

ATTACK BY PESTS AND WILD MONKEYS

Mandarin farmers face setback

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Pest attacks and import of Indian mandarins have caused severe setback for the mandarin growers in the district.

Moulvibazar Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Deputy Director Shahjahan Chowdhury said mandarin was cultivated on around 250 acres of land in Juri, Kulaura and Baralekha upazilas this year.

Of them, 150 acres were cultivated in Juri upazila, 75 acres in Baralekha and 25 acres in Kulaura. The entire district has 130 large orchards as well as several small ones. Last year, orange production was three to three and a half tonnes per hectare, while it has been around four to four and a half tonnes this year.

Farmers in the hills of Rupachara and Lalchara in Goabari union under Juri upazila said all the mandarin trees are full of the fruit

Murshed Mia, a farmer of Lalchara village, said he sold the produce from 1,000 mandarin trees for Tk 5 lakh this year, adding that he suffered a loss of Tk 3 lakh. They are not getting the fair price due to import of Indian mandarins, he said, demanding a halt to the import.

Faruk Mia, a farmer of Rupachara village,



PHOTO: STAR

A fruiting mandarin tree at Suknachara village in Juri upazila of Moulvibazar.

said he got good production from his 200 trees, but attacks by wild monkeys and pests have damaged the mandarins and they are falling from the trees.

Mizan Uddin, said each tree bears 50 to a few hundred mandarins, depending on the size of the tree, but 40 percent of the mandarins are falling off. For this reason the farmers have been selling the fruit

before it ripens, which makes it less sweet as it does not get the time to mature, he said. As a result, the growers have to sell the fruit at a cheap price, he added.

Kisan Das of the same village said the yield was good, but the fruits are falling off due to pest attacks. Earlier, there was a training project for mandarin cultivation, but it has been closed since 2008. He

demanding revival of the project so that the farmers could get training and advice on mandarin cultivation.

Mamun Mia said most of the farmers sell the fruit on advance payment, so they do not get the right price. He said they sold one bunch of 100 mandarins to local buyers for Tk 200 to Tk 1,000.

Baralekha Upazila Agriculture Officer (UAO) Debal Sarkar said farmers cultivated three varieties of mandarins there, among which Khasi variety was the most cultivated. Insects attack the fruit when it ripens, he said, adding that they regularly advise the farmers on how to prevent the attacks.

He said it is necessary to prune the trees and irrigate them during drought after the rainy season to ensure production of mandarins, adding that disease and insect attacks will decrease in the Bangla months of Poush and Magh. Use of cartap insecticide on the mandarin trees will prevent insect attacks, he added.

Juri UAO Krishno Roy said they are giving advice to mandarin farmers on how to prevent pest attacks.

Deputy director of Moulvibazar DAE said mandarins are falling off the trees due to lack of regular irrigation and irregular use of fertilizer and pesticide.

No respite from attacks

FROM PAGE 1

Talking to The Daily Star, Khokon alleged that the law enforcers opened fire targeting him.

Asked, Noakhali Superintendent of Police Ilias Sharif said police fired blanks to bring the situation under control.

The SP further said he didn't know whether anyone was injured in the incident.

Contacted, Sonaimuri upazila unit AL President Mominul Islam Baker denied the allegation that ruling party men intercepted the BNP procession.

The AL leader claimed that BNP leaders and activists led by Khokon vandalised an election campaign office of his party.

At a press conference at Noakhali Ainjibi Samity auditorium earlier in the morning, all BNP candidates in the six constituencies in Noakhali had alleged that the atmosphere in the district is not at all congenial for holding polls.

In the capital, Mirza Abbas, BNP candidate for Dhaka-8, came under attack yesterday noon when he along with his supporters was campaigning in Segunbagicha area.

Abbas, also member of the BNP Standing Committee, alleged that around 100 AL men suddenly attacked them without any provocation.

Seven to eight BNP activists were wounded, he told journalists after the incident.

Subrata Chowdhury, Jatiya Oikyafront-backed candidate for Dhaka-6, alleged that miscreants attacked his election rally in the city's Hatkhola area.

Meanwhile, BNP candi-

date for Chandpur-2 Jalal Uddin and nine other party men were injured in attacks allegedly by AL men at Ladhua village in Matlab upazila.

Talking to journalists, Jalal alleged that he and his supporters were attacked twice in the presence of police.

He also claimed that the law enforcers even assisted the attackers.

Chandpur Superintendent of Police Jihadul Kabir, however, refuted the allegation and said police protected Jalal from the attackers.

Matlab (north) Jubo League President Dewan Jahurul Islam said the incident might have stemmed from internal feud in the local BNP unit.

In Manikganj, BNP contender for Manikganj-1 SA Kabir Jinna and about 20 party men were wounded in an attack allegedly by ruling party men at Daulatpur last evening.

Earlier on Friday, three BNP candidates -- Romana Mahamud in Sirajganj-2, Habibul Islam Habib in Satkhira-1 and Jeba Amin in Jhalakathi-2 -- suffered injuries in attacks allegedly by AL activists, according to media reports.

Yesterday, BNP Senior Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed claimed that around 150 party candidates so far came under attack from AL men across the country.

Such attacks are being carried out in all the constituencies right under the nose of law enforcers, he said at the party's Nayapaltan central office in the capital.

BNP candidates in Bogura, Sirajganj, Gazipur, Jamalpur, Manikganj and Patuakhali alleged that a level playing field was

absent in the districts and law enforcers were working in favour of the ruling party.

In Chattogram, at least 10 people, including a son of Liberal Democratic Party President Oli Ahmed, were injured in an attack in Satkania upazila's Keuchia yesterday.

Talking to this newspaper, Oli, BNP candidate for Chattogram-14, alleged that around 50 followers of a brother of Chattogram-14 lawmaker Nazrul Islam Chowdhury launched the attack on his son Omar Faruk and supporters while they were campaigning for him.

Nazrul refuted the allegation.

In Satkhira, 10 to 12 supporters of the AL and the Bikolpodhara Bangladesh suffered injuries on Friday night as activists of the two parties clashed in Shyamnagar upazila.

On Friday evening, BNP men allegedly attacked an AL election camp in Ramerkandi Mor Bazar area in Sherpur, leaving 10 AL men injured.

Local BNP leaders denied party men's involvement in the attack.

Moreover, four persons were injured in an attack allegedly by BNP men at Dulhari village in Dinajpur.

Witnesses said a group of BNP supporters was campaigning at the village in Biral upazila yesterday. As they sought vote for 'sheaf of paddy' -- the BNP's electoral symbol, one of the voters there said he would vote for 'boat' -- the AL's electoral symbol.

At this, the BNP supporters got angry and beat him up. Three others got injured while trying to save the man.

In Jhenidah, a rickshaw-

puller was injured at Helai village as AL men allegedly attacked a rickshaw carrying a loudspeaker used in campaigns for the BNP candidate for Jhenidah-4 yesterday.

At least 10 BNP men were injured as AL men allegedly swooped on a meeting of BNP candidate for Patuakhali-1 Altaf Hossain Chowdhury at Badorpur village in Patuakhali.

In Bhola, the BNP alleged that at least 20 party men were injured in an attack by AL men in Lalmohon launch terminal area yesterday.

Besides, 12 Jatiya Party men, including its candidate for Barguna-2 Mizanur Rahman, were injured in an attack allegedly by AL men at Baichutki ferry ghat.

Last night, Joly Talukder, Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) candidate for Netrakona-4, and her supporters came under attack while campaigning in Mansiri Palpara area of Netrakona.

At least five of her supporters, including Partho Pratim Sarker, organising secretary of Chhatra Union's Netrakona unit, were injured.

Joly alleged that she was assaulted during the attack.

In another incident yesterday, a car carrying Kamrun Nahar, wife of BNP candidate for Patuakhali-3 Golum Maula Roni, was attacked in Galachipa municipality. BNP claimed that AL men carried out the attack.

Contacted, Kazi Alamgir Hossain, general secretary of district unit AL, denied the allegation and said no AL man was involved in the incident.

Google users face problems

FROM PAGE 16

created problems on the service quality of the internet.

ISPs noticed the problems with Google's services Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) blocked 54 websites on Monday.

Afterwards, some of them also notified their customers and apologised for the inconvenience, said a top leader at the Internet Service Providers Association of Bangladesh (ISPAB), preferring anonymity.

"Please be informed that as

per government instruction, we have blocked a few websites for the next 20 days. One of them shares common CDN with Google Services, due to which you may face issues in using various Google Services such as Google Drive, Gmail, Gmail attachment download etc," reads a message sent to customers.

Among the 54 websites blocked, two sites were hosted using the Google platform -- https://defenseupdatebangladesh.wordpress.com and https://bangladeshdefence.blogspot.com -- and that was creating the problems, said MA Hakim, president of ISPAB.

Lots of users have been

complaining about problems faced while uploading and downloading files on Gmail and being unable to use its cloud services, he said, adding that the ISPs were yet to find a solution.

Requesting anonymity, a top leader of ISPAB, said they had not informed the regulator about the customers' suffering as it, along with different intelligence agencies, had taken a tough stance on the issue. However, he added they had informed Google about the issue.

"We are expecting the government might rethink the whole process and cus-

tomers will get smooth services again after the general election," he said.

"In a meeting with the stakeholders last week, the authorities showed their boldness and sought zero tolerance towards website blocking and that's why we are shaky and will not place the issue before them.

"This is a part of our political life and we have nothing [to do] but accept it."

Roughly, about three and a half crore people are using Google services in the country, according to a report by Google last year.

Get ready to guard polling stations

FROM PAGE 2

The rally was part of the alliance's first road march ahead of the election that began from Rob's home in the capital's Uttara.

Dr Kamal Hossain, a top leader of the Jatiya Oikyafront and eminent jurist, also joined the rally.

He began the alliance's campaign on Thursday by offering prayers at the shrines of Hazrat Shah Jalal and Hazrat Shah Paran in Sylhet.

Rob alleged that the ruling party was trying to thwart the upcoming parliamentary election "sensing its defeat".

"The prime minister is scared and is seeking ways to stop the election. She wants to escape from the election."

If the Oikyafront comes to power, security would be ensured for Sheikh Hasina. "Even if she wants to go abroad, she will be allowed," he said.

Stating that Hasina and ministers were campaigning with police protocol, Rob said, "Protocol should also be given to us to create a level playing field."

Nagorik Oikya convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna said, "We are engaged in a war. They [the ruling party] have arms, we have ballots. We will win this war."

BNP standing committee member Nazrul Islam Khan said eight BNP candidates had been arrested so far and urged activists to defy all

odds and stay in the race until the election.

Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Zafrullah Chowdhury said violence during the run-up to the election was unprecedented. "Attacks are going on everywhere. The army should soon be deployed."

Oikyafront leaders then went to Sreepur Mawna intersection and held another roadside rally where Krishak Sramik League President Kader Siddique attended.

Our correspondent in Mymensingh reports, Jatiya Oikyafront leaders at a rally in the town last night said the attack on Dr Kamal Hossain's motorcade was an act of the

anti-liberation forces.

The rally was held at Mymensingh Railway Krishnachura Chattar to garner support for Mymensingh-4 BNP nominee Abu Wahab Akanda Wahid.

Manna said the government is planning a voterless election like the last one.

The government hijacked all the local government elections during their tenure and they are in great fear of losing the battle. The alliance leaders also urged activists to meet the voters at their doorsteps.

Quader Siddiqui, Rob, Zafrullah, Begum Selima Rahman, AZM Zahid Hossain, Prof Shafiqul Islam also addressed the rally.

Ghost cases, again

FROM PAGE 1

"clash" between Awami League and BNP men the previous day.

Mohamamd Hanif, general secretary of ward-9 Jubo League of the same union, was killed when BNP men attacked an AL campaign passing by a BNP programme, according to the case statement.

Taher's son Abul Hossain Bahadur thinks his father was implicated because of his involvement with BNP politics.

"If police want, they can dig my father's grave and take his corpse to the police station. It is really shameful that my dead father has been made an accused," he said, standing by his father's grave around 5:30pm.

Bahadur is the general secretary of Jubo Dal's Kadir Hanif union unit.

About two hours after he spoke to The Daily Star, police arrested him in the case, although he was not a named accused. Saifur Rahman, sub-inspector of Sudharam Police Station, confirmed his arrest.

The case also names Qatar expatriate Harun, who has been living in the Middle-Eastern country for more than five years. He last came to the country in December last year and left for Qatar around six months ago, his family said.

"Then how come he was present at the spot on that day?" said Harun's younger brother Rasel Mahmud, also

a BNP activist.

Besides, at least six identical names were mentioned twice in the case. The names of their fathers are also identical, exposing the flaw of the case statement.

This case brings to mind the dozens of cases filed in September where dead men, bed-ridden patients and expatriates, some of them involved with BNP politics, were made accused.

Asked about the latest case, a local BNP leader said it was meant to harass former and current BNP leaders and supporters as well as their families in Noakhali-4 constituency.

Police intensified their raids on the houses of BNP men since filing of the case, he alleged.

"Only 40 to 50 BNP men were holding a programme when the killing [of the Jubo League man] took place in Poschim Ismail Nagar. But they made 365 BNP men accused in the case," said the BNP leader.

Asked why he named a dead man and an expat in the case, complainant Ariful Islam Sumon said he was in a meeting and asked this correspondent to call him an hour later.

But he did not receive any call afterwards.

This correspondent yesterday visited the killing spot, which is virtually a deserted place. Jubo Dal leader Abdur Rahim Rejvi's house is just behind the spot. Three more houses are

Man held with USD 20000; 2 others with gold at Benapole

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested an alleged Hundi trader from Benapole checkpoint area under Benapole Port Police Station yesterday.

They seized US\$20,000, Indian rupees 7,500, Tk 18,000 and seven mobile sets from his possession.

The arrestee is Mohammad Haque, 50, son of Fazlur Rahman of Nilnagar area in Gazipur Sadar upazila.

Commanding Officer of BGB 49 Battalion Lt Col Ariful Haque said a team of BGB members conducted a drive in Benapole check post area and arrested Mohammad Haque along with the money.

Later, the arrestee was handed over to Benapole Port Police Station with the money. A case was filed.

Meanwhile, BGB members arrested two alleged gold smugglers and seized eight gold bars from their possession from Putkhali border area under Benapole Port Police Station on Friday night.

The arrestees are Yakub Ali, 30 son of Amirul Islam of Amla village, and Rony Akhter, 28, son of Anisur Rahman of Balunda village under the police station.

Commanding Officer of BGB 21 Battalion Lt Col Imran Ullah Sarkar said, on information, a team of BGB conducted a drive in the area and arrested them while they were smuggling the gold worth around Tk 40 lakh to India.

The arrestees were handed over to Benapole Port Police Station along with the gold. A case was filed in the regard.

beside Rejvi's.

The area is five to six kilometres away from the main road and is surrounded by crop fields, with only a handful of houses faraway.

Even four days after the clash, 30 to 40 damaged chairs were found scattered in front of Rejvi's house where, BNP leaders said, they were holding a meeting attended by local BNP men.

They alleged that AL men, armed with firearms, attacked them and that Hanif was killed by AL men themselves.

But no one from the village was willing to talk to this newspaper fearing reprisal.

"I don't know" or "I don't want to say anything" were the replies of all the three people The Daily Star talked to yesterday.

One woman from a nearby house said, "Please go away. If they saw you with us, they will harm us."

She walked away without saying anything when asked who would harm them.

Anwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sudharam Police Station, said the names of dead or expatriate, if any, would be dropped after investigation.

Denying the allegation of harassing BNP men, the OC said police were acting neutrally.

At a press conference at Noakhali Ainjibi Samity auditorium yesterday, Mohammad Shahjahan, a BNP candidate from Noakhali-4, alleged the

ruling party men launched the attack on them on that day (Dec 11).

He blamed Hanif's death on the ruling party's infighting, and alleged the case was filed with a political motive.

But AHM Khairul Anam Chowdhury Selim, president of Noakhali district AL, refuted the allegation. "No one from our party made the attack. My party activist was the victim of BNP's brutality instead."

He said three of their men were pasting posters after campaigning in the area when the BNP men chased and caught one of them. They tortured him and shot him to death, he alleged.

Hundreds

FROM PAGE 16

including two Ro-Ro ferries, were plying non-stop since morning, but it did not help normalise the traffic congestion, said Barkat Ullah, assistant general manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation.

The rush of people heading for the southern districts has increased to a large extent thanks to the three-day holiday weekend, he added.

"The authorities are trying to normalise the situation," said Arman Hossain, sub-inspector of Mawa Naval Police Outpost.

The pressure started mounting since Thursday night, he added.

Lack of good governance still a barrier

FROM PAGE 16

about the structure of the political parties. We are lagging behind our competing countries because of weakness in our political institutions," he said.

"The Election Commission's infrastructure is the largest in comparison to the others in the subcontinent. Despite that, the EC has failed to discharge its responsibility properly," Sakhawati said.

The country does not have any policy on institutionalising the commission, creating crisis to take timely decisions, he said, adding that the businesspeople were now panicked about the situation after the polls.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, vice-president of ICCB, pointed out the rising inequality in Bangladesh.

Quoting a recent Oxfam

report, she said Bangladesh has been ranked 148th out of 157 countries. India and Singapore -- although financially in a much better position -- ranked 147th and 149th respectively.

"One of the prime philosophies of taxing is to reduce income inequality," she said.

To harness benefit from the demographic dividend, she said the government must create job opportunities for the ever growing number of unemployed youths.

The ICCB vice president also said the massive development of the country that has taken place in the last few years was not a bi-product of good governance.

Hossain Zillur Rahman, another advisor to a former caretaker government, said one of the core objectives of political parties for ruling the country

was providing unfair facilities to the people involving with their organisations.

A demographic discrimination between Dhaka and the other parts of the country has been created, he said.

The political parties should focus on the issues, he said, adding that the electoral process should be credible so that people can vote without fear.

Salehuddin Ahmed, a former Bangladesh Bank governor, said people from all walks of life had not got the benefits of the economic development.

"The central bank has framed a lot of rules and regulations to supervise banks. But banks hardly follow those as many defaulters often reschedule their nonperforming loans more than three times breaching the rules," he said.

The upcoming govern-

ment should strengthen the organisational structure of the regulatory bodies, Salehuddin said.

Among others, Selim Raihan, executive director of SANEM, Ghulam Quader, a former advisor to a caretaker government, Asif Ibrahim, a former president of DCCI, Farah Kabir, country director of ActionAid Bangladesh, M Ramizuddin Chowdhury, editor of daily Purbokone, Nasim Manzur, former president of Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Abul Kasem Khan, president of the Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry, MATaslim, former chairman of Tariff Commission, and AB Mirza Azizul Islam, advisor to a former caretaker government; also addressed the event.

'Deal within reach'

FROM PAGE 16

This would see richer countries giving money now to help deal with the effects of climate change many vulnerable states are already experiencing.

Another contentious issue concerns the integrity of carbon markets, looking ahead to the day when the patchwork of distinct exchanges -- in China, the European Union, parts of the United States -- may be joined up in a global system.

"To tap that potential, you have to get the rules right," said Alex Hanafi, lead counsel for the Environmental Defense Fund in the United States. "One of those key rules -- which is the bedrock of carbon markets -- is no double counting of emissions reductions."

The Paris Agreement calls for setting up a mechanism

to guard against practices that could undermine such a market, but finding a solution has proved so problematic that the debate may get kicked down the road to next year.

Some observers cast Brazil as the villain, with several sources accusing it of seeking to muddy the date by which the provisions should enter into force.

"There are still a range of possible outcomes and Brazil continues to work constructively with other parties to find a workable pathway forward," Brazil's chief negotiator J. Antonio Marcondes told AFP.

'A DEAL WITHIN REACH' Another stumbling block could be how ambitious countries are in their renewed pledges ahead of a 2020 stock-take of the Paris

deal's progress.

Most nations wanted the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to form a key part of future planning. It highlighted the need for greenhouse gas emissions to be slashed to nearly half by 2030 in order to hit the 1.5C target.

But the US, Saudi Arabia, Russia and Kuwait objected, leading to watered down wording.

Dr Kamal

FROM PAGE 2

crowd, I felt very bad and tried to stop the enquirer," his statement read.

"All my life I have spoken for the freedom of the press and the rights of journalists," he added.

Rajapakse

FROM PAGE 16

future as well," he said addressing his close associates. "We will bring the forces opposed to the country down to their knees by organising the people."

His aides said he was returning a fleet of limousines he had used since his disputed appointment.

President Maithripala Sirisena triggered the political turmoil by sacking premier Ranil Wickremesinghe and replacing him with his flamboyant former foe Rajapakse.

But Wickremesinghe refused to step down insisting that his sacking was illegal, leaving the Indian Ocean nation of 21 million people with two men claiming the premiership.