



Saplings of a variety of local and foreign flowers are kept for sale at a nursery in Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Floriculture booms

Good prices amid rising demand inspire many jobless youths in Pirojpur's Swarupkathi to cultivate flower

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Cultivation of different varieties of flower appears to be a booming business for many in Swarupkathi of Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila nowadays.

While going through different villages in the upazila one can see vast tracts of land are covered with flowers of many local and foreign varieties.

Hundreds of labourers in at least 32 villages, including Alankarkathi, Krishnakathi, Rahutkathi, Aramkathi, Aklom, Kuriana, Panaullapur, Adabor, Jalabari, Mahamudkathi, Edilkathi, and Kamarkathi, are now passing busy time in tending flower plants.

Local growers said the area of flower cultivation is increasing every year.

Deputy Assistant Agriculture Officer at Nesarabad Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Rathin Chandra Gharami said around 21 hectares of land in the upazila have been brought under flower cultivation this year.

Flowers like gladioli, tuberose, red rose, marigold, gerbera, lily and many other varieties are being cultivated in at least 170 nurseries in the upazila.

Nursery owners' said around four thou-

sand agriculture labourers are currently working at different nurseries in the area.

"I have been cultivating different varieties of flower in my garden for the last 10 years and increasing the farm area every year," Owner of Kohinoor Nursery Zahangir Alam said.

Kuriana Union Parishad Chairman Shekhar Sikder said flower farming has helped many unemployed youths of his union to be self-reliant.

Day labourer Joyanti Rani of Farzana Nursery said she earns Tk 350 to Tk 400 daily.

"We need training and proper support from the government so that we can go for flower farming three times in a year, labourer Sajadulla of Shanta Nursery said.

As the growers are getting a good profit from flower production, the area of cultivation is increasing every year, Nesarabad DAE Deputy Assistant Agriculture Officer Gole Noor said, adding that a large number of women labourers are now engaged in this sector.

Flower growers in the region are greatly benefited with the high demand and good prices of their produce, Nesarabad Upazila Agriculture Officer Rifat Shikder said, adding that the government has a plan to train up the growers in near future.

Informal staff look after six closed rly stations for years

Porters, betel leaf sellers among the caretakers of the inoperative stations in West Zone

TEAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

People like porters, day labourers and betel leaf sellers are guarding six closed railway stations in Parbotipur-Chilahati section under the West Zone (WZ) of Bangladesh Railway (BR) for over a decade under a temporary arrangement.

According to WZ's Pakshey division, there are 61 kilometer rail lines and 10 stations in this section. Those are Belaichondi, Saidpur, Khairatnagar, Darwani, Nilphamari College, Nilphamari, Taranibari, Domar, Mirzaganj and Chilahati stations.

Of them, Belaichondi, Khairatnagar, Darwani, Nilphamari College, Taranibari and Mirzaganj

stations remained closed for years due to shortage of manpower, said Khondokar Shahidul Islam, general manager (GM) at WZ of BR.

Once vibrant Nilphamari College Station is now closed and at present betel leaf seller Saiful Islam, 50, acts as its caretaker.

Saiful said he worked as a coolie at the station in 2002. The then booking clerk hand over the station keys to him when the clerk got transferred to another station.

"Since then I have been guarding the station. A new booking clerk was posted here on deputation but he does not work here. The clerk on deputation gives me Tk 350 per month as fuel cost to light the signal," said Saiful.

Despite odds, he works there in hope of getting a permanent job at railway, said Saiful.

Day labourer Abdul Jabbar, 45, at Mirzaganj station said the booking clerk of the station went on retirement five years ago. Some days before his retirement, the clerk handed over the responsibilities of the station to him and since then he has been taking care of it.

"I work here almost for free with the hope that I will be recruited officially in near future," said Jabbar.

GM Shahidul Islam said 73 stations in the west zone were closed due to manpower shortage and they are likely to start recruitment soon to bring back momentum in the railway.



Day labourer Abdul Jabbar also serves as 'informal caretaker' of Mirzaganj railway station in Domar upazila of Nilphamari as the station on Parbatipur-Chilahati section of Bangladesh Railway's West Zone has remained closed for over a decade. Inset, another closed station at Belaichandi on the same route.

PHOTO: STAR

Kans grass brings profit for Kurigram char people



PHOTO: STAR

Two labourers prepare large bundles of kans grass straw at Mogalbasha Haat in Kurigram Sadar upazila a few days ago.

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Cultivation of kans grass (called kash phool in Bangla) serves as a modest earning source for many people, especially those in different char (sandy riverbank) areas of the district.

After recession of the floodwater every year, kash seeds naturally germinate in the vast tracts of char areas in different upazilas of the district.

In October every year, its white flower-stalks keep waving even in a gentle breeze and create a charming atmosphere along the river banks as well as the char lands.

Usually, month of January and February are the trading months of kans grass straws.

After harvesting the kans grass in the month of November, farmers pile up the kans grass along the river banks or in the open char lands for drying up.

Later, they prepare bundles of the dried up kans straws. Usually, length of a healthy straw is around eight to ten feet.

Farmer Abdul Mannan, 40, of Porachar village under Jatrapur union in Kurigram Sadar upazila, said, "The area of kans cultivation is not fixed as it depends on flood."

Rustam Ali, 54, of Char Shitayehar village under Mogalbasha union in the upazila, said after harvesting kans in the month of November many farmers go for cultivation of Boro or other Robi crops.

They sell each small bundle of kans

straw for Tk 3 to Tk 5 to the buyers, who come from across the country.

During a visit to Mogalbasha union this correspondent saw some labourers busy preparing kans straw bundles.

"Preparing kans straw bundles is a seasonal work and I have been involved with it for nearly eight years now," said day labourer Noor Mohammad, 55.

Usually, we prepare a large bundle of dried kash straw with 10 small bundles, consisting 10 straws, he said, adding that they get Tk 400 for 100 large bundles.

Kans trader Nayebar Ali, 58, said, the business lasts for four months from November.

After preparing the straw bundles farmers keep those on the river banks and traders go there by boats to purchase the item, he said, adding that they buy one thousand of small bundles for Tk 3,000 to Tk 5,000.

They take the kans bundles to other districts like Rajshahi, Khulna and Barisal and sell each thousand of small bundles for Tk 6,000 to Tk 7,000 to the local traders.

In the peak season, at least seven to eight trucks of kans straws are sold at Mogalbasha Haat every week," Nayebar said.

Sadar Upazila Agriculture Officer Shashthi Chandra Roy said for the char farmers kans grass is a natural crop, which is grown without any investment or labour.

One to die, two get life term for killing in-law

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A Kishoreganj court yesterday sentenced a man to death and two others to life term for killing their brother-in-law in 2012.

The court also fined Tk 5 lakh to each convict -- Moazzem Hossain Mozu, his brother Mobarak Hossain and their cousin Arman Ali, all from Manderkandi village in Pakundia upazila of Kishoreganj, said Toufiq Ahmed, court inspector in Kishoreganj.

The three were sentenced in absentia by Additional District and Sessions Judge Mohammad Abdur Rahim, the inspector added.

According to the case statement, Akhteruzzaman, a farmer, married his cousin Selina of the same village. On July 26, 2012, Selina left him for her parents' house over domestic disputes.

The following day, when Akhteruzzaman went to his in-laws' house to bring her back, his brothers in-law -- Moazzem, Mobarak, Arman and Azizul Haque Arzu -- engaged in an altercation with him over the dispute.

At one stage, the accused attacked Akhteruzzaman with sharp weapons, leaving him injured critically. He was pronounced dead after he was taken to Jahurul Islam Medical College Hospital in Bajitpur of Kishoreganj.

Akhteruzzaman's elder brother Sheikh Ruhul Amin filed the case with Pakundia Police Station the same day, accusing four in-laws of the deceased.

Police pressed a charge sheet against the four. The fourth accused Azizul Haque Arzu died before the trial completed.

Man crushed under train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

An elderly man died under a train at Brahmanbaria Rail Station yesterday.

At around 1:15pm, Abu Mia, a resident of Dakkhin Mourail area in the town, was crossing tracks through the space between two compartments of a Dhaka-bound train parked there.

The train started moving soon after the 70-year-old man stepped onto the attachment connecting two compartments and he died instantly after slipping under the train, said Nurul Islam, assistant sub-inspector at the police camp of the station.

UPAZILA PARISHAD ELECTION

AL drops controversial chairman candidate in Sunamganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Cancelling its previous nomination to a controversial candidate, the Awami League (AL) yesterday nominated its Sunamganj Sadar upazila unit General Secretary Mobarak Hossain as the chairman candidate in the upcoming upazila election.

On February 9, the party had nominated Khairul Huda Chopol, convener of Sunamganj Jubo League and president of Sunamganj Chambers of Commerce, as the candidate for the position. He submitted his nomination paper on February 11.

Khairul is an accused in a case filed on July 2, 2017 by Anti-

Corruption Commission on charges of corruption and purposeful mismanagement in levee construction in Sunamganj.

Barrister M Anamul Kabir Emon, general secretary of AL's Sunamganj district unit, said, "Reconsidering several matters, the central committee of AL cancelled Kahirul Huda's nomination and nominated Mobarak Hossain as the candidate for Sunamganj Sadar upazila in the upcoming polls."

The Daily Star on February 11 ran a report, headlined "AL nominates murder, graft accused in Sylhet", covering upazila election candidates with accusations of their involvement in various crimes.



Turkeys reared by Md Abdul Baker Masud at his poultry farm at his village in Binodpur union under Noakhali Sadar upazila. The masters degree holder is now a symbol of success and source of inspiration for many others in the area. Starting with only 12 chickens over 20 years ago, Masud now rears around 10 thousand poultry birds including hens, partridges and turkeys at his farm, which brings him monthly profit of around Tk 80 thousand..

PHOTO: STAR