

Nilphamari farmers find fortune in ginger

About 200 farmers of five villages in two upazilas are making handsome profits from commercial cultivation of the spice item

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

These days the farmers in Nilphamari call ginger by the name "magical crop."

Those who had been struggling with other crops, opted for the tuber crop about five years ago, following in the footsteps of one farmer, Mizanur Rahman.

Now about 200 farmers in Itakhola, Singdoi, Kanialkhata, and Chapra village under Sadar upazila and Shalmara village in Domar upazila are making fortunes with the spice, which is an essential ingredient in Bengali cuisine.

With guidance from a sub-assistant agriculture officer (SAAO), Mizan of Itakhola village started growing ginger. "After incurring losses for four consecutive years with paddy, I became so helpless that I started to sell my land. Because I had to maintain my family," recalled the 55-year-old farmer.

"The officer had advised me to go for crop diversification [the addition of new crops or cropping systems to agricultural production on a particular farm]," said the farmer, who now owns a brick-built house, power tiller, and cultivable land.

"It is a magical crop as it helps to alleviate poverty. It takes a handsome amount to start cultivation and the production cost is higher than other crops. But the return is three times higher than the cost," said Mizanur.

Arif Rabbani, an SAAO who maintains the crops register at the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Nilphamari, echoed his statement.

"Before him [Mizanur], farmers here used to cultivate ginger in small scale for consumption only. But gradually over the years, they went for commercial production. This year, farmers cultivated the spice on 2,732 acres of land. Last year, it was cultivated on 2,608 acres and the yield was 11,055 tonnes," the DAE official told this paper.

The soil and weather of the northern district is suitable for tuber crops like ginger, according to Obaidur Rahman Mondol, training officer at Nilphamari DAE.

"Ginger grows underground, in a layer where water cannot deposit. The ginger



Farmer Sukumar Roy of Shalmara village in Nilphamari's Domar upazila tending ginger plants at his field. The photo was taken recently.

produced in Nilphamari are of best quality and costly," said Obaidur.

The seeds are sown around the month of November. Harvesting period starts at the end of the month and continues till the end of December.

Sukumar Roy of Shalmara said, "I cultivated ginger on 1.5 bigha land this year and got 48 mound yield. I have already earned Tk 1.92 lakh by selling the produces at a rate of Tk 4,000 per mound. My production cost was Tk 60,000 only.

"With the money, I am now arranging

the wedding of my daughter," said the buoyant farmer.

Farmer Anwarul Islam of Chapra village said, "Last year I got 16 mounds of grains after cultivating the Aman paddy on one bigha land. I had to sell them at a rate as low as Tk 500 per mound.

"But I have made profit this year by cultivating ginger on the same land. I have already earned Tk 1.28 lakh by selling the produces."

According to local farmers, the only challenge in ginger cultivation is that the

cropland needs to be guarded round the clock as thieves try to steal the expensive crop.

At present, one mound of ginger is being sold at Tk 4,000 at the wholesale market.

"We always encourage the farmers to go for crop diversification. Ginger farming has gained popularity in line to that. Our staff regularly visit the fields and give the farmers necessary suggestions," said Nikhil Chandra Biswas, deputy director at DAE Nilphamari.

TRIPLE MURDER IN LALMONIRHAT'S ADITMARI 5 of 7 accused not arrested in a year

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

One year into the brutal killing of three farmers at Taluk Haridas village in Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, five of the seven named accused in the murder case are yet to be arrested.

The killed were Abdul Jalil, 47, son of late Dalal Uddin at Gilabari village, and his relatives Golam Rabbani, 45, son of Abdul Gafur, and Sahidar Rahman, 55, son of late Asir Uddin of Taluk Haridas village in Sarpukur union of Aditmari.

The named accused in the case for the triple murder are Aliar Rahman, 30, Al Amin, 26, and Atiqul Islam, 24, sons of Abdul Khaleque, Habir Uddin, 47, son of late Abdus Sobahan, Shamsul Islam, 62, son of late Nurul Islam, Khorshed Alam, 19, and Judge Miah, 24, sons of Shamsul Alam -- all residents of Taluk Haridas village.

"Khabir Uddin and Shamsul Alam were arrested on November 13 last year, hours after the killings. Charge sheet in the triple murder case was submitted against seven people with the court three months ago. Police are still trying to arrest the five absconding accused," said Aditmari Police Station OC Saiful Islam.

There was a dispute between Abdul Jalil and Abdul Gafur over a 28-decimal land for long, said police and family members.

After Jalil built a hut on the disputed land at dawn on November 13 in 2018, Gafur's sons and relatives rushed to the spot with sharp weapons and attacked Jalil and his relatives, they said.

"The attackers brutally killed my father and injured me with spear. Our relatives Golam Rabbani and Sahidar Rahman, who were injured while trying to save me, died on the way to hospital," said Jalil's son Jahedul Islam.

The plaintiff of the murder case, Jahedul's elder brother Jahangir Alam said, "I filed the case accusing seven named and five to seven unnamed persons with Aditmari Police Station on November 13 last year but police prepared the charge sheet accusing only the named persons."

"We are upset as all the killers are yet to be arrested," he said.

Bus helper held for rape attempt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A helper of a bus was held on charge of attempting to rape a seven-year-old girl at Jatiya Kabi Nazrul Islam University campus in Trishal upazila yesterday.

The arrestee is Mujibur Rahman, 40, helper of the rented university bus, said Officer-in-Charge of Trishal Police Station Md Azizur Rahman.

While waiting for students, the helper took the girl inside the bus when she was playing near the vehicle and tried to rape her around 4:00pm, said the OC.

Hearing screams, a student rushed to the spot and caught the helper red handed.

On information, some other students rushed to the spot, gave the accused a good beating and then took him to the proctor's office. Informed by Proctor Ujjol Kumar Pradhan, police arrested the accused.

The arrestee was later produced before a court that sent him to jail, said the police official.

TCB'S ONION FOR Tk 45 A KG

Chandpur DC handles large crowd on first day of sale

People throng Bagerhat DC's office for a fair deal

STAR COUNTRY DESK

The deputy commissioner of Chandpur had to engage himself in crowd control yesterday when hundreds poured in at his office premises and bought three tonnes of onion at Tk 45 per kilogram.

DC Mazedur Rahman Khan facilitated the sale on the premises of the DC office in Chandpur town around 10:00am, reports our correspondent in Chandpur.

Hearing that onion would be sold at fair price at the DC's office, hundreds of people had gathered there, the DC said adding that they had to use loudspeakers to control the large crowd and allotted one kg onion for each individual.

Additional Deputy Commissioner SM Zakaria, Executive Magistrate Samiul Islam, Chandpur Sports Council General Secretary Golam Mostofa and other government officials assisted the DC during the sale.

TCB has sufficient onions in stock and the government will organise onion sale in every upazila of the district every day, DC Mazedur said.

They have plans to sell three tonnes of onion every day in each upazila, but dealers

are urgently needed in the upazilas for the task, he added.

Meanwhile, in Bagerhat, TCB started selling onions at Tk 45 each kg to curb its price at the open market.

The sale was organised from the morning on the premises of the Bagerhat DC office where a large number of people stood in line for two to five hours, our Bagerhat correspondent reports.

Members of police and the district administration supervised the sale.

However, a number of buyers expressed their dissatisfaction as there was a limit of one kg onion for each buyer.

Rickshaw puller Masum Sheikh said, "The lion's share of the public's earning is now being spent on buying only one kg of onion. Under the circumstances, selling onion for Tk 45 a kg is an initiative in the right direction and we want the government to continue this move."

Rabiul Morshed, head of TCB's regional office in Khulna, said, "We disbursed 3,000 kg of onion to the dealer in Bagerhat and around 1,000 kg could be sold in one day. Based on the situation, the district administration would decide whether they would increase or decrease the quantity."



Centenarian Gazar Uddin of Dahagram village in Patgram upazila is seen among his grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Inset, copy of his NID Card.

PHOTO: STAR

Age is just a number for centenarian Gazar

Free of common old-age complications, the 108-yr-old is a witness to many historical events

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

November 20, 1911 is the date of birth of Gazar Uddin as per his national ID. The affable gentleman, however, claims that he is 125 not 108.

Gazar Uddin, his children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and great-great-grandchildren live in 12 houses at Dahagram village in Patgram upazila.

Free of common old-age complications, Gazar is not only well-known for his health, but also for being a witness to a series of historical events including the 1947 partition of India.

The father of six sons and four daughters lost his first wife Shahjadi Begum about 40 years ago, second wife Maleka Begum about 20 years ago, and third wife Aleya Begum two years ago.

His eldest child Fatema Bewa is 95 years old.

Gazar has been an agriculturist all his life and at present passes his time by making bamboo crafts and fishing nets, and feeding cattle. He cannot carry heavy materials though.

When asked about his secret to long life, Gazar said that he had always been an early

riser and a conscious one. "I wake up before sunrise every day and eat home-cooked meals. I seldom eat meat, mostly I live on vegetables."

The centenarian says he can see clearly and has no health complications. "I never suffered from any serious disease. For bouts of fever, pain, cold, and headache, I took herbal medicine not the chemical ones."

Gazar starts his day by saying prayers at the village mosque and then walks around in bare feet. In breakfast he takes "roti" (flat round bread cooked on a griddle) and for lunch and dinner, he takes rice, vegetable, pulse with fish or meat.

His third child Abdul Jabbar, 80, described to this correspondent how his father outshined him. "Except lifting weights, my father till today does all necessary chores whereas I have been sick for the last 10 years. I am proud to be his son."

Jabbar's son Saber Ali said his grandfather was the only "disease-free man in the village."

"I have never seen him in pain, he is always smiling," said the 65-year-old.

Saber's son Ashraf Ali, 40, addresses Gazar as

"Baro ba," "Boro ba tells us stories from his life experiences and also narrates the history like how the British ruled India, how the partisan happened. Then of course he talks about 1952 Language Movement and 1971 Liberation War."

Gazar's great-great-grandchildren Anisur Rahman Akash is 18 years old.

"Gazar dada [grandpa] is our asset because he always guides us. He is not educated but encourages us to be. I never saw him sitting idly. I am happy to be a member of the fourth generation of his family," said Ashraf's son Anisur.

Alongside family members, Dahagram Union Parishad Chairman Kamal Hossain is also fond of Gazar.

"He is the senior most resident of this union so I pay him a visit whenever I can. He never takes any aid from me but enlightens me with his words of wisdom," said the UP chairman.

Gazar owns 10 bighas of arable land, eight cows, and six goats. "I want to live with sound health till the day I die. That's what I ask for in my prayers," Gazar told this paper.



Khagrachhari Hill District Council brings out a colourful procession in the town yesterday marking 22nd anniversary of Chattogram Hill Tracts Peace Treaty. Public representatives and officials of the local administration attended the programme participated by a large number of people.

PHOTO: SAIKAT DEWAN