

Lightning kills three

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Three people were killed by lightning in Gazipur and Chapainawabganj in the last two days.

A thunderbolt struck a fifth grader when he was returning home from a nearby water body at Pakiabo village in Gazipur's Kapasia upazila yesterday, reports our correspondent.

The deceased was Mohammad Hossen, 12, son of Ismail Fakir of the village. He was a Class V student of Pakiabo Government Primary School in the area.

Meanwhile, lightning killed two people in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj on Tuesday, reports our correspondent.

The victims were Moyna Khatun, 35, daughter of Kalim Uddin of Bagbari village, and



Jamuna Automatic Rice Mill in Dinajpur Sadar upazila after the April 19 explosion that claimed the lives of 18 workers and badly injured several others. Inset, a boiler, already rusted, being installed at a mill in the same upazila several days ago, shows utter callousness of the owners.

PHOTO: STAR

PRICE FALL

Jute cultivation declines

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Jute cultivation in Rangpur region decreased this year as farmers did not get expected price for their produce last year. Around 59,938 hectares of land was brought under jute cultivation in Rangpur, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Gaibandha and Nilphamari under Rangpur region this year, while it was 62,273 hectares last year, said Foyez Uddin, officer of the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Rangpur.

Local variety jute was cultivated on 5,235 hectares and Tosa jute on 54,703 hectares.

DAE officials are expecting 6,91,205 bales of jute this season, while it was 6,44,684 bales last year.

Farmers of these districts started planting jute at the end of March, and it will be harvested 110 days after planting. A few farmers faced losses last year as there was not enough water for rotting the harvested jute.

DAE officials said that jute was cultivated on 11,830 hectares in Rangpur, 12,175 in Gaibandha, 20,703 in Kurigram, 4,780 in Lalmonirhat, and 10,450 hectares in Nilphamari.

Jotindra Roy of Taraganj upazila of Rangpur, however, said demand for jute has gone up as the government is trying to promote jute made products in the country banning polythene bags, adding that he cultivated jute on four acres this year. "Many farmers who switched to other crops leaving jute are farming the golden fibre again," he said.

Rice mills still lack monitoring

23 killed in boiler explosions in 4 years, one inspector for 600 boilers in Rangpur, Rajshahi and Khulna regions

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

The authorities concerned are yet to develop a minimum monitoring system for overseeing rice mill boilers, even after the April 19 deadly boiler explosion in Dinajpur Sadar.

A few boiler explosions occurred in northern region's automatic rice mills due to unskilled operators and lack of awareness among the millers.

Reza Humayun Faruk Chowdhury Shamim, president of Dinajpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry said this while talking to this correspondent.

Besides, there is only one inspector to oversee boilers in 300 rice mills and over 300 other different mills in Rangpur, Rajshahi and Khulna regions, showing awfully poor monitoring by the government, he said.

About one lakh workers are employed in the mills.

Mill operators of the divisions said there are 300 fully automated rice mills in operation in 16 north-

ern districts. Of them, 140 are in Dinajpur and 53 in Naogaon and most of them are 30 to 40 years old, they added.

At least 23 people were killed in boiler explosions during the last four years in the districts. Two people were killed in a boiler blast at Tumpa Automatic Rice Mill in Naogaon Sadar upazila while three died at Dinajpur's Kuddus Automatic Rice Mill in 2013.

In the latest incident, 18 people died and 12 others were injured in an explosion at Jamuna Automatic Rice Mill in Gopalganj area of Dinajpur Sadar upazila on April 19.

Naogaon Rice Mill Owners' Group President Rafiqul Islam said boiler explosion in the mills is rare. One of the reasons for explosions is shortage of skilled boiler operators, he said. Besides, annual maintenance of each boiler is prerequisite for operating a rice mill, he added.

Most mills in the region do not have any skilled operators and rou-

tine checkup and maintenance of boiler with the help of an inspector is often ignored, said Anwarul Islam, senior vice-president of Dinajpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Hydraulic test is the only method for checking the condition of a boiler," he added.

A rice miller in Dinajpur said the explosion at Jamuna Automatic Rice Mill was caused due to negligence of the mill owner and the operator. "Main boiler operator Moksedul Islam went out for having tea, whereas he cannot leave the place when the boiler is heated up," he said.

"The explosion could have been averted if the safety valve of the boiler had worked properly," the miller said.

Blaming the government for shortage of inspectors, he said there is only one boiler inspector for Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna regions.

Jamuna Automatic Rice Mill resumed operation on April 17 this year that had been closed since

December last year, said the injured boiler operator Shafiqul Islam.

Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna region's Boiler Inspector Humayun Kabir said the accident took place as the owner restarted the mill without any preliminary maintenance work. There are 600 boilers under Rajshahi, Rangpur and Khulna regions, Humayun said, adding that inspecting such a huge number of boilers by one inspector is quite difficult.

Dinajpur Deputy Commissioner Mir Khairul Alam formed a committee on April 22 to investigate the matter.

The six-member committee led by Additional District Magistrate Mahbubur Rahman submitted the report on May 6.

Chamber President Shamim said, "It was a lesson for the mill operators, workers and inspectors. We have formed a committee to prevent such accidents in future."

Madina Begum, wife of late Ripon Mia, filed a murder case accusing three people, including the mill owner Subal Ghosh, on April 24.

FALSE ALLEGATION

Woman beaten, hair cut off

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A 35-year-old housewife in Atghoria upazila of the district faced the wrath of some village leaders who labelled her a 'fallen woman' over false allegation of extramarital affair.

Police on Tuesday arrested four people after victim Jolifa Khatun, wife of Shamsuddin Khan of Kadamdanga village in the upazila, filed a case with Atghoria Police Station on Monday.

The arrestees are Azizul Haque, member of Ward No 7 under Chandbha union parishad (UP), Mukul Hossain, Sobhan Ali and Masud Rana of Kadamdanga village.

The arrestees were produced before a Pabna court yesterday that sent them to jail.

Officer-in-Charge Anwarul Islam of Atghoria Police Station said Shamsuddin's two brothers from Kathalbaria village in Chatmohar upazila came to visit him when he was not present at home on June 7 and stayed there that night.

Taking advantage of Shamsuddin's absence, the arrestees along with some other villagers cordoned the house and brought Jolifa out of her house bringing false allegation of illicit relation with her visiting guests, the OC said, adding that they beat up Jolifa mercilessly and later cut off her hair in the name of arbitration.

Critically injured Jolifa was admitted to Atghoria Upazila Health Complex next morning and later shifted to Pabna Medical College Hospital.

The victim filed a case with Atghoria Police Station on Monday accusing seven people, the OC said.

Kidnapped rape victim still traceless

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A 15-year-old domestic help, who was abducted by her alleged rapists in Gouripur upazila on June 7, is still traceless.

Although the victim's father, a physically challenged beggar of Echhulia village in the upazila, filed a case with Gouripur Police Station, accusing Kala Chand and 14 others the following day, the police are yet to rescue the girl and arrest any of the accused.

Police said a gang led by Kala Chand of Krishanapur village entered the victim's house and forcibly picked her up on June 7.

Kala Chand and his accomplices raped the girl when she went out of her room to respond to the call of nature on May 26.

Noakhali FFs recall horrific days of 1971

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Today is 15th June. On this day in 1971, Pakistani occupation forces opened fire, killing over a hundred innocent people within 25 to 30 minutes in the district.

They also raped many Bangalee women and torched shops of Sonapur Bazar and houses at nearby villages Sreepur, Sonapur, Madhaya Karimpur, Mahabtabpur and Christian Para in Sadar upazila, said local freedom fighters (FFs).

The Pakistani army carried out the brutal attack in cooperation with some local collaborators, they said.

Freedom fighters Kamal Uddin and Mofazzal Hossain Chunnun said the Pakistani troops targeted people of the villages as they had tremendous support to the Liberation War.

Besides, most of the youths in the areas took part in 1971 Liberation War at the call of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, they said.

At first, the invaders entered Sreepur village and shot Ali Hossain dead at the field of

Ahamadia School. Later, they entered the house of Ali behind the school and killed his two siblings and a guest.

Former schoolteacher Ibrahim Khalil, who was injured on the day, said the occupation forces made him, his elder brother Abdur Rahman and his uncle stand in a line and fired. His elder brother and uncle died on the spot.

When a businessman takes on visionary farming

SHYKH SERAJ

Dear readers, a few days back I went to Madhaishur village in Louhajang upazila of Munshiganj to meet an agricultural entrepreneur. He is Abul Kalam Azad, a local man. However, he's more rooted to business that stretches to the capital city. He has made a mango orchard at Madhaishur village. It is very eye-catching indeed. Four years ago, 200-300 mango plants were sowed here just out of hobby. He planted Amropali, Mollika, Lengra, Gopalbhog, Fazli, Kachamitha and a few other varieties. In the first two years, very few mangoes grew. However, by 2017, all the trees are full of mangoes.

"By the grace of Almighty, plenty of mangoes have grown," says a beaming Azad. I was amazed looking at his orchard that he has been nurturing with utmost care and



Shykh Seraj with innovative mango grower Abul Kalam Azad at the latter's orchard at Madhaishur village in Munshiganj's Louhajang upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

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devotion.

It's only a 3.5-bigha orchard. Every step of Azad's life is planned and orderly. From this small orchard he ensured providing delicious and pure mangoes to his family. I got to know so many things from this great farming soul.

"Did you inherit this place?" I asked. "Yes," he replied.

"What was your first thought when you started this orchard?" I wanted to learn about his vision.

"I thought not to leave the land unused. Then, I bought some plants of several mango varieties

Including Himsagar, Amropali, Gopalbhog, Kachamitha and Haribhanga from Brac and planted them," he said. "Are you getting enough yields from your mango orchard?" I asked Azad.

"Yes, way better than before and plenty of them as you can see," he pointed to the delicious mangoes on the trees. "To get plenty of mangoes in the month of Holy Ramadan is like a blessing," he added.

I could see how much happy he was for his production.

"You love them, don't you?" I eagerly wanted to know.

"Yes, I am so happy to see my mangoes. It's a great pleasure, when you know, you've grown them all," he replied with a tone of accomplishment.

Abul Kalam Azad understood if an orchard is made in a planned way, it does bring fruitful results. At least, a farmer can expect a great outcome. However, I didn't see him using bagging method at his orchard to protect the mangoes. I requested him to use the method which will definitely help him get even better yield, alongside

ensuring quality.

Dear readers, if you go to Northern districts of Bangladesh, from Panchagarh to Rajshahi and the rest, those who cultivate mangoes are pure farmers. Their main cash crops are mango, litchi etc. However, those who are businessmen like Abul Kalam Azad, they barely had the idea of investing in agriculture. What does Azad have to say about that?

"For growing crops and do something really fruitful, I always wanted to invest in farming and I wanted to do something pure out of it and eventually I did," he said.

Azad's nephew, Izharul Islam Halder rushed from London to Louhajang after hearing about his uncle's success.

"How do you feel about your uncle's orchard?" I asked Izharul.

"Great. I also have my own land 2.5 miles away from here. I bought it seeing my uncle's success. Now, I am taking advice from my uncle to do what he has done here," Izharul replied.

"So, your uncle has now become an expert," I said.

"Yes, he has been a great mentor for me," gladly replied Azad's nephew.

Izharul also shared a precious memory with me. During the 80s, he saw me doing an episode for BTV's Mati O Manush on the rooftop at their Moghbazar residence. At that time, his father was alive. According to Izharul, I interviewed his father on Kazi guava and his father was so happy that he sent his son the photograph he took with me. Izharul said he would give me a soft copy of that photo.

"I get inspired every day looking at my orchard," said Abul Kalam Azad while I was chatting with his nephew.

A local young farmer of this area, Ruhul Amin, mainly looks after this orchard. And, he's working the way Azad has told him to. He works in a much planned way to bring in the best results.

The orchard has turned out to be a great pleasant field for the Azad family. In every vacation, they visit the orchard in Louhajang, travelling from Dhaka. They spend some quality time filled with happiness, here at Azad's mango orchard.

This orchard has ensured a source for getting pure mangoes, completely grown with organic fertilisers, in this Ramadan for this family. It is very inspiring to others as well.

Dear readers, the mangoes cultivated by our farmers are now being exported abroad. These traditional farmers don't have proper knowledge or education for modern farming. They only know how to cultivate using their age-old wisdom coupled with love for the soil and crops. On the other hand, if an educated businessman takes this agriculture into his hand, it will have more value in the global market. And, by educating the farmers the market will get bigger and better.

A large number of those who live in the urban areas have enough land to make a little orchard in villages. You can also make mango orchards like Azad, be it small in size, but it will surely supply you and your family pure mangoes. It will also unite everyone of your family, through the bond-age with crops and soil.

Nine fishermen return home after serving in Myanmar jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Nine fishermen of Kuakata area returned to Bangladesh on Monday after spending five months in a Myanmar jail.

They landed at Shahjalal International Airport on Monday and went to Kuakata from Dhaka on Tuesday.

Ten fishermen of fishing boat FB Faysal went missing from the Bay on January 16. Their trawler went adrift in Myanmar territory as its engine stopped working on January 28. Myanmar's coastguards caught them on February 15 and sent them to jail.

Their family members learned of the matter after receiving phone calls from the head of the Bangladesh consulate in Rakhaine province of Myanmar.

Alipur fisheries warehouse owners' association president Ansar Uddin Mollah said they requested the Bangladesh embassy in Myanmar to get them freed. The Myanmar government later released them.

Their families sent Tk 15,000 for each fisherman as plane fare from Myanmar.

The returnees are Ali Hossain Gazi, 35, Kabir Hossain, 32, Sobhan Gharami, 45, Alamgir Matobbar, 35, Nazrul Gazi, 32, Hasan Howlader, 17, all of Maibhanga village in Latachapplee union, and Rubel, 25, Jahidul, 18, and Shamim, 16, all of Serajpur village in Mohupur union under Kalapara upazila. Kawsar Musullee, 26, died on the boat due to want of food.

Md Monir Matobbar, elder brother of Alamgir Matobbar said, "We are very grateful to almighty Allah as the missing fishermen have returned."