

High yield, fair price bring cheer to betel nut growers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Betel nut growers in all the seven upazilas of the district are all smiles as they have a goodyield this year and earninghandsome profit from selling their produces.

This year, the growers are getting fair prices for the betel nut compared to last year's prices.

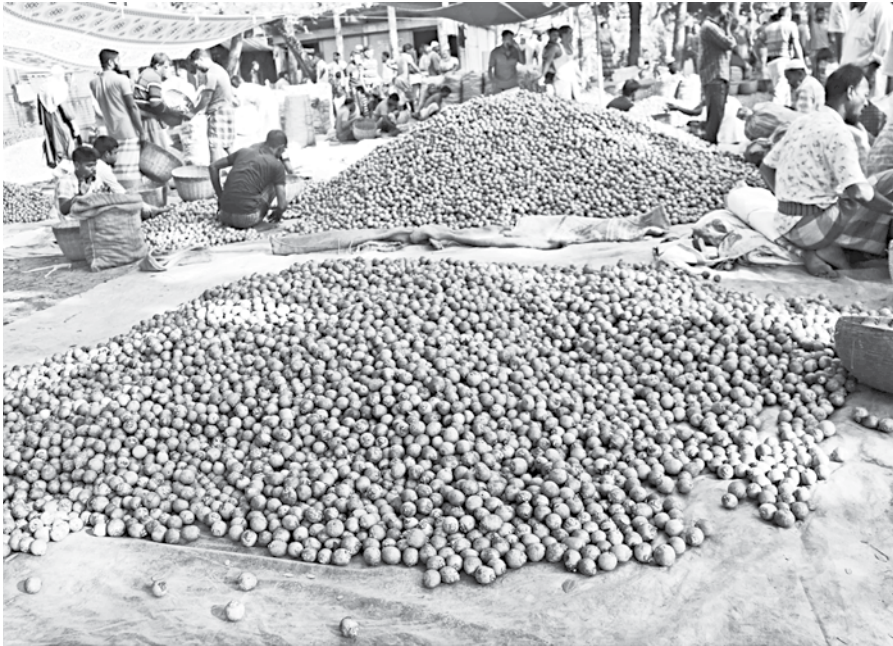
While vising different local haats (weekly markets) in the district this corresponded saw almost all the markets crowded with the presence of buyers and sellers.

Both the sellers and buyers are seen passing busy time in selling or buying betel nut.

This year, per kuri (210 pieces) of betel nut is selling between Tk 250 to Tk 550, depending on its size and quality.

Wholesalers said a huge number of buyers from different parts of the country including Rangpur and Gopalganj come to different local markets of the district, famous for producing quality betel nuts.

Mehedi Hasan, a betel nut grower from Indurkani upazila, said they are happy as they have a good harvest this year as well as getting fair prices of their produce.



Pattashi Bazar, one of the biggest betel nut weekly wholesale markets in Pirojpur's Indurkani upazila, buzzes with buyers and sellers. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Trading of the seasonal crop started about a month ago this seasonal and will continue till the end of next month, he added.

They are earning a good profit from selling betel nut as buyers from nearby areas can easily visit different wholesale markets of the district, another grower Manik Khan said.

Altaf Hossain, a resident of Pattashi village, said a major portion of local economy depends on betel nut as almost all the people in the upazila have betel nut orchard or betel nut tree at their courtyard.

Moreover, many locals get earning opportunity during this time of the year, centring betel nut business, he said.

During the peak season, many people get involved with betel nut business and earn extra money, trader Mizanur Rahman said.

People can easily run their business without any hassle at Pattashi Bazar as it is toll free and there is no extra charge for buying or selling, said Zahangir Sheikh, general secretary of the bazar management committee.



Locals have a look at a roof of a building that collapsed at Johorpur village in Shibganj upazila of Chapainawabganj. The building along with 24 other structures in the village, situated by a canal, started to develop cracks on November 10 as the ground started subsiding. All the 25 structures crumbled within the next few days, turning the impoverished residents homeless overnight. Shibganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shakib Al Rabbi said they provided food relief and blankets to the victims and were considering rehabilitating eight fisher families that lost their homes. Upazila Project Implementation Officer Ariful Islam said they sought expert assistance to ascertain the cause of the subsidence.

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN

Lawmakers blast govt for graft

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is marching forward at an irresistible speed. Bangladesh now appears as a 'development miracle' in the world arena."

A total of 59 MPs, including the prime minister, took part in the nearly 11-hour discussion in the last two days.

The House later adopted the resolution unanimously.

Except the criticism from some MPs, other lawmakers of the treasury and opposition benches highly lauded the government and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her leadership in building a prosperous Bangladesh.

Jatiya Party lawmaker Mujbul Haque Chunnun said, "There is no doubt that the country has achieved a lot. But let me say one thing, Bangabandhu had said that corruption must be eradicated. But that has not been done."

He said corruption must be stopped in order to realise Bangabandhu's dream.

Mujbul, also the JP secretary general, said: "Looting banks, defaulting loans, and laundering money were not in Bangabandhu's dream. We will have to stop all these."

BNP MP Rumeen Farhana said

Bangladesh was liberated as an independent country with the motto of democracy. "But in the last one decade, 'democracy after development', 'limited democracy' have been introduced in the country."

She said there is a culture of "more development, less democracy" in the country now just like Ayub Khan's (Pakistani autocratic ruler) basic democracy.

Rashed Khan Menon, a lawmaker from Workers Party, a component of the Awami League-led 14-party alliance, said they were taking responsibilities of the government's wrongdoings although they were not a part of its decision-making process.

"We have reached the present state with the formation of 15-party alliance, pledges by three alliances and formation of the 14-party combine, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. But it was based on the unity of non-communal and democratic forces. We are in the 14-party alliance now only to celebrate different national days. We are not a part of the policy-making process."

Coming down hard on the government over corruption and mismanagement in the health

sector, Menon, also the president of Workers Party, alleged that the sector was mired in mismanagement. He stressed the need for an overhaul of the healthcare system.

Expressing dismay at the participation of businessmen in politics, he said, "We have noticed today that the military-civil bureaucracy-rich groups have been formed around the ruling power of the country."

He said Bangabandhu had subordinated the bureaucracy to the people's representatives, but the latter are now under the bureaucracy.

"Bureaucrats do not hesitate to call politicians 'political villains'. They now also say that they are running the country," Menon added.

BNP MP Harunur Rashid alleged that corruption was everywhere, especially in the health and education sectors.

He said there is no democracy and rule of law in the country.

The lawmaker said parliament failed to materialise people's hopes and aspirations as it couldn't become the centre-point of discussions on all matters.

Gonoforum MP Mokabbir Khan said the government will have to ensure people's basic rights, voting rights and rule of law.

1 arrested over Ctg gang-rape

Woman in Satkhira 'raped in her house'

STAR REPORT

A man was arrested in connection with the gang rape of a thread factory worker in Chattogram, while a 50-year-old woman was allegedly raped in her house at knifepoint in Satkhira yesterday.

In Chattogram, Md Jahid was arrested yesterday in connection with the gang rape of the 26-year-old worker of Sitakunda town. Two others accused -- Hannan and Linkon -- are on the run, police said.

Quoting the victim, Abul Kalam Azad, officer-in-charge of Sitakunda Police Station, said, "The victim was previously acquainted with Linkon and Hannan. After she was done with work on Wednesday night, she was waiting for the bus to go home when the two men appeared at the Banshbaria bazar area and offered her a lift, which she accepted."

However, instead of taking her home, they took her to the Bashundhara embankment area, where Md Jahid was waiting. The three of them then raped her.

The OC said on-duty night guards there heard the woman's screams and rescued her. After hearing about the incident from her, the guards raided the area and were able to detain Md Jahid, but the other two managed to flee.

The guards then informed police and the victim filed a case with Sitakunda Police Station.

"The victim was sent to One-stop Crisis Centre of Chattogram Medical College Hospital," OC Kalam said.

Meanwhile in Satkhira, a woman, who works at a school for disabled children, alleged that an unknown man stormed into her house while she was home alone, held her hostage at knife-point and then raped her.

He also threatened her and told her not to share the incident with anyone.

Hearing screams, her neighbours rushed to the spot, rescued her and admitted her to hospital. The man had managed to flee the scene by then.

Babul Akter, inspector (investigation) of Satkhira Sadar Police Station, said police visited and spoke to the victim after being informed, adding that a case will be filed in this regard.

Evaly had Tk 2cr

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Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman during hearing three separate writ petitions as per its earlier order.

Meanwhile, the commerce ministry submitted another report through its lawyer Tapas Kanti Baul to the bench, saying that it constituted a 15-member committee for taking urgent steps about the development of the e-commerce industry.

The committee arranged meetings several times and decided on important issues such as review of the existing legal structure, ascertaining the amount of money blocked in the gateway and so on.

After receiving the reports, the HC asked the BFIU to submit a complete report on the other e-commerce entities and asked the commerce ministry to include a representative from the law ministry in the committee for its proper functioning. Mohammad Shishir Manir, a lawyer for the writ petitioners, told The Daily Star.

The HC fixed February 28 next year for

further hearing and passing orders on the writ petitions.

Deputy Attorney General Bepul Bagmar represented the state during the hearing of the petitions.

Three separate writ petitions were filed with the HC on different dates by some lawyers and consumers seeking necessary directives.

A petition challenged the failure and inaction of the authorities concerned to take necessary actions or preventive measures to protect the rights and interests of customers of digital or e-commerce platforms.

Another petition sought HC directives to form an e-commerce regulatory authority to control the online trade in the country and the third one requested the HC to form a judicial committee to inquire into the alleged embezzlement of money, money laundering and fraudulence by controversial e-commerce platforms like Evaly, Alesha Mart, E-orange, Dhamaka, Qcom, Aladiner Prodig and Dalal Plus.

I would like

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NAP BANNED

President Yahya today banned the National Awami Party and ordered the house arrest of some of its leaders in what appeared to be a prelude to crackdown on his critics.

A two-man special court was also set up to try cases of conspiracy, spying and aiding the enemy.

Despite the ban those elected to national and provincial assemblies on the NAP ticket could retain their seats.

The ban covered both the Bhashani and Wali Khan factions.

ON THE WAR FRONT

Mukti Bahini raided Iswarganj police station today and killed 2 West Pakistani policemen and 3 Razakars.

Mukti Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops near Dharmadaha today killing 7 Pakistani soldiers.

Mukti Bahini liberated Brahmpura area in Dinajpur district today.

Mukti Bahini damaged a railway bridge between Dumar and Chilham today. In the same area they also captured 3 razakars along with their arms.

Muktibahini capture the Paanch Matha intersection at Jhenidah, disconnecting the cantonment from rest of the country. They put barricades on Kushtia-Chuadanga highway.

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Exciting ride

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Bangladesh is negotiating with some potential countries to sign free trade agreements, preferential trade agreements and comprehensive economic partnership agreements to retain the trade privileges.

Moreover, it is expected that Bangladesh will be eligible for the EU's Generalised System of Preferences between 2024 and 2034 for fulfilling all the conditions, Munshi added.

Graduation does not mean that all the trade facilities have vanished overnight as the developing nations also enjoy a lot of trade privileges, said Abdur Razzaque, research director of the Policy Research Institute.

"We need to find those opportunities," Razzaque said.

This is another milestone in Bangladesh's march towards becoming a developed country by 2041, said Nihad Kabir, president of the Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"MCCI is sure that Bangladesh will rise to the challenge and make the best of the new opportunities brought about by the graduation," she added.

A stern test awaits Tigers

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recently concluded three-match T20I series.

Although Bangladesh go into the Test series on the back of a convincing win in their one-off Test away to Zimbabwe, which remains the Tigers' only win in the format this year, there will be a lot of focus on skipper Mominul Haque and team management's approach towards the longest format.

The Babar Azam-led Pakistan have already announced a 12-member squad for the first Test while Bangladesh made two last-minute inclusions to the squad as they added pacers Khaled Ahmed and uncapped Shohidul Islam to extend the squad from 15 to 17 just a day before the game.

The last time Bangladesh played

at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium was against the West Indies back in February this year where the hosts were handed a three-wicket defeat after the visitors recorded the highest successful run-chase in Asia.

The Tigers will be without their experienced campaigners like Shakib Al Hasan and Tamim Iqbal, both of whom are sitting out due to injuries, and Mahmudullah Riyad, who had announced his retirement from the format on Wednesday. That will see skipper Mominul share the bulk of the responsibility with experienced Mushfiqur Rahim in order to guide a relatively inexperienced side.

Liton Das, after being dropped from the T20 side, is expected to play a big role alongside Mominul and Mushfiqur in the middle order.

Danger on road guaranteed

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enacted but many sections of the law were not enforced, he said.

As a result, anarchy in the road transport sector prevails and the number of road accidents is increasing, he told The Daily Star last night.

Several thousand students took to the streets in the capital and beyond after two college students were killed by a bus while engaging in an unhealthy race with another bus in the capital on July 29, 2018.

During and after the movement, lawmakers hastily passed the Road Transport Act-2018, the Prime Minister's Office issued a 17-point directive, and police observed "traffic week" multiple times to bring discipline on the roads. For their part, transport leaders also made serious promises of change.

But very little has been done and the picture on the city streets remains almost unchanged. Moreover, road accident across the country saw a sharp rise over the last three years.

At least 2,635 people were killed and 1,920 others injured in 2,629 road crashes in 2018, according to police reports.

But 3,502 were killed and 3,479 others injured in 3,701 road accidents in the first eight months of this year, show the reports.

At least 4,138 lost their lives in 4,147 accidents in 2019, while 4,198 accidents claimed 3,918 lives last year, the report says.

However, different road safety organisations put the number much higher.

DEMANDS NOT MET

One of the nine demands of the 2018 movement was ensuring capital punishment for killing people by reckless driving and such

provision should be incorporated in the Road Transport Act.

In September 2018, the parliament passed Road Transport Act with the provision for five-year imprisonment if anybody causes accident by reckless and negligent driving, and kills or injures someone severely.

Many sections of the act are yet to be enforced due to absence of necessary rules and opposition from transport organisations.

Another demand of the movement was to build an underpass near the Ramiz Uddin College in Banani where the accident took on July 29, 2018. The government has built an underpass there, but it is yet to be opened to public.

Students also demanded they be allowed to travel in buses at half fare. They again started demonstrating to press home the same demand after bus fares were recently hiked.

Their other demand was to take buses without fitness clearance and drivers without valid licences off the streets.

But Bangladesh Road Transport Authority in July 2019 told the High Court that 4.79 vehicles were operating without fitness certificates. Besides, there are several lakh drivers without valid licences.

In December that year, a Dhaka court handed down life sentence to two drivers and a helper of two buses of Jabal-e-Noor Paribahan over the road accident that killed the two students in the capital's Banani.

But the victim families have to wait for a long time to get justice as the case is still pending with the High Court.

Meanwhile, right-hander Yasir Ali, who is yet to make his Test debut despite being in all the Test squads that played this year, may get the nod today.

However, it is still not confirmed whether young Mahmudul Hasan Joy, who earned his maiden Test call-up, would make his debut and open the innings with Shadman Islam.

Left arm spinner Taijul Islam and Mehedi Hasan Miraz are expected to lead the spin department while pacer Abu Jayed will remain the auto-choice in the pace department. It will be interesting to see whether the think-tank opts for another debut in the form of pacer Rejaur Rahman Raja as the second seamer or look for other alternatives between Khaled, Shohidul, and Ebadot Hossain.

False sense

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(ECDC), the EU public health agency, recommended vaccine boosters for all adults, with priority for those over 40, in a major shift from its previous guidance which suggested the extra doses should be considered for older frail people and those with weakened immune systems, reports Reuters.

The EU's drug regulator yesterday approved the use of Pfizer-BioNTech's vaccine for children between the ages of five and 11.

Inoculating children and young people, who can unwittingly transmit Covid-19 to others, is considered a critical step towards taming the pandemic. In Germany and the Netherlands, kids now account for the majority of cases.

Europe yesterday reached the grim milestone of 1.5 million coronavirus deaths.

Ethiopia PM at 'battlefield' front to fight rebels: state media

AFP, Addis Ababa

Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed on Wednesday reportedly joined the front line where government forces are battling rebels from the Tigray region, prompting US-led international calls for a diplomatic solution and immediate ceasefire to the conflict.

The fighting in the north of Africa's second-most populous country has killed thousands of people and forced hundreds of thousands into famine-like conditions.