

Diverse foreign cattle species in Bangladeshi farm

Mahmudul Islam of Jashore dreams of adding more variety to country's livestock

SHYKH SERAJ

My deepest reverence to the language martyrs. Without them Bangla would not be our state language and we wouldn't have achieved the global recognition of Ekushey February (February 21) as International Mother Language Day. In addition, I am proud to share with you all that on this glorious day, Hridoye Mati O Manush stepped into its 16th year of operation. Thank you all from across the world for your support!

Let's come into the article now. I don't have a farm of my own. But for the past 40 years, I have been with the farmers. I witnessed thousands of farms grow in the country; I telecast those on television. Many others followed. Some have succeeded, some failed. However, the news titled 'The country is self-sufficient in livestock' is quite comforting and amusing as well. Our progress in the farming sector is quite encouraging and inspiring. There is no doubt that a revolution in the livestock sector has taken place in the last few years. However, there is some difference between the official statistics and the real situation at the field level. During more than fourteen years of open discussion between policymakers and farmers at the field level, titled 'Kirshi Budget, Krishoker Budget' (bud-



Mahmudul Islam feeds his rare livestock animals, collected from around the world, at his farm in Jashore's Chachara Pulerhat area.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

In course of time, many unemployed young people have become self-reliant by establishing farms. Reports like women's success in bringing solvency to the family by raising goats are coming from districts and upazilas across the country, including areas in the remotest corners. Overall, except for a few odds, our development journey with livestock can now be termed as pretty much progressive.

Raising goats is very profitable in our country. Our 'Black Bengal' goats have great reputation worldwide. For its reproductive quality, skin and meat, it is adored by all. According to the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) 2015 data, Black Bengal goats are one of the best in the world.

Now the number of cattle farms is about 12 lakh (1.2 million), including small and large ones. In the last three years, the number of cows and goats in the country has increased by about two million. According to livestock department, in the fiscal year 2016-17, the number of cattle in the country was 5 crore 47 lakh 45 thousand (54.74 million). Among them, cow was 2 crore 39 lakh (23.9 million), bull 12 lakh 78

thousand (1.47 million), goats 2 crore 59 lakh (25.9 million) and sheep 34 lakh (3.4 million). This information proves that there is a lot of progress now both in terms of production and the variety of species of cattle.

For a long time working in the field, I have understood one thing very well. That is, people prefer variations. People always tend to go for something new. And if the new is an alternative to something necessary, then there is no doubt. In last January, I went to Jashore where I heard about Mahmudul Islam, a farmer who is different from others. When I reached Jashore's Chachara Pulerhat area, it was late afternoon.

Mahmudul's farm looks ordinary from outside. Inside the fences made of bamboo and wood, there is something different. Right after entering, I saw various species of animals. This is a farm of rare species of livestock collected from different countries of the world. In Bangladesh, such a farm is of great interest to us.

I talked to Mahmudul. In 2008, he started raising only two Hariyani goats just as a hobby. Later, he got interested in commercial cattle farming. The number of goats started growing day by day. On the other hand, he started collecting

various species of cows, goats, bulls, garol, sheep and other animals. There are 100 species of animals in the farm. The animals are kept in different parts of the one-bigha farm. There are open spaces in front of tin-shed houses, with fences. He is raising these different animals in an open environment.

During the last few years, newspapers ran stories regarding Bhutti cow or Bhutani cows during the Eid-ul-Azha, a Muslim festival marked by sacrifice of animals. The cows are a little larger than big goats. Mahmudul's farm has three cows and a bull of such variety. He has collected them from Bhutan a couple of years ago. He also narrated the story. He went to Darjeeling in India. From there, he went to Bhutan for a day. There he got interested after seeing this cow. He imported the Bhutanese cow through a legal way. The price of the cow was Tk 30 thousand and another Tk 20 thousand spent to bring it to the country. Although small in size, due to special characteristics, now the price of this cow is very high in our country, said farmer Mahmudul Islam. Over two and a half years, the price of one cow has increased to Tk 1.5 lakh (approximately USD 1785). I wanted to know from Mahmudul Then why is the price of this small sized cow so

much while people generally look for big cows that give more meat. Mahmudul's answer was that this cow has exceptionally more demand as its meat is delicious. Besides, there is a great demand for this cow for exhibitions in the zoo or urban areas.

There are also Chinese Barbara goats in this farm. It is also among the best goats in the world. Whose market value is quite good, says the farmer. He says he sells a pair of these goats for Tk 60,000 (approximately USD 714). And sells the calves pair for Tk 25,000 (approximately USD 297).

There are 13 species of goats, including Rajasthan, Haryana, Totapuri and Nepal. There are Turkish and Nagalpur bulls and garol. He is breeding these animals on his own regularly. As a result, the number of animals is increasing day by day. Farmer Mahmudul has sold approximately 200-250 calves, goats, sheep and bull. Overall, this farm has turned out to be a source of commercial income. Apart from all the expenses, an average of Tk 40,000 (approximately USD 476) remains as profit every month.

The question is how much profitable these foreign animals will be in our climate. Mahmudul said that he is marketing the cattle, successfully adjusting them to the weather conditions in the country. And in this case, he is getting necessary assistance from the local livestock office. But, he thinks bulls and garols are more profitable in our country. Because they do not get sick that much and they are habituated to taking the fodder available here.

Mahmudul is working to bring the rare species of livestock to the doorstep of the country's farmers. He says he has plans to open a semen lab in future. He thinks there is a need of more effective research to improve the quality of these species to generate more income.

Dear readers, country's livestock sector is expanding day by day. The number of farmers is increasing. Considering the profits, the entrepreneurs of this sector are adding different species of animals. And the result is further expansion of the sector. Mahmudul has made an example of success in doing so. Agriculture is always beneficial if you do it with passion and planning. The livestock sector has ample potential for employment. If government and non-governmental organisations come forward to boost this sector, it will bring economic prosperity to the country along with creation of huge employment, especially for the youths.

Man kills sister over property row

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A woman was killed allegedly by her brother centring a feud over inheriting and taking possession of their ancestral property in Monirampur upazila of Jashore on Tuesday night.

The deceased, Noorjahan Begum, 50, was wife of Md Alauddin of Galda village in the upazila.

Officer in Charge (investigation) of Monirampur Police Station SM Enamul Haque said they detained deceased's younger brother Abdul Rahim, 33, for his alleged involvement in the murder.

Quoting the deceased and arrestee's family members and neighbours, police said Rahim locked in an altercation with Noorjahan over their shares in family properties around 9:00pm on Tuesday.

At one stage, Rahim took a knife and started stabbing his elder sister indiscriminately, leaving her critically injured, police said, adding that Noorjahan was rushed to Monirampur Upazila Health Complex, where the doctors declared her dead.

Meanwhile, police produced Rahim before a Jashore court yesterday that sent him to jail.

Ferry services resume after two hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Ferry services on Paturia-Daulatdia route in the Padma river resumed after two hours of disruption caused by dense fog yesterday.

Mohammad Shafiqul Islam, general manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) in Daulatdia of Rajbari, said dense fog disrupted the ferry services for two hours from 4:00am.

Five ferries remained stranded in the middle of the river, Shafiqul said, adding that about 600 vehicles also remained stationed on both sides of the river till the services resumed around 6:00am.

Two drug stores fined

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A mobile court yesterday fined two medicine stores a total of Tk 50,000 for storing unapproved medicines and not renewing trade licences.

The court led by Tangail Executive Magistrate Nuzhat Tasnim and Superintendent of Drug in Tangail Dr Nargis Akter conducted a drive in Old Bus Stand area of the town in the morning and fined the two shops.

The court fined Prodig Sarkar, owner of Progoti Pharmacy, Tk 30,000 and Nripoti Mukut Paul, owner of Bhupoti Pharmacy, Tk 20,000 under Narcotic Control Act.

The court also seized the unapproved medicines.

Youth at 90

Lalmonirhat's Language Movement hero Abdul Quader Bhasani still active as ideal spice farmer, bike rider

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Ninety-year-old Language Movement veteran Abdul Quader Bhasani still works hard at his spice field amid enthusiasm while most people in his age stay indoors and live a passive life.

Seeing his success in spice farming, many farmers at his village Haldibari in Sadar upazila have started cultivating onion, garlic and other spices on their land.

Bhasani, possibly the lone surviving language hero in the district, has been engaged in spice farming since his student life. He believes agriculture is life of Bangladesh.

Bhasani cultivates onion, garlic, ginger, chilli, coriander, turmeric and mint on his 40 decimals of land round the year and earns a good profit by selling the produces, said Khair Uddin, a sub-assistant agricultural officer in Lalmonirhat.

The Language Movement veteran in his old age still rides bicycle and works hard at his crop land, said Khair, adding that he is an ideal farmer at the village.

"I'm sure that farmers will get expected output if they use their land in spice farming," said Bhasani.

"I'm so lucky that I can still spend my time in crop farming," he said.

"We take advice from Bhasani on

how to grow spice and we are now earning better by selling the produces," said Mokhlesar Rahman, 58, a farmer of the village.

"Our father still works for family's welfare and he never spends a single moment idle," said Bhasani's son Jamal Abdun Naser Jadu.

The language hero said he wants to work till his last breath.

Bhasani, son of late Nasir Uddin Sarker and Mahima Khatun, was born in 1928. He was a student of Rangpur Carmichael College. He joined the 1952 Language Movement while he was a student of Class X at Lalmonirhat Government Boys' High School.



Abdul Quader Bhasani tends garlic plants of his field at Haldibari village in Mahendranagar union under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. The photo was taken on Monday.

PHOTO: STAR



A teacher at an NGO-run pre-school for indigenous children in Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila. The government has been sending free textbooks in indigenous languages for students upto second grade, but the initiative hit a snag due to a shortage of teachers trained to teach in the languages.

PHOTO: STAR

ETHNIC KIDS IN SYLHET DIVISION

Teacher shortage holds down schooling in mother tongue

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The government's initiative of providing indigenous children with free textbooks, printed in their mother languages, faces a setback in Sylhet division due to a shortage of teachers trained to teach in those languages.

Students and guardians of the ethnic communities were excited after the government in 2017 started to print and distribute textbooks in primary-level curriculum to prevent dropout of indigenous children from schools.

But thanks to poor planning, the primary schools are yet to get sufficient teachers who have the language skills for giving lessons using the textbooks in the indigenous languages.

Directorate of Primary Education (DPE) initially introduced curriculum in five indigenous languages for pre-school grade in 2017, first grade the next year and

second grade this year.

According to DPE, they distributed textbooks in three indigenous languages - Tripura, Garo and Sadri - to a total of 701 students at 35 schools in Sylhet division this year.

Dipok Chandra Sharma, headmaster of Isachhara Government Primary School in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila, said a large number of students in the school are from Garo community. "Although the students now get textbooks in their mother tongue, there's no trained teacher who can teach in Garo language here," he said.

Smol Simsang, a second grader at the school, said, "I've got new books this year too. But my books go unused as the teacher cannot properly teach or pronounce in my language."

The shortage of teachers trained to teach in a particular indigenous language will hinder the objectives of distributing

textbooks to indigenous students, said General Dhar, headman of Isachhara punji, adding that a Monipuri teacher cannot teach in Garo language properly.

"The higher authorities have been informed of the situation and work is on to address the situation," said Bayazid Khan, district primary education officer in Moulvibazar.

The initiative of providing textbooks in the mother tongues of ethnic children will not achieve its goal unless sufficient teachers are trained for the purpose, said AFM Zakaria, associate professor of anthropology at Shahjalal University of Science and Technology.

Asked for his comments over the issue, AKM Safyet Alam, deputy director of DPE in Sylhet division, said, "The government is planning to train teachers on particular subjects and recruit indigenous teachers for teaching in indigenous languages."