

# Boom in Tulsi farming

Growers in five upazilas of Gaibandha making good profit selling the herb leaves

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Tulsi (a medicinal plant) cultivation is gradually gaining popularity among farmers at different villages in the district due to fair prices of the herb leaves.

The villages include Ramchandrapur and Muraripur in Palashbari upazila, Kunjamohipur and Khordakamarpur of Sadullapur upazila and Shahpara Bhabanipur in Sadar upazila, Sreepur and Ghoshpara in Sundarganj upazila and Barokhodapur in Gobindaganj upazila.

As the growers do not need to use pesticide or chemical fertilizers to grow the herb, they have been making profits every year by selling its leaves to herbal medicine manufacturers, said an agriculture officer.

The department of agriculture is encouraging farmers to grow tulsi alongside cultivating usual crops for making additional profit.

On a recent visit to Bujruk Bristipur village in Palashbari upazila, this correspondent found the surroundings of almost all the houses covered in greenery as the villagers cultivated the herb there.

Saju Mia, a grower of the village, said "I have cultivated tulsi on 34 decimals of land. I'm expecting a better yield this time. I got Tk 18 thousand from half bigha of land last year."

Tulsi was cultivated on one bigha of land spending Tk 7000 to Tk 8000, said Saju, adding that he got one maund of tulsi leaves from each



A farmer tends his tulsi field at Bujruk Bristipur village in Gaibandha's Palashbari upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

decimal of land and sold the leaves at Tk 1000 to Tk 1200.

Another farmer Aytal Hossain of the same village said he cultivated tulsi on 80 decimals of land this year.

Lat year, he planted tulsi on 30 decimals of land and earned Tk 35

thousand, which is more profitable than other traditional crops.

Besides, it takes three and half months to grow the herb after sowing its seeds, said Golam Hossain, a resident of Kettirpara village in the upazila, adding that unlike other

crops, it hardly requires any cost for production. Moreover, herbs can be grown round the year.

Herbal medicine manufacturers have deployed agents for collecting tulsi leaves from the growers, he said, adding that the agents later supplied

the leaves to their respective herbal medicine factories, he added.

Palashbari Upazila Agriculture Officer Azizul Islam said farmers are showing interest in farming other herbs besides tulsi for earning good profit.

PRESSURE FROM MONEYLENDERS

## Farmer kills self

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A man killed himself in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila on Sunday allegedly after failing to bear the continuous pressure from local moneylenders.

The victim, Doyal Chandra, 35, was a resident of Dhangipukur village in the upazila.

Quoting locals, Officer in Charge (OC) of Sadar Police Station Ashikur Rahman said Doyal went out of his house on Saturday night and didn't returned home.

The following morning, villagers spotted his body hanging from the ceiling of a makeshift tea stall at Futani Bazar and informed the police, who recovered the body and sent it to the hospital for autopsy.

During the inquest (Surathal) report police found a suicide note that also inscribes names of 14 people and two mobile numbers.

Victim's wife Purnima Rani filed a case with Sadar Police Station against 16 people on Sunday night.

In her complaint, Purnima alleged that Doyal, a marginal farmer, took money from a number of local moneylenders on high interest.

As her husband was going through financial hardship in the recent days he failed to repay the loans timely, she added.

She alleged that continuous pressure from the moneylenders might have forced her husband to take his own life.

Sub-Inspector (SI) Pijus Kanti, also investigation officer of the case, said they were investigating the matter and primarily assumed that Doyal might have killed himself.

Deceased's body bore no mark of injury, the SI said.



National Housing Authority (NHA) in cooperation with Dinajpur district administration during an eviction drive yesterday demolished many illegal structures in Newtown area of the town.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Myanmar sued for genocide

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unfolding right under our own eyes," he said, reports Reuters.

Both the Gambia and Myanmar are signatories to the 1948 Genocide Convention, which not only prohibits states from committing genocide but also compels all signatory states to prevent and punish the crime.

Tambadou, who has worked for more than a decade as a lawyer at the UN tribunal that dealt with the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, assumed a position of leadership in the lawsuit because of his special expertise.

In a telephone interview, Tambadou told the New York times that he had been moved by his visit to the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh.

"The world failed Rwanda when the international community did not prevent the genocide while it was unfolding," he said.

"The treatment of the Rohingya is illustrative of the international community's failure to prevent genocide in Myanmar. I thought this was not right. The world cannot stand by and do nothing."

Regional rights body Fortify Rights said that in October 2016 and August and September 2017 the Myanmar military deployed more than 11,000 soldiers who, along with police and civilian perpetrators, systematically massacred and raped Rohingya men, women and children, and razed several hundred villages in all three townships of northern Rakhine.

In August and September 2017 alone, some 750,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh and joined some 300,000 others who had fled waves of violence since the 1980s in Rakhine, where they are denied citizenship and other basic rights.

UN investigators have said the crackdown against the Rohingyas was executed with "genocidal intent".

The UN Independent Fact-Finding Mission reported in September this year that it has a confidential list of more than 100 names, including Myanmar officials, suspected of being involved in genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes, in addition to six generals it named publicly a year

ago.

The civilian and military government routinely deny any wrongdoings by state security forces in the Rakhine State and reject evidence of mass atrocities on the Rohingyas. It says the crackdown targeted militant separatists in Rakhine.

Over the last two years, the UN Security Council failed to take any concrete actions against Myanmar due to opposition from China and Russia that have veto powers.

In its filing, the Gambia asked the court to grant so-called provisional measures to make sure Myanmar immediately "stops atrocities and genocide against its own Rohingya people".

The law firm helping the Gambia, Foley Hoag, said it expected the first hearings on the provisional measures to take place next month.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Dr Imtiaz Ahmed, professor of International Relations & director of Centre for Genocide Studies at Dhaka University, said the Gambia has demonstrated its moral height when the international community has failed to take any concrete action against Myanmar.

"Myanmar will face additional pressure now. Its allies will also now come forward to help address the crisis," he told The Daily Star.

The International Criminal Court (ICC), which also initiated an investigation into Myanmar's crimes against Rohingyas, can hold only individuals accountable. The ICJ, however, can hold Myanmar, as a state, responsible. So, Myanmar cannot avoid replying to the ICJ, Imtiaz said.

Asked about the Rohingya repatriation, he said Myanmar in fact may try to expedite repatriation to prove that they were treating the Rohingyas fine.

Mofidul Hoque, trustee of the Liberation War Museum, said the filing of the case by the Gambia is an act in the right direction towards justice.

"What's needed now is global support for the case. There is a lot to be done. The submissions to the court have to be strong. I am sure the global community will support the case," he

said.

In a statement, 10 rights bodies said the case with the ICJ will lead to the first judicial scrutiny of Myanmar's brutal campaign against the Rohingyas.

"The court's prompt adoption of provisional measures could help stop the worst ongoing abuses against the Rohingyas in Myanmar," said Param-Preet Singh, associate international justice director at Human Rights Watch.

Matthew Smith of Fortify Rights said, "All available mechanisms for international justice and accountability should be used without delay," said.

"States should do everything in their power to ensure the case at the ICJ is well resourced and moves forward," he added.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh welcomed the Gambia's filing of the case.

"We welcome it. It's OIC's decision... this is good news that the OIC is taking some responsibility," Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen told BSS.

"We are happy with it."

## Runaway buffalo kills 1, injures 10

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A runaway buffalo attacked several people, leaving one dead and 10 others injured, in Phulbaria upazila on Sunday.

The deceased, Shamsul Haque, 70, was son of late Wahed Ali of Uttar Jorbaria village.

Of the injured, Julhas Mia, 50, Mukul Mia, 42, and Sanwar Hossain, 65, were being treated at Phulbaria Upazila Health Complex.

Quoting locals, Officer in Charge (OC) of Phulbaria Police Station Firoj Talukder said before slaughtering the buffalo some butchers took it to a cattle market in the upazila headquarters.

While roaming the area, the buffalo suddenly went wild and started attacking local people and pedestrians, leaving 11 people injured.

## Rice growers

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Standing Aman paddies, the second biggest crop, were most hit, followed by pulse and winter vegetables, the DAE data showed. Aman crop on 2.70 lakh hectares of area, with different levels of maturity has been affected, causing losses for farmers. Harvesting of the paddy would begin by the end of this month.

The DAE said crops in 13 districts, mainly Patuakhali, Bhola, Bagerhat, Pirojpur, Satkhira and Khulna, were hit the most.

The affected crop areas were 22 percent of the total of 12.99 lakh hectares of standing crops in the 13 affected districts.

DAE officials said they were yet to complete the final assessment and amount of crop losses would be finalised upon getting detailed reports from all the affected areas.

"In some areas, Aman paddy has fallen in a way that the crop will not bring any actual yield," said Mehedi Hasan Khan, upazila agriculture officer in Khulna's Dacope upazila.

The cyclone also caused losses of livestock worth Tk 58.71 lakh, after the death of animals, poultry and the damage of farms and feed, according to Department of Livestock Services (DLS).

"We had all prepared to protect lives from danger. Even if we could protect ourselves, many of us suffered from loss of property," said Md Asaduzzman Milon, chairman of Reyenda Union of Bagerhat's Sarankhola upazila.

## Meat consumers' health risks ignored in Tangail town

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Health of Tangail townspeople is under threat due to absence of slaughterhouse and screening of animals at kitchen markets of the town.

Without any effective mechanism of supervision by the municipality or the livestock department, meat traders are slaughtering animals at unhygienic places in front of or on roads near butchers' shops all over the town.

After a slaughtering shed near Tangail stadium was abandoned following complaints by locals in 1988, Tangail municipality later on built a smaller shed at the town's Park market for the purpose.

When they started developing it further in 2012, the work had to be suspended due to land dispute between them and the upazila land office.

Ever since, ignoring concerns for consumer health, the town's meat traders have been slaughtering animals at any

used to go to the market only to stamp 'bull', 'cow' or 'goat (khashi)' marks on the animals, he added.

College Parasecretary Mohammad Sumon said without any proper slaughterhouse or proper inspection of animals, consumers have no way of knowing what kind of meat they are buying or whether the meat is safe for consumption.

While speaking with this correspondent at Park market, Hindu community member Krishna Roy said the butchers' shops display both beef and mutton side by side.

He also said the authorities should ensure that cows and goats are slaughtered at separate places and beef and mutton are not kept together at a shop.

A team of local journalists during a recent visit to different kitchen markets in Tangail town witnessed indiscriminate slaughtering of animals in front of the butchers' shops at the markets and on adjacent roads.



Meat traders processing an animal after it was slaughtered in front of a butcher's shop at Park Market in Tangail town. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

place they consider convenient for them.

According to rules, veterinary doctors from the livestock department and the municipality's sanitary department are supposed to inspect an animal and issue health certification for the animal before it is slaughtered.

The livestock department said they did not have necessary personnel for the job, while the Tangail municipality authorities claimed that their inspectors screen animals everyday before slaughtering at the town markets.

Khandakar Abdul Kader Sirajul, sanitary inspector of Tangail municipality, said they inspect animals every day at each market in the town to ensure that the meat traders do not slaughter sick animals.

But without proper tools, they conduct the inspections with the naked eye, the inspector added.

However, meat trader Gaznavi Miah at Battala market said he never saw any health inspector by the Louhajang river in Paradise Para area where he slaughters animals every day.

After slaughtering the animals there, he transports the meat on a rickshaw van to the market, he also said.

Khoka Miah, another meat trader at Park market, said the meat traders at the market slaughter animals on open spaces in front of their shops before selling the meat.

A while back, a municipality employee

Contacted, Civil Surgeon in Tangail Dr Sharif Hossain said people can be infected with anthrax and many other diseases if hygiene is not maintained during slaughtering of animals or if it is done in the open.

Dr Md Abu Sayeed, district livestock officer in Tangail, said as per rules, health of animals has to be examined by a veterinary doctor before slaughtering.

Admitting that they have not been able to conduct the examinations due to shortage of necessary workforce, he said, a process was underway to approve a project for constructing a modern slaughterhouse in the town.

Park Market Meat Traders Association General Secretary Shahjahan Miah said the municipality mayor and assistant commissioner (land) in Tangail recently visited different markets to find a suitable place for constructing a slaughtering shed. "We [meat traders] urged them to construct the shed as soon as possible."

Jamilur Rahman Miron, mayor of Tangail municipality, said over the last one year, he has been in communication with the administration for allocation of a piece of land in the town where a slaughtering shed would be built.

"I hope the municipality residents will get an animal slaughtering shed soon," he also said.