

Mixed orchard shows promise

Amir established a mango orchard six years ago

SUSHANTA GHOSH with ANDREW EAGLE

Six years ago, when Amir Hossain Mia from Mohonganj village in Barisal's Babuganj upazila returned from working in Dubai, he had a plan to establish an orchard. This he did, dedicating his seventy decimals to mango trees. But rather than only grow mangoes he added lemons as well, a fruit-growing recipe that has proven to be successful, such that he has since established other mixed orchards as well.

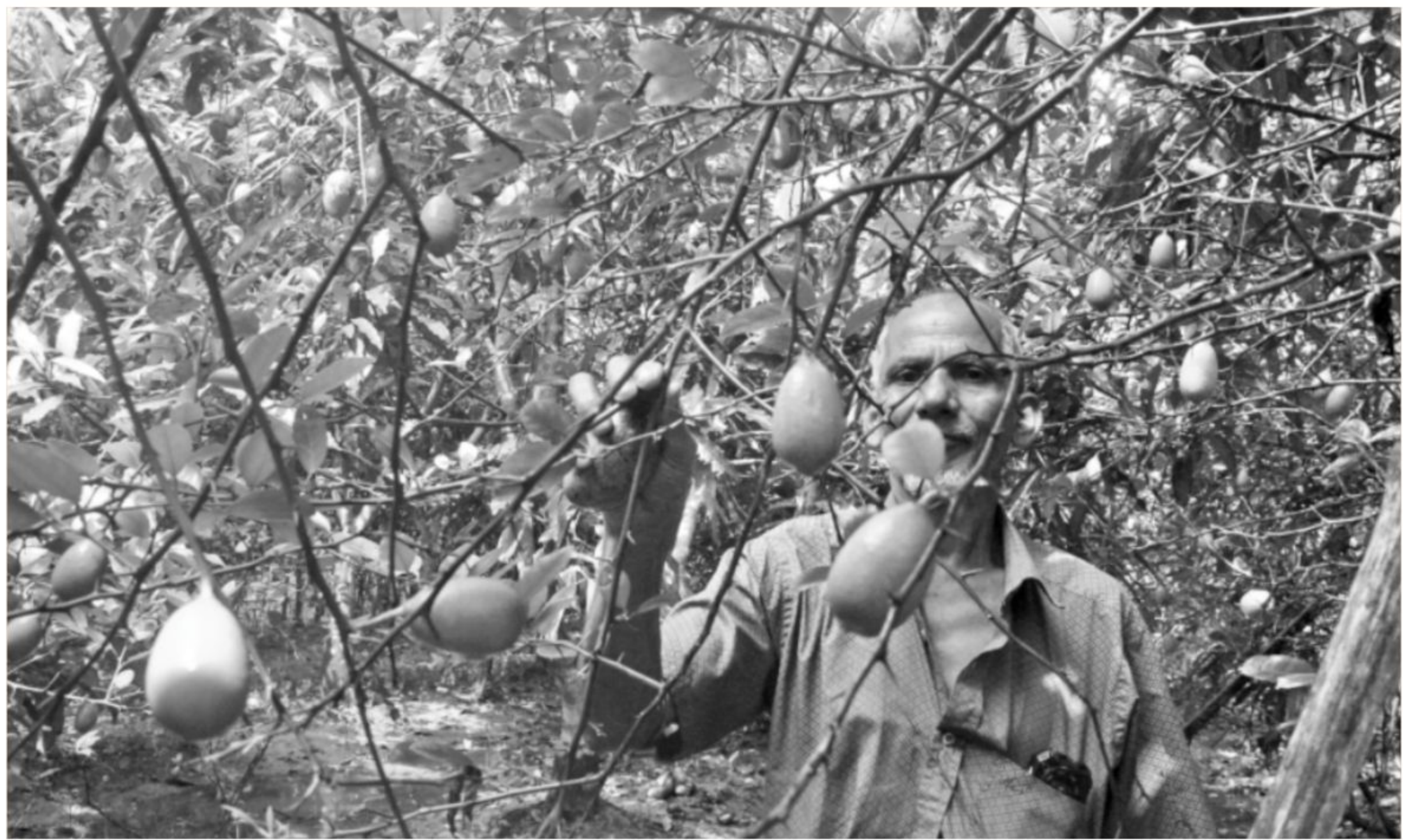
"The mangoes started to produce fruit after three years," Amir recalls. "Then I planted two hundred lemon saplings in the gaps along each line of mango trees. I dug a canal for irrigation and only use organic fertiliser." He also expanded his orchard on a further twenty decimals of leased land.

This year Amir has already sold thirty maunds of mangoes and three maunds of lemons, representing sales revenue of around Tk 1 lakh.

"Expenses for the mixed orchard are about Tk 30,000. It means there is a Tk 70,000 per annum profit," he says.

Amir's fruit is popular, especially because it is grown organically. "His fruit is chemical-free and tastier than other fruit," says Barisal City businessman Pankaj Gupta. "We have bought fresh mangoes directly from Amir's orchard for the past two years." Anis, a local fruit trader, agrees. "I collect quality fruit from Amir Hossain nowadays," he says, "to sell in the local markets." Indeed Amir's fruit is so popular that he's often sold out before it's quite ready to harvest.

"The most interesting feature of Amir Hossain's mixed orchard," says the deputy director of the horticulture centre in Babuganj, Swapon Kumar Halder, "is the innovative irrigation system that relies on water flow through a system of canals. His orchard is a model for the correct use of organic fertiliser, too."



Amir Hossain Mia at his organic mixed orchard at Mohonganj village in Barisal's Babuganj upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

ONE YEAR OF SHOLAKIA MILITANT ATTACK

Investigation yet to end

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

One year has passed since the barbaric militant attack on Eid congregation at Sholakia in the district but investigation into the case has not yet ended.

The incident shattered the family of housewife Jharna Rani Bhowmik, who lost her life, being hit by a stray bullet during the gunfight between militants and police on the day. Eleven-year-old Shuvo is living a miserable life after losing his mother.

Shuvo Dev Bhowmik, younger son of Jharna Rani, yesterday said he cannot resist crying when he sees the picture of his mother and bullet ridden window. The bullet pierced the window and killed his mother.

Shuvo's elder brother is a part-time teacher at a college in Dhaka and his father Gouranga Nath Bhowmik holds a small job at a bidi factory.

Gouranga Nath demanded quick trial to the killing. He said he has admitted Shuvo to Class VII of Mukul Niketan at Mymensingh as there is no one in Kishoreganj to look after him. He stays in the school hostel there. He said after the death of his mother Shuvo has become quieter.

Jharna Rani's elder son Basudev Bhowmik said his father has become



Eleven-year-old Shuvo looks at the picture of his mother Jharna Rani Bhowmik, who was killed in the militant attack at Sholakia in Kishoreganj on July 7 last year.

hapless after the death of his mother.

Some noted persons of the area demanded quick disposal of the case and ensure punishment to the culprits to restore the heritage and honour of Sholakia Eidgah ground.

The militants made a grenade attack at Azimuddin High School near Sholakia Eidgah ground on July 7 last year before Eid-ul-Fitr prayers. Two police constables—Ansarul Haque and Zahirul Islam—were killed when militants hacked them. 12 other police members were also injured.

Militant Abir was killed in gunfight with police.

On July 10, Pakundia Police Station officer-in-charge filed a case under Anti-terrorism Act. Neo-JMB leader Jahangir Alam alias Rajib Gandhi has given confessional statement and provided important information.

A charge sheet in the case will be given at the soonest when the full report of the DNA profile will be available, said the OC.

Early marriage foiled

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Shajahanpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) on Wednesday foiled early marriage bid of a 16-year-old college girl.

Parents arranged marriage of Bithi Rani Roy of Kamarpara village, said UNO Md Kamruzzaman.

On Wednesday afternoon, the UNO went to the office of UNO Kamruzzaman and informed him about her marriage to be held with Joydeb Bishwash, son of Kartik Biswash of Ratanpur village under Khoksha upazila of Kushtia today.

Later, the UNO along with local people rushed to the spot and foiled the marriage bid. He later took her parents to his office and released them after taking undertaking.

Earlier, Kamruzzaman postponed five early marriages in the upazila after joining in the upazila on May 24 as UNO.

Mentally ill girl chained for three years

Md Aminul Islam with Andrew Eagle

Muhibbur Rahman Sarder, a small-scale farmer from Char Katihari village in Jinari union of Kishoreganj's Hossainpur upazila has difficulty enough in providing for his seven-member family. In particular, looking after his twenty-year-old daughter Fatema is a challenge. She is mentally unwell. It is beyond the family's financial capacity to seek proper treatment. As a result, to prevent her from wandering beyond the house, for her own safety, for the last three years she has been chained.

"To provide treatment for the girl is serious burden on the family," says the officer-in-charge of Hossainpur police station Md Nannu Mollah. "Her mental illness first manifest when she was in class ten at the local high school. Three years ago her condition became more serious."

It used to be that Rafiq Sarder, the younger of Muhibbur's two sons, worked for a private company in Dhaka and was able to contribute to the family's income. But an accident three years ago left the father-of-two physically-challenged and unable to work. Muhibbur's elder son Babul

Sarder, 40, meanwhile struggles to support his own family of three children on his earnings as a labourer.

To make matters worse another daughter Nazma Akhter, 23, who is Fatema's older sister, also faced a period of mental illness two years ago, soon after she was married. She was sent back to her parental home; though fortunately she is now well again.

"Fatema was treated at local hospitals and by village healers on various occasions, as we could manage," says her uncle Hobi Sarder, "but she's never had good treatment for her illness and is yet to be cured."

"The family lives hand to mouth," says local Jinari union councillor Aminul Islam Makhon. "I organised two disability cards for Fatema and her brother Rafiq six months ago so that they can get food support. But it doesn't help with treatment costs."

"If any affluent member of society stepped forward," sobs a distraught Muhibbur, "my daughter might be able to return to her normal life." Jinari union's chairman Abdus Salam says the council is also thinking about how to organise treatment for Fatema.

NGO officer rescued, nine 'abductors' held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Police rescued a kidnapped NGO official and arrested nine people in connection with the abduction in the district town on Tuesday night.

Criminals abducted Zahidul Islam, 32, branch manager of SK Foundation of Goradhap branch in Bogra Sadar upazila, from Matidali in Bogra town when he was returning to his residence from office on Monday evening, said police.

The criminals demanded Tk 3 lakh as ransom from Zahidul's family and threatened to kill him otherwise.

His family gave them Tk 1.16 lakh through bKash and informed police on Tuesday afternoon.

"Police arrested nine people from different areas of Bogra town on Tuesday night and rescued the victim. They also recovered Tk 80 thousand from the arrestees," said Aslam Ali, inspector (Investigation) of Sadar Police Station.

The arrestees are Shapna Begum, 28, Mala Begum, 20, Sharmin Akhter, 30, Rekha Begum, 22, Sultan Ahmed, 26, Farhad Hossain Manik, 26, Monir Ahmed, 28, Piyash Ali, 30, and Abdul Gafur, 30.

3956 textbooks seized, principal sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A case was filed on Wednesday night against acting principal of Shibram School and College in Sundarganj upazila on charge of illegally selling government school textbooks meant for free distribution.

Upazila Education Officer Mahmud Hossain Mondol filed the case with Sundarganj Police Station against acting principal Anwar Hossain and purchaser Akkas Ali under Special Power Act 1947.

Earlier, local people seized a rickshaw-van loaded with the textbooks

of Class VI to Class IX of this year and the previous year near Chaitantola Bazar the same day and informed the upazila administration of the matter.

On information, Upazila Secondary Education Officer went to the spot and seized the textbooks with the help of Sundarganj police.

Sensing the presence of the law enforcers, however, buyer Akkas Ali and the van-puller fled the scene.

The seized goods include 106 textbooks of different subjects of current year and 3850 books of the previous year.

Officer-in-Charge Atiar Rahman of

Sundarganj Police Station said they are conducting drives to arrest the other accused of the case.

Selling textbooks meant for free distribution among students is a punishable offence as declared by the government, said Sundarganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer SM Golam Kibria.

Contacted, Khurshid Jahan Smrity, president of the college governing body and wife of slain Gaibandha Lawmaker Manjurul Islam Liton, could not say anything about the issue as she is currently in the capital.

Minor girl raped by shaman

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

An eleven-year-old girl was raped allegedly by a shaman in Chatlapur Tea Garden area under Kulaura upazila of the district on Wednesday night.

Local people rescued the victim, also a Class V student at a local primary school, from a bush in the tea garden around 11:00am yesterday. She is now undergoing treatment at Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital.

Quoting villagers, police said as the girl had been suffering from fever for long her paternal uncle called a shaman, locally known as Kobiraj, for her treatment on Wednesday afternoon. He stayed in their house at night.

After feeding sedatives to the victim's uncle the culprit took the girl to a nearby bush, said local UP member Sitaram Bin, adding that the shaman raped the girl and fled the scene.

Officer-in-Charge (investigation) Binoy Bhusan of Kulaura Police Station said he heard about the incident and will take necessary steps after filing of a case in this regard.



A landslide on June 13 severely damaged the Rangamati-Khagrachhari road, stopping traffic movement on the route. The photo was taken yesterday from Khamar Para area of Rangamati's Sapchhari union.

PHOTO: STAR

RANGAMATI-KHAGRACHHARI LINK ROAD

Still unfit for traffic

ANVIL CHAKMA, Rangamati

Rangamati-Khagrachhari link road, which was damaged by landslide on June 13, is still unfit for vehicular movement, much to the suffering of the commuters.

This correspondent visited the spot on Tuesday and saw commuters walking on the road that was completely destroyed at two points and damaged in 25 to 30 places.

Md Jahangir, 35, from Mohalchhari upazila of Khagrachhari said he was going to Rangamati. "It is very hard to walk on the road and it should be repaired soon," he added.

Dipok Chakma, a shopkeeper at Kutukchhari bazar, said he cannot carry goods to his shop as the link road is badly damaged.

Assistant Teacher of Mauroom High School in Kutukchhari union Rupam Chakma said the students do not come to the school regularly due to the difficulties they face on the road.

Hanyaraam Chakma and Modhulal Chakma of Moantola Hijing village in Rangamati Sadar upazila said they do not

know how long it will take to repair the road. Students face problems every day while going to their institutions along the damaged road, they added.

Italy Chakma, a student of Rangamati Government College, said she used to go to college by CNG auto-rickshaw from her village, but now she has to walk nearly three km on the damaged link road.

Krishno Kumar Chakma, work assistant of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in Rangamati, said they are trying to make the link road fit for vehicular movement, but they cannot work properly due to heavy rain. They will finish the work in around one week if it stops raining, he added.

Sub-Assistant Engineer of RHD in Rangamati Mohammad Abu Musa said they worked for three days before Eid to repair the road, but failed. Two places were destroyed completely, of which they repaired one a few days ago and other will be repaired soon.

Kutukchhari Union Parishad Chairman Kanon Chakma said the road should be repaired as soon as possible.

Auto-rickshaw driver found murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Police recovered the body of a battery-run auto-rickshaw driver in Sadar upazila of the district yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Ratan Chandra Barman, 35, son of Kundu Chandra Barman of Chaitarbaid village in the upazila.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Sukanta Roy of Sadar Model Police Station said villagers of Dhulerchar Madraspara area spotted Ratan's body in a cropland and informed the police.

On information, police recovered the body that bore several injury marks and sent it to Tangail General Hospital for autopsy.

Criminals might have killed Ratan for snatching his auto-rickshaw, the SI said.