



Surja Begum of Chargajaria village under Lakkhipur union in Jamalpur Sadar upazila is all smiles as she got bumper yield and good price for the tomatoes. **Right**, workers sort and pack tomatoes in Nandina, a local wholesale market in the Bhramaputra river basin area in the same upazila.

PHOTOS: ABM AMINUL ISLAM

Jamalpur tomato growers happy with fair price, bumper yield

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Tomato growers of the Brahmaputra river basin areas in Sadar upazila are happy as they are getting bumper yield and good price, thanks to favourable weather. This season, tomato was cultivated on 1,300 hectares of land in the river basin areas under Lakkhirchar, Tulsirchar, Narundi and Ranagachha unions of the upazila, while the number of growers is 6,500, agriculture department sources said. Different hi-breed varieties of tomato, including safol, udayan and bipul plus, are being cultivated commercially in the river basin areas for about two decades. With the passage of time, tomato cultivation has gained much popular-

ity among the growers as they are able to make a handsome profit from the produce every season, which has helped them become solvent, said Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Shakhawat Ekram. Besides, tomatoes produced here meet the seasonal demand of consumers in Mymensingh, Dhaka, Gazipur, Narayanganj, Cumilla, Chattogram, Sylhet, Khulna, Feni and Noakhali, Shakhawat said. The agriculture department is hopeful of getting 78,000 tonnes to 84,500 tonnes of tomato by achieving production target of 60 tonnes to 65 tonnes per hectare (200 maunds to 216.5 maunds per bigha) this season (October'18 to February'19) as there has not been heavy dew or temperature fluctuation, he said.

72,000 tonnes of tomato were cultivated on 1,200 hectares last season, he added. "Harvesting started from mid-December and will continue till end of February. The vegetable was sold at Tk 1,000 per maund for first two weeks, Tk 800 for the next two weeks, and is now selling at Tk 600 in local wholesale markets. Growers will get around Tk 500 in the first two weeks of February and Tk 400 in the next two weeks. Farmers expect to get, on average, Tk 660 per maund and make a profit of around Tk 1 lakh per bigha," he added. A number of growers at Chargajaria village under Lakkhirchar union told this correspondent that they have started making profit after recovering their production cost of Tk 25,000 to Tk 30,000 per bigha.

"I cultivated tomato on two bighas of my land and started harvesting from mid-December. By this time, I have earned Tk 1.3 lakh from the sale of the produce and made a profit of Tk 80,000 (Tk 40,000 per bigha)," said Abdur Rahim, 40, of Chargajaria village. "I am hopeful of getting profit of over Tk 1 lakh as per expected production of 200 maunds or more per bigha," he added. Surja Begum, 45, of the same village, said she cultivated tomato on her one bigha of land, which has started bringing her profit after recovering the production cost. "I am hopeful of getting 200 maunds and making a profit of Tk 1 lakh as the plants have grown well without facing any pest and disease attack," she smiled. Wholesale buyers, who purchase

the vegetable from the growers at local wholesale markets --Nandina Bazar, Narundi and Ananda Bazar -- are taking 60 to 70 trucks of tomato to different parts of the country daily and are making profit of between Tk 9,000 to Tk 12,000 per truck carrying 150 maunds, said wholesale buyer Sajal Shaha. Several hundred workers, including women, are getting an opportunity to earn Tk 400 to Tk 500 per day by sorting out good ones from the piles of tomato and loading the trucks, said another buyer Muksed Ali Sheikh. "Growers will benefit a lot if they avail the opportunity of preserving their seasonal produce in a cold storage, which could be set up by the government or a private organisation," the agriculture officer suggested.

Woman arrested for killing husband

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A woman was arrested in Kulaura upazila yesterday on charge of killing her husband on Sunday. The arrestee is Rima Begum, 35, wife of victim Abdul Muslim, 40, of Tattiuli village in the upazila. The couple have four children. Police said Rima hacked Muslim to death in front of their children over a family feud around 11:00pm on Sunday. Muslim's sister-in-law Montaj Ali said following a phone call from the victim's 10-year-old daughter Sadia Begum, she rushed to the spot and found him in a pool of blood. He was taken to the upazila health complex where on-duty doctor declared him dead. Muslim's brother Mokhles Mia said all of a sudden Sadia saw her mother Rima hacking her (Sadia's) father in his sleep. "As she screamed, Rima left the scene with her three-year-old son Shahid. Earlier in the evening, the couple locked in an altercation over a family issue," Mokhles said. Muslim often tied his wife and two daughters and beat them mercilessly, he added. The victim's brother filed a case, accusing Rima on Monday, said Shamim Musa, officer-in-charge of Kulaura Police Station. Quoting the arrestee, the OC said as Muslim often beat his wife and two daughters mercilessly, she hacked him dead.

Bamboo bridge lone means for 20 thousand people

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A 50-foot-long bamboo bridge over the Karatoa river in Par Nimaichara village of Nimaichara union under Chatmohar upazila has been the only way of road communication for the people of five villages in the union for many years, much to the suffering of the villagers. Over 20,000 residents of Par Nimaichara, Majhgram, Khondobaria, Shibrampur, Shitlai villages of Nimaichara union use the bridge to go to upazila headquarters and other places every day, locals said. "We have no alternate way to go to other places except the risky bamboo bridge. Women, children and elderly

people suffer a lot while crossing the bridge, but everyone is forced to use it," said Saddam Hossain of Par Nimaichara village. Hundreds of students go to their educational institutions over the risky bamboo bridge, which worries their family members, he added. Villagers suffer more when somebody dies as there is no way to carry the dead body across the bridge, said Afzal Hossain of the same village. They take the body to the graveyard on boat, he added. Villagers made the bamboo bridge voluntarily a couple of years ago, and it is the only means for the villagers to travel to the upazila headquarters and other places, locals said. "We demanded setting up of a

permanent bridge and link road in Par Nimaichara village, but nobody cares about it," said Sakena Khatun, another villager. Nimaichara Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Kamruzzaman Khokon said the UP has submitted a proposal for construction of a 50-foot-long bridge over the river. The sufferings of the people will be removed if the project is approved, he added. Chatmohar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sarkar Ashim Kumar said he visited the spot and saw the sufferings of the people. "It needs a lot of money, and that is not possible for the upazila administration to spend. We are trying to take initiative through the district administration," the UNO added.



Villagers cross the risky bamboo bridge over the Karatoa river at Par Nimaichara village under Chatmohar upazila of Pabna. **Inset**, residents of five villages use this riverside road through a jungle for communication with other places. PHOTO: STAR



Students of Gaibandha Government College bring out a procession on the campus, boycotting their classes and examinations yesterday, demanding immediate removal and arrest of Amit Partha, head of history department of the institution, for his alleged sexual harassment of female students. **Below**, students collect signatures in support of the demand.

PHOTO: STAR

UZ chairman arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

The chairman of Laxmichhari Upazila Parishad was arrested from Silchara area when he was going to his home from Sadar upazila by motorcycle on Tuesday night. Police said there are three cases, including two murder cases, against the arrestee, Super Jyoti Chakma. He is also accused in the sensational murder of Tapan Jyoti Chakma, alias Burma, convener of United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) Ganatantrik Party in Naniarchar upazila of Rangamati, last year. He had been absconding for long. Laxmichhari Police Station OC (investigation) Md Shahnur Rahman said police arrested Jyoti Chakma on Tuesday and produced him before a Khagrachhari court yesterday, which sent him to jail. UPDF issued a statement strongly condemning the arrest of Jyoti Chakma and demanded his release. Super Jyoti Chakma was elected chairman of Laxmichhari Upazila Parishad with the support of regional political party UPDF.

BCL happy

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Central Students' Union (Ducus) polls inside the academic buildings. Reading out a statement, the organisation's President Salman Siddique said the objective of holding the polls would be hindered if the authorities failed to ensure a free election. "But we have witnessed that the university administration has taken the Chhatra League's side by coming up with the decision of setting up polling centres inside the dormitories," he said. The left-leaning body made several other demands, including allotting dormitory seats to students based on merit, at the briefing. It plans to submit a memorandum to the university's vice-chancellor on Sunday to press home the demands. Pragatisheel Chhatra Jote, an alliance of left-leaning student organisations, also brought out a torch procession on the campus, demanding that polling centres be set up inside the academic buildings. Meanwhile, Chhatra Sangram Parishad, a platform of student bodies loyal to the AL and its partners in the 14-party alliance, yesterday protested the leftist student bodies' stance on the issue. In a press statement, the Parishad termed the protests "an attempt to create confusions." "We are witnessing that a quarter is intentionally trying to create confusions over the polling centres of Ducus and hall union polls," read the statement, signed by Central BCL President Rezwatul Haque Chowdhury, also coordinator of

the platform. Nearly 65 percent of the university's students stay at the dormitories and academic tasks and co-curricular activities are done centring the halls, the statement said. All the dormitories have been brought under CCTV surveillance. Thus, there remains no scope of any confusion about the polling centres. Common students will freely pick the leadership of their choice, it said. "By raising the demand of setting up polling centres outside the dormitories, the democratic values, culture of tolerance and collective efforts of the general students towards building the campus of dreams have been insulted," added the statement which was issued after a meeting of the Parishad. Leaders of Bangladesh Chhatra Moitri, JSD Chhatra League and Chhatra Samiti were present at the meeting. In May last year, the university authorities started updating the voter list for the long-pending election. They published the first draft on October 31. Talking to The Daily Star on January 23, DU Proctor Prof AKM Golam Rabbani said, "As of now, nearly 38,000 students have been listed as voters and we hope that the final list will have names of more than 42,000." Ducus was formed in 1922, a year after the DU was established. The aim of the platform is to promote cultural activities at the university and foster a spirit of cooperation among the students of different dormitories.