



Abu Bakar tends his off-season watermelon plantation at a field of Purbo Bhandaria village in Bhandaria upazila of Pirojpur. *Inset*, profusely growing watermelon at the field.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Off-season watermelon farming sees success, first time in Pirojpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A farmer has become successful by cultivating off-season watermelon on 63 decimals of land at Purbo Bhandaria village in Bhandaria upazila.

A solvent person of the village allowed him to cultivate the fruit on his land, said grower Abu Bakar.

Bakar, 44, of Matibanga village, has been involved with farming for around 30 years, said locals.

Bakar said he went to visit an off-season watermelon field in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila with the help of upazila agriculture office in Bhandaria last year.

"Seeing a bumper production of the watermelon there, I was inspired to cultivate this delicious juicy fruit," said Bakar.

In the middle of March this year, Bakar cultivated around 2,000 plants of hybrid Sweet Galaxy and Karna variety on the land.

At different times, around 700 plants got destroyed due to pest attack, said Bakar, adding that he will be able to harvest the

fruit within next two weeks.

Highest weight of each watermelon will be three kilograms, said Bakar.

"I have covered the roots of the plants with high quality polythene. As a result, heat from sun cannot harm the plants," he said, adding that it also saves the plants from heavy rain.

Bakar also said he cultivated the fruit on the land at a cost of Tk 1.5 lakh as he built a bamboo structure on the field for the plants.

The off-season watermelon can be cultivated all the year round, he said.

Bhandaria Upazila Agriculture Officer Abdullah Al Mamun said off-season watermelon has grown in Pirojpur district for the first time.

"We are inspiring farmers to cultivate the watermelon due to its fair price," he said, adding that they are bringing other farmers to the watermelon field of Bakar so that the growers are inspired to cultivate off-season watermelon.

## 2 'Mogh Bahini men' arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Detective Branch (DB) of police on Monday arrested two suspected members of Mogh Bahini, a terror outfit, from Bandarban's Rowangchhari upazila.

The DB identified the arrestees as Mya Kyaw Thoai, 23, a citizen of Myanmar, and Mong Kyaw Ching Marma, from remote Chhotomadok area in Bandarban's Thanchi upazila.

SI Jainul Abedin of DB in Bandarban said they also confiscated 2,000 pieces of yaba tablets from the possession of the arrestees.

Five indigenous people were killed and one abducted in Bandarban and Rangamati in the last one month. Locals and many family members of the victims have been blaming Mogh Bahini for the killings.

On May 30, law enforcers arrested three members of Mogh Bahini from Bandarban's Ruma upazila.

Meanwhile, Kwe Shwe Hla, president of Awami League's (AL) Bandarban unit, filed a general diary with Bandarban Sadar Police Station as his name was being circulated for the last few weeks in the social media as a sponsor of Mogh Bahini.

Since the 11th parliamentary elections, some AL men, assisted by some law enforcers, have been sheltering the criminals, locally known as Mogh Bahini, to ruin harmony in the region, claimed Uchow Mong Marma, president of Bandarban unit of Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samity (PCJSS).

## Reporter among 10 injured in attack 'over news on Kuakata mayor'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 10 people including a local journalist was injured in an attack, allegedly by a local Jubo League leader and his cohorts, in Kalapara upazila on Monday night.

Bangla daily Jugantor's Kuakata correspondent Nasir Uddin Biplob and five others -- Jamal Hawlader, Solaiman Fakir, Shakil Khalifa, Chunnu Hawlader and Sabur Mia -- were admitted to Kalapara Upazila Health Complex with injuries, while the other injured received primary treatment at different local health facilities.

A group of nearly 15 criminals armed with sticks and sharp weapons and led by Masud Mollah -- joint convener of Jubo League's Mohipur upazila unit and son of Kuakata municipality Mayor Abdul Bareq Mollah -- swooped on Nasir Uddin around 9:00pm when he was sitting in his office at Alipur Bazar, said eyewitnesses and the injured.

The assailants dragged him out of the office and assaulted him physically. When locals heard the commotion and came to his rescue, they also came under attack and sustained injuries, they also said.

Nasir Uddin, former president of Kuakata Press Club and secretary to Muktijoddha Santan Command in the upazila, alleged that the Kuakata mayor's son assaulted him as the mayor took offence at a news report that he made in January this year regarding an incident at a local fish market involving the mayor.

Refuting the accusations against his son and himself, the mayor said Nasir was spreading propaganda for political gains.

His son, Masud Mollah, also denied any involvement in the attack, saying, "I was at Kuakata beach when the attack took place."

"After hearing about it [the attack], I came to the spot and tried to control the situation," he also claimed.

Nasir said he was making preparations to file a case in this regard.

Officer-in-Charge of Mohipur Police Station Saidul Islam said after being informed, they swiftly went to the spot and brought the situation under control.

They would take necessary steps once a case is filed in this connection, he added.

## Woman's hand chopped off during villagers' clash

Four including prime accused arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

A 65-year-old woman's hand was chopped off while she was trying to save her son from his attacker during a clash between two rivalling groups in Dhunat upazila of Bogura on Monday.

Nine other villagers of both the groups were also injured in the incident that took place in Kiyagari village in the morning.

Sahena Khatun, wife of Kopil Mondol, is now undergoing treatment at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogura and her condition is stable now, said a doctor on duty at the hospital.

The elderly woman, lying in her hospital bed, said her son's attacker, Al-Amin, 35, threw her severed left hand into a pond, from where police later recovered it.

Doctors at the hospital however said it would not be possible to reattach the severed hand.

Police said they already arrested prime accused Al-Amin and three others -- Biplob, 40, Rani Khatun, 25, and Moyna Begum, 40, of the same village. They also seized the blood-stained sharp weapon (locally known as hasua) that was used in the crime from Al-Amin's house.



PHOTO: STAR

**Victim Sahena at Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital in Bogura.**

## Woman kills self over husband's 'extramarital affair'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A woman took her own life over her husband's reported extramarital affair at Terachong village in Rajnagar upazila on Monday morning.

The deceased was Halima Begum, 24, daughter of Abdul Khalik of Bajua village in Sadar upazila. She was the mother of a baby girl.

Halima married day labourer Enaetur Rahman Shaheen, 35, in 2016, said the victim's father.

Police and family sources said the couple often engaged in altercations over the extramarital affair of Shaheen.

On Sunday night, Shaheen beat Halima mercilessly following an altercation over the issue and then went out of the home, said Abul Kalam, sub-inspector of Rajnagar Police Station.

Neighbours entered the house by breaking open the door yesterday morning and found her body hanging from the ceiling of the room.

The victim's father said it was a well-planned killing, not suicide.

The body was sent to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital for autopsy, said Rajnagar Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Abul Hashim.

A case was filed, accusing three people including the husband, said the OC, adding that police arrested Shaheen.

## Dead ship likely

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He told The Daily Star that the government could have preserved the ship as a tourist attraction instead.

However, Nazmul Ahsan, director (clearance) of DoE, said the fears of environmental hazard were unwarranted.

Talking to The Daily Star, he said they recommended issuing the clearance 31 conditions so that the environment was not harmed.

"We will be monitoring the whole process to make sure the breaking of the ship is environmentally-friendly," he said.

The recommendation made in DoE's 442nd meeting on April 10 stipulated 31 conditions making it mandatory for the breakers to ensure no residue spread outside the site.

The first condition for the clearance was to ensure that the breaking activities would not be allowed to pollute the air, soil and water, or create any sound pollution.

It also stipulated that the operation should be led by an expert marine engineer, adding that an oil boom should be set up around the breaking site so no sludge or asbestos could spill over to nearby areas.

Experts, however, believe such conditions may not be enough.

Prof Dr Sikandar Khan, president of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolok, Chattogram chapter, told The Daily Star that Parki beach was a tourist spot and the approval to dismantle the ship there would result in massive environmental disaster there. The sea would be affected, he said.

The ship must be taken to the areas designated for ship-breaking and the DoE must rethink and cancel the recommendation, he added.

The 168-metre bulk carrier MV Crystal Gold was originally owned by the Crystal Group, but was purchased by Four Star Corporation in October last year.

Unable to move the vessel, the company took initiatives in December to dismantle it on the beach. However, the DoE slapped it with a Tk 2 crore fine saying it had not taken the mandatory clearance.

Mohammad Moazzam Hossain, director of Chattogram DoE told The Daily Star that The Environmental Management Plan submitted by Four Star Group was approved at a headquarters meeting.

"Four Star Group will be issued a clearance from the Chattogram DoE based on the compliance of the conditions stipulated from headquarters," he said.

He also said an inspector from the DoE would monitor the work round-the-clock to ensure that the conditions are fulfilled.

## Two murdered in Pabna, Netrakona

STAR COUNTRY DESK

A fisherman and a farmer were murdered in Netrakona and Pabna yesterday.

A fisherman was killed in Sakua Bazar area of Netrakona town, reports our Mymensingh correspondent.

The deceased was identified as Bismu Chandra Barman, 50, of the area.

Taskin, 35, of adjacent Gandompura village entered the house of Bisnu around 12:00 noon and killed him with a sharp weapon, Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Mohammad Fakruzzaman quoted neighbours as saying.

Bisnu was alone in the house then.

On information, police rushed to the spot, recovered the beheaded body and sent it to Netrakona General Hospital for autopsy.

Bisnu might have been killed over

previous enmity, said the ASP.

In Pabna, a farmer was stabbed to death over a trivial matter at Chandpur village in Bhangura upazila, reports our correspondent.

The victim was Md Abul Kalam, 50, son of Golap Hossain of the village.

Quoting locals, Officer in Charge of Bhangura Police Station Md Masud Rana said neighbour Md Saiful Islam's cow grazed at Kalam's field on Monday morning. Kalam then brought the cow to his residence.

On information, Saiful along with his men attacked Kalam and stabbed him.

Critically injured Kalam was rushed to the upazila health complex and then shifted to Pabna Medical College Hospital where he died yesterday morning.

Police are raiding different areas to arrest the culprits, said the OC.



Ignoring the risk of accident, an overcrowded passenger launch starts from Patuakhali for a long journey to Dhaka yesterday as a large number of people are on return journey to their workplace after spending the Eid holidays with near and dear ones.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN