

Schoolboy killed by friend

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A schoolboy was stabbed to death allegedly by his friend over affairs with a girl in Sadar upazila on Wednesday.

Victim Ratul, 16, son of Azim Mia of Dakkhin Poirtola area, was a student of Class VII of Bangladesh Gas Fields School and College.

Ratul's another friend Saiful was also injured seriously during the incident.

Police said the victim's friend Sourav, 16, of Kandipara in the town locked in an altercation with Ratul and Saiful over affairs with a girl.

Later, Sourav called them to Poirtola bus stand area for an emergency where he stabbed Ratul. Ratul later died at Sadar Hospital.

Narod river polluters warned of action

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

The district administration at a workshop yesterday warned of action against several industrial units if they fail to stop polluting the Narod river immediately.

"Four industrial concerns named Pran Agro, Jamuna Distilleries, Kishan Agro and Natore Sugar Mills are polluting the Narod river for years," said Natore Deputy Commissioner (DC) Shahina Khatun.

"We will no longer tolerate such pollution. All the grabbers will be evicted," she said at the workshop held at the DC office conference room.

"We will help the administration to keep the Narod river alive as per the direction of the DC," said Pran Agro DGM Hazrat Ali at the meeting.



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: A finch with its newly bred young ones, several adults of the beautiful songbird species, and Abdul Manan Dinar, the small bird enthusiast who has set up the breeding centre at his house in Manikganj town.



PHOTO: ZAHANGIR SHAH

For the love of finches

Manikganj enthusiast shares his avian passion

ZAHANGIR SHAH with ANDREW EAGLE

Pint-sized and available in a range of colours, finches are a pet that won't get on the neighbours' nerves, says enthusiast Abdul Hannan Dinar, 35, from 'Pakbagicha' house in Manikganj town. With over a hundred finches of twenty-five species, Dinar speaks from experience.

"They aren't noisy like parakeets," he says. "Finches are about the size of a sparrow, so they can be kept anywhere in the house. It's easy to give them sufficient flying space and breeding common varieties isn't difficult. To keep finches is joyful; but to look after them well, a little dedication is required."

Pet birds are growing in popularity nationwide, according to Dinar, with more than one lakh people currently engaged in bird-rearing. "It's a type of addiction

that doesn't spare anybody," he jokes. "From children to housewives to the elderly, pet birds are popular. Caring for a bird brings mental satisfaction."

Dinar inherited his interest from his father, who used to rear pigeons. "From childhood I dreamt of rearing birds," he recalls. He turned his dream into reality in 2011, after passing his Masters degree from Manikganj Devendra College. Cordon bleu, owl, zebra, parrot and Gouldian: Dinar's finch varieties cost him up to Tk 6,000 per month in food and maintenance. He earns around Tk 1.5 lakhs per annum from selling bred birds. "Depending on the species, a finch will fetch between Tk 400 to Tk 40,000," he says.

Asked to name his secret to successful finch breeding, he says there is none. "In the internet era there are no secrets," he remarks. "I would only add that breeding

birds required patience."

He notes that some finch species are monomorphic, meaning males and females look alike, which makes it harder to be sure one has a pair. "For breeding, finches need space, decent nesting boxes, a bit of peace and quiet, as well as a proper diet and clean water, including for bathing. The African and Asian waxbill varieties prefer aviaries with lots of plants."

It's a subject Dinar knows well. He is likely the only person in the country to have successfully bred several rare species including St Helena and orange-cheeked waxbills, the purple grenadier, crested pearl and chestnut Bengali finches, and the strawberry finch. He bred several new hybrids, too.

To ask Dinar which is his favourite variety is to leave him perplexed. He takes time to consider. "It's like having to choose a

favourite child!" he exclaims. "If I really had to say, then probably the African waxbills are the most interesting. But I love all finches equally!"

Indeed his favourite memory of his hobby is achieving success in breeding the St Helena waxbill. "I kept them in a big aviary and they made nests a few times with no result. I had almost given up hope since there was a belief among finch-breeders that waxbills couldn't be bred in captivity. So the day I heard chicks begging for food inside the aviary I was both thrilled and astonished. I hadn't even realised the baby birds were there."

In the wild finches live for about four years; but if well looked after in captivity they have a lifespan of seven to ten years. Dinar recommends finches are encouraged to breed only during their natural breeding season.

"Many breeders have their finches breeding year-round like egg-laying chickens," he says. "It shortens their lifespan and makes them prone to disease."

Finches are suitable for everybody, says Dinar. "Newcomers can try less demanding species like zebra finches. They are found in abundance at pet markets and are locally called 'prince' by our enlightened shopkeepers." Dinar is head administrator of the Facebook-based Finch Society of Bangladesh, where enthusiasts share their hobby, take advice and participate in competitions designed to encourage quality breeding.

In the humble finch Dinar sees yet more benefit than enjoyable recreation. "Keeping finches can make a person more active. It's a positive activity that can steer younger generations away from bad habits."

Fatwa leaves family ostracised for ten years

MINTU DESHWARA with ANDREW EAGLE

Village life is supposed to be quiet but for Fatir Ali and his family, from Eraligul village in Moulvibazar's Juri upazila it's far too quiet. For the last decade, as a result of a fatwa stemming from a land dispute, Eraligul villagers have been forbidden from having any interaction at all with Fatir Ali's family, including speaking to them.

"It's been like this since my childhood," says family member Shermina Begum who is now a second-year zoology student at Moulvibazar Government College. "I cannot speak to anybody in the village."

"I am not invited to any social event in the village," says Fatir Ali. "I am forbidden to pray at the local mosque, so I go to a neighbouring village for prayers."

The problem began a decade ago, when Fatir Ali was involved in a dispute with his brother Sharafat Ali over eight decimals of land. In 2007, Fatir Ali built a house on the land, which his brother

was trying to occupy. A local panchayet committee involving respected locals Aftab Ali, Ustar Ali and Jamir Uddin, was engaged to resolve the dispute.

While the panchayet committee was arbitrating the land dispute, Fatir Ali, driven by concerns of bias, filed a petition against the committee at Juri Police Station. The committee took offence and Fatir Ali was asked to apologise. He refused.

For his refusal to apologise, the committee issued the fatwa ostracising the family. "Fatir Ali and his wife treated elders with disrespect," the committee members claim. "They did not ask for forgiveness. That is why the fatwa was issued."

The land dispute was resolved seven years ago, after a survey. Only the fatwa remains.

"Such a rule is illegal," says the additional assistant public prosecutor of Moulvibazar judge court, Abdul Khaliq.

"Following investigation of the matter we will take legal action," says Juri Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mintu Chowdhury.

Soldier Shahin Alam laid to rest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Sainik Shahin Alam alias Chanchal, killed following a landslide in Manikchhari camp near Rangamati town on Tuesday, was buried at his family graveyard at Dhantola village in Adamdighi upazila of the district yesterday.

Earlier, his body was flown to Bogra by a helicopter and then taken to his ancestral home by a microbus around 12:00noon.

Seeing the body of their only son, his parents were often losing their consciousness, while his relatives and well-wishers started to gather at the house only to have a last glance.

Family sources said Shahin, 32, son of Mohammad Sohrawardi Mia and Selina Begum, joined the Bangladesh Army in 2006.

Shahin married police Constable Chamon Begum, who is currently serving in Mymensingh, in 2012 and the couple have a four-year-old son.

His father Sohrawardi told this correspondent in tears that Shahin called him on Tuesday morning and around 3:00pm he was informed that his son died during a landslide in Rangamati.

His mother Selina Begum became speechless after losing her only son, second among their four children, who assured her he would build a brick house in place of the clay made house on their three decimals of land.

Shahin's wife Chamon Begum lamented that she is now worried about the future of her only son.

Officer-in-Charge Shawkat Kabir of Adamdighi Police Station said due to the unfavourable weather in Rangamati the body could not be sent on Wednesday.



Wailing family members of Rangamati landslide victim Shahin Alam alias Chanchal (inset) at their Dhantola village home in Bogra's Adamdighi upazila.

PHOTO: STAR



Farmer Mizanur Rahman Raju at his arum field of Meherpuri variety at Harishwar Kaloa village in Kurigram Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Kurigram arum farmers eye bumper yield

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Farmers in different upazilas of Kurigram district are expecting bumper yield of arum, locally known as *kachu*, this year due to the favourable weather prevailing in the area, encouraging them to cultivate the item on more land.

Many farmers in the district are opting for arum cultivation as its farming is more profitable than the other agricultural items.

Farmers said it rained several times after planting the arum seeds this year which is very good for the cultivation of the popular vegetable.

According to Kurigram Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) around 315 hectares of land have been brought under arum cultivation in all the nine upazilas of the district this season.

Of the land, about 217 hectares of land have been used for cultivation of Mukhi Kachu while nearly 98 hectares have been brought under Pani Kachu

this year.

"I have cultivated arum of Mukhi variety on 1.5 acres of land and expect bumper production this year," said farmer Mizanur Rahman Raju, 42, of Harishwar Kaloa village in Kurigram Sadar upazila.

"I planted the seeds in April this year and hopefully will be able to harvest the vegetable by the end of July," Raju added.

Dhiren Chandra Roy, 50, an arum farmer at Shivram village in the upazila, said, "I have spent Tk 10 thousand for cultivation of arum of Mukhi variety on 33 decimals of land and expect a profit of around Tk 40 thousand."

"If I had cultivated other crops, I wouldn't have gained as much profit," he added.

Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Md Kamruzzaman said arum is tolerant to natural calamities and it requires no pesticide.

As it can be cultivated on low lands, its production cost is very low as well, the officer said.

20 injured in Gopalganj clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

At least 20 people were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers at Davgram village in Gopalganj Sadar upazila yesterday.

Locals said the clash began when supporters of Sheikh Mosharraf suddenly attacked the men of Gopalganj Zilla Parishad member Sheikh Shahabuddin with sharp weapons, leaving 20 injured.

Gopalganj Municipality Councillor Roman Mollah said Mosharraf and his brother Batul Sheikh are drug peddlers and they suddenly attacked them with sharp weapons, leaving at least six people injured. The injured were admitted to Gopalganj Sadar Hospital.

Police said they arrested Sheikh Mosharraf and his son in this regard.

Extreme passion for trees

'Guardian of nature' plants 3 saplings, coming out of hospital bed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Even hospitalisation could not prevent Faridpur 'guardian of nature' Abdul Samad Sheikh from planting trees.

"I could not plant trees due to my sickness for a few days. As I felt better on Wednesday, I went out and planted three saplings," said Samad, now admitted to Faridpur Medical College Hospital for his tumour operation.

Samad, 60, a resident of Bhagondanga village in Faridpur Sadar upazila, has planted at least one tree per day for the last 48 years.

"My husband's operation will be conducted on June 21. I stay with him during the day and our younger son attends him at night. But he [Samad] came out from hospital around 8:00am on Wednesday and planted three saplings before returning to the hospital around 10:00am," said Samad's wife Jhorna Begum.

Samad's younger son Chapal Sheikh said, "On Wednesday morning, I went to washroom. Returning from there, I did not find my father on his hospital bed. He was not found on the hospital compound either. Later I found him in Tatul area."

"He told me that he went out from hospital as he wanted to plant trees. I took him home and he took bath. Then he went to Bhagondanga Horticulture Center and bought three plants."

"Asked by my father, I took him to Faridpur Super Market area on my rickshaw. There he planted two plants and planted another one at Charkomlapur. Then he returned to hospital," said Samad's elder son Kutub Sheikh.