

UCF of Dimla upazila Md Tafuazzaman said, "We will start purchase as soon as the upazila agriculture office sends us the list of farmers, but they are delaying."

UAO of Sadar upazila Md Mazedul Islam said, "We are busy preparing the farmers' list, but it is a complicated task as we have to verify their national identity

card, agriculture equipment assistance card and also land ownership."

District unit of Krishak Samity secretary Sreedam Das said wheat farmers suffer losses due to delay in starting wheat purchase. He demanded inauguration of the drive soon.

Farmer Khairat Hossain of Itakhola village in Sadar upazila said he cultivated wheat on two bighas of land and got 16 maunds of wheat.

"I had to spray fungicide on my three bighas of Boro paddy field that was attacked by blast disease. To manage the expense I had to sell wheat in the local market at Tk 18 per kg, incurring a loss of Tk 10 per kg as the government rate is Tk 28," he added.

Fazal Kadir of Kishoreganj upazila said, "Hoarders and middlemen are going to be benefited by the delay in procurement by the government as farmers are selling wheat to them at low price to meet day to day expenses."

"The process is on to start the procurement drive very soon," said district controller of food Kazi Saifuddin.

'Robber' dies in 'gunfight' with police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kusthia

An alleged robber was killed in a 'gunfight' with police in Gangni upazila of Meherpur early yesterday.

Deceased Lalon, 39, was a member of an inter-district robber gang, said Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Gangni Police Station.

Acting on a tip-off that the gang was preparing to commit robbery near Chokhtola field of Kushtia-Meherpur highway, a police team raided the area around 3:30am.

Sensing presence of the law enforcers, the robbers opened fire, forcing the team to retaliate.

At one stage of the 'gunfight', the other robbers managed to flee while Lalon was found dead, the police official added.

Police recovered one locally-made rifle, two crude bombs, one machete and a saw from the spot.

2 killed, 29 hurt in Sunamganj clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

At least two people were killed and 29 others injured in a clash between two groups of people over land dispute in Chhatak upazila of Sunamganj district yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Abu Sayeed, 25, son of Abdul Kayum in Habibpur and Sultan Ali, 28. Locals and police said the clash began after an altercation over a land dispute among the supporters of one Abdul Wadud in Sahityapara village and other Abdul Kahar of Habibpur village in the Jawabazar area.

Locals said Sayeed belonged to Wadud group while Sultan was man of Kahar.

Wadud told the correspondent that Sultan died due to heart failure during the clash.

Both groups used sharp weapons and sticks during the clash that spread the entire village and adjacent areas. Police struggled for two hours in vain to bring the situation under control. They fired rubber bullets and tear gas shells to break up the clashing villagers.

Chhatak Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Md Atiqur Rahman said around 31 people from both sides were injured during the clash.

Of them, Abu Sayeed and Sultan Ali succumbed to their injuries on the way to hospital, said the OC. Nine were admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital. Ten others were taken to Chhatak Health Complex and different private clinics. Some others were released after first aid, he said.

Riot police have been deployed on the spot to avoid further clash, Atiqur said.

No case was lodged as of filing this report at 5.00pm.



Journalists form a human chain in front of Jhalakathi Deputy Commissioner's office yesterday demanding punishment to criminals responsible for torturing Ajker Barisal correspondent Md Badal. PHOTO: STAR

JOURNO ASSAULTED FOR FACEBOOK POST ON RAIN TREE INCIDENT

Take action against criminals

Jhalakathi newsmen demand

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newsmen accompanied by cross section of people formed a human chain in front of Jhalakathi Deputy Commissioner's office yesterday demanding punishment of the criminals who brutally tortured a local journalist for giving 'like' status on a Facebook post concerning the rape incident at hotel Raintree in Dhaka.

With his leg fractured and several torture marks on the body, the victim, Md Badal, Kathalia upazila correspondent of the daily Ajker Barisal, is undergoing treatment at Jhalakathi Sadar Hospital.

"On Wednesday afternoon, a group of 20 to 25 people took me before Kathalia Upazila Parishad Chairman Kibria Shikder. There the chairman hurled abuses and slapped and kicked me. Then his men beat me severely

with iron rods and sticks," said Badal, also convener of Bangladesh Mofossal Sangbadik Forum's Kathalia upazila unit.

"At one stage they forced me to sign on blank stamps. After torturing me for around half an hour, they left me on the spot," said Badal.

Then people took him to Amua Hospital in Kathalia from where he was referred to Jhalakathi Sadar Hospital.

Badal's leg was fractured and there are many torture marks on his body although he is out of danger now, said the on-duty doctor.

"I faced the wrath of the upazila parishad chairman and his men who wanted to show their power before the local MP. The Facebook post was related to the brutal crime at hotel Raintree of Banani in Dhaka. Local MP B H Haroon's son is director of the hotel," said the victim.

Contacted, Kathalia Upazila Parishad Chairman Kibria Shikder, also upazila unit convener of ruling Awami League, claimed that he did not torture Badal.

"I was busy in Jhalakathi when Badal was attacked. He might be tortured by Jubo League and Chhatra League activists as he spread through online false news against the local MP and some other local leaders," he said.

"I have been informed of the incident but none filed any written complaint with the police station. I will take action as per law after getting written application in this regard," said Showkat Anwar, officer in charge of Kathalia Police Station.

"The torture on the journalist shows how threatened our freedom of expression is," said Palash Roy, district correspondent of Somoy TV.

Labour crisis hampers Boro harvesting in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Acute shortage of labourers hampers harvesting Boro crops in the district.

Ripe paddy is still lying in the fields and may be damaged at any time if hailstorm hits the area, feared farmers.

Moreover, the situation is worsening day by day due to heavy downpour. Meanwhile, many of the Boro fields in low lying areas went under rainwater. The farmers are facing difficulty harvesting crops from water-logged paddy fields.

Acute labour crisis is prevailing in this Boro crop season, as most of the farm labourers have migrated to other places just for getting higher wages.

Finding no other alternatives, growers' family members are working for harvesting Boro crops.

Although some farm labourers are available in different areas, they are not enough to meet up the requirements. Moreover, landless and poor farmers could not afford unexpected higher wages.

"I have cultivated Boro on three bighas of land and meanwhile, crops on one and a half bighas of land still remained in the field, waiting to be harvested but I could not do it due to shortage of labourers", said Abdur Rashid, a farmer of Malibari union in Sadar Upazila.

"I spent a whole day on Wednesday for searching of farm labourer, but none was available, so I decided to harvest paddy alone from the next day", said farmer Sukumar Chandra of Ghogoa union.

"Locally we get Tk 200 to 300 as wage per day, but if we migrate to other places we can earn Tk 500 to 600 per day and due to this, we prefer to go to other areas for earning more money," said Abdul Quddus, a farm labourer of Kholahati village in Sadar upazila.

"Boro cultivation is now so costly, moreover labour crisis is additional problem for growers, last year we achieved better yield of Boro crops, but this year Boro farming was affected by natural disaster," said Sontosh Barmon, a farmer of village Kholahati.

Man to die for killing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A court in Jessore on Wednesday sentenced a man to death for killing his wife in 2012.

The convict is Md Abdulla, 30, son of Ayub Ali of Sultanpur village in Sadar upazila. The court also fined him Tk 1 lakh.

According to the prosecution, Abdullah strangled his wife Salma Khatun, 20, to death following a family feud on July 9 in 2012.

Victim's father Kabir Hossain filed a case with Jessore Kotwali Police Station against Abdullah the same night. Investigation officer of the case submitted charge sheet against the accused about a month later.

After examining records and witnesses, Judge Amit Kumar Dey of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal handed down the verdict in a crowded courtroom.




Request for Proposal

Katalyst is a market development project that aims to contribute to increasing the income of poor men and women in rural areas. It does this by facilitating changes in services, inputs and product markets, which in turn increases the competitiveness of farmers and small enterprises. Katalyst is co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the UK Government, and the Danish International Development Agency (Danida). It is implemented by Swisscontact under the umbrella of the Ministry of Commerce, Government of Bangladesh.

Katalyst is looking to hire a service provider for the following assignment: **Providing event management and relevant PR support for events hosted by Katalyst**

Katalyst wants to work with a firm with event management and PR supervision expertise, who can backstop and monitor the required activities.

Details regarding the Request for Proposal and the templates for submitting the proposals are available at: <http://katalyst.com.bd/procurement-of-services/>

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