



Mustard plants at a field gets damaged due to attack by cut worms, known as katui poka. The photo was taken from Paikora village in Tangail's Kalihati upazila

PHOTO: STAR

Cut worms wreak havoc on mustard fields

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Massive attack of cut worms, known as katui poka, on mustard plants in different upazilas of the district worries thousands of farmers as use of pesticides fails to prevent or check the trouble.

Upazila agriculture officials said they were observing the situation very closely and providing necessary advice to the affected farmers.

Local farmers said with the receding of floodwater they planted different varieties of mustard in their lands with a hope of getting a good yield and cover up the losses caused by the flood.

But the insects start cutting the mustard seedlings at a very early stage and dashed their hopes, they alleged.

Farmer Aminul Islam of Paikora village in Kalihati upazila said he planted mustard on 1.5 acres of land this year, but the cut worms have destroyed almost haft of his mustard plants.

"Then I sowed some more seeds for the second time in a season, but the fresh plants were also damaged by the insects," he said, adding that the money he spent in mustard cultivation this season had totally gone in vain.

Kalihati Upazila Agriculture Officer Sajjad

Hossain Talukder said mustard was cultivated on 2,800 hectares of land last season and they have a target to cultivate the crop on 3,000 hectares this year.

He said many farmers from different areas have informed them about the cut worms attack.

Meanwhile, farmers in adjacent Basail upazila also complained about the pest attack on their mustard fields.

According to Basail Upazila Agriculture Office the department has a target to cultivate mustard on 4,820 hectares of land this year.

Ranjan Sarkar, a farmer from Jikatolipara village in the upazila, said he has cultivated mustard on one acre of land and the insects already destroyed almost all the seedlings.

He failed to prevent insects attack on his farmland despite spraying insecticides, Ranjan added.

Contacted, Basail Upazila Agriculture Officer Naznin Akter said they have received complaints about the attack of cut worms in different upazilas of the district including some parts of Basail.

Tangail, one of the biggest mustard producing region in the country, alone produces nearly 50,000 tonnes of the crop every year.

Rohingya killed in wedding brawl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

A man was killed and several others were injured as those attending a wedding reception were attacked allegedly by some relatives of the bride in Cox Bazar's Ukhiya Rohingya camp on Saturday night.

The deceased was identified as Mohammad Belal, an uncle of the bridegroom.

Quoting locals, Kamran Hossain, additional superintendent of police (APBn-8), said the incident took place in C-block of Rohingya Camp-9 around 10:00pm during the wedding reception of Mohammad Idris and Khaleda Bibi, who got married four days ago.

Khaleda's family did not accept the marriage and they were furious at Idris' family over the matter, he said, quoting the locals.

As the programme was underway in Idris' house on Saturday night, relatives of Khaleda swooped on those attending it with sticks and iron rods, leaving Belal dead and several others injured, Kamran said.

The body was sent to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

After the incident, APBn members raided the camp and detained two men.

Process of filing a case with Ukhiya Police Station was underway yesterday afternoon, added the additional SP.

Jordan jails hospital chief over Covid deaths

AFP, Amman

A Jordanian court yesterday sentenced to three years in jail the director of a state hospital over the deaths of 10 patients at the facility which treated coronavirus patients.

Abdel Razak al-Khashman and four aides were convicted of "causing the deaths" at the Salt state hospital where the patients died after it ran out of oxygen.

Astronomers discover

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of the 'ultra-short period' (USP) group of planets, which orbit their star in less than one Earth day.

Since the planet is so close to the star its surface temperature could reach 1,500C – soaking up more than 500 times the radiation the Earth does.

"We already know a few of these [USP planets] but their origins are currently unknown," said Dr Lam. "By measuring the precise fundamental properties of the USP planet, we can get a glimpse of the system's formation and evolution history."

Researchers were able to determine the radius and mass of the planet with a high degree of precision measuring its radial

velocity – the wobble as it moves towards and away from the Earth – which also gave them more information about its inner structure.

"The high density indicates the planet is dominated by an iron core," said the German Aerospace Centre's Szilárd Csizmadia. "These properties are similar to those of Mercury, with its disproportionately large iron and nickel core that differentiates it from other terrestrial bodies in the Solar System."

GJ 367b is located around a red dwarf star approximately half the size of the sun. Their comparative cool temperature makes spotting planets around them easier to find, and they are some of the most common objects in our galaxy.

No plan to seal borders, enforce

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Although the government has not imposed a travel ban on any country yet, Maleque urged Bangladeshis now abroad, especially those in African countries, not to return home right away.

"You stay safe right there if you want to keep your family as well as the country safe," the minister said.

Earlier, the government made 14-day institutional quarantine mandatory on arrival from seven African countries.

It also issued a blanket rule that all arrivals must carry RT-PCR Covid negative certificate with the test done no more than 48 hours prior to departure for Bangladesh.

For outgoing passengers, the space for the RT-PCR testing zone has been expanded to

30,000 square feet from 2,000 square feet at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, the minister informed.

Last week, the health directorate issued 15-point directives to enforce health safety rules and alerted all hospitals countrywide.

Besides, the government has decided to offer booster doses to people aged 60 years and above.

"Booster dose is not related to the Omicron. We had this in our plan; it has been approved now," the minister said.

Meanwhile, six people have died from Covid-19 in 24 hours prior to 8:00am yesterday. There were at least 197 new Covid cases discovered in the same period, says a DGHS press release.

Silence halts ACC probe

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directive during the hearing on two separate rules issued over taking action against the Bangladeshi nationals who purchased properties abroad through money laundering.

One of the rules was issued on November 22 last year following reports punished by newspapers The Daily Star, Prothom Alo, Janakantha and Bangladesh Pratidin on Bangladeshi nationals who bought luxurious properties abroad with laundered money.

Another rule was issued on February 28 following a writ petition filed by lawyers

Abdul Qaium Khan and Subir Nandi Das on February 1.

During the hearing yesterday, the bench emphasised the need for cooperation from all to eradicate corruption and money laundering from Bangladesh.

A single person or a body cannot remove corruption from the country; the politicians, judges, lawyers, journalists, civil society members should work together to make Bangladesh a corruption-free country, it said.

The court will resume the hearing today. Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik represented the state.

Security forces plough car into

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Myanmar's largest city, was rammed minutes after it started, witnesses said.

"I got hit and fell down in front of a truck. A soldier beat me with his rifle but I defended and pushed him back. Then he immediately shot at me as I ran away in a zig-zag pattern. Fortunately, I escaped," a protester who asked not to be identified for security reasons told Reuters by phone.

A car occupied by soldiers hit the crowd from the back, two witnesses said, and followed the scattered protesters arresting and beating them. Some were

seriously injured with head wounds and unconscious, according to the witnesses.

A spokesman for the ruling junta did not answer calls seeking comment yesterday.

Wars with ethnic minority insurgents in remote frontier regions in the north and east have intensified significantly since the coup, displacing tens of thousands of civilians, according to United Nations estimates.

Suu Kyi, 76, faces a dozen cases against her including incitement and violations of Covid-19 protocols. She has rejected all the charges to date.

Rain to stay

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improves, the UNO said.

According to the BMD, the deep depression lies over Northwest Bay and adjoining West-central Bay. It is likely to move towards the north-north easterly direction and weaken gradually.

Officials said the country will witness two cold waves this month, the first of which may happen after the second week of this month, said Meteorologist Bazlur.

2 killed

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area under Char Fashion upazila.

The robbers opened fire on Rab members, who retaliated with gunshots, leaving two persons dead on the spot, he claimed.

Three locally made guns and a machete were recovered from the spot.

Police were set to take the bodies to Bhola Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

They're

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there might be a 1-2 percent disbursement charge from each payment.

"We will start paying back the money as soon as we get instructions from the ministry as the money is already stuck up in the payment gateway," said a senior official of the BB asking not to be named as he is not authorised to speak to media on the matter.

He also said there would be a refund charge.

UK tightens

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The health ministry said that the measure was justified as UKHSA analysis indicated the window between infection and infectiousness may be shorter for the Omicron variant.

But British Airways said it was a "devastating blow" for the industry, while pilot union BALPA said the government was destroying confidence in air travel.

The measures will be reviewed on December 20. Nigeria will be added to Britain's travel "red list" at 0400 GMT today.

The health ministry said the vast majority of cases in Britain have clear links to overseas travel from Nigeria and South Africa, reports Reuters.

Green coconut sales gain popularity in Bagerhat

Coconut oil millers facing a dearth in supply

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Suitable weather for coconut cultivation has brought smiles to the farmers of Bagerhat, a district famous for the fruit.

The farmers are selling their produce to the local buyers at Tk 22-28 per piece and the local buyers are selling those to the wholesalers at Tk 35-38 per piece. Most of the farmers are willing to sell green coconuts instead of waiting until they are ripe. As a result, coconut oil millers are facing a dearth in the supply of dried coconuts.

To make matters worse, the supply of dried coconuts started to fall due to a rise in demand for coconut water over the last few years, resulting in the mills' daily production falling.

A dried coconut trader Tarapada Shaha said, "I am not getting a sufficient number of dried coconuts and my business is about to stall."

Although the oil millers are facing a loss, the farmers expressed satisfaction with the price of green coconuts.

Shahidul Sheikh, a van puller, of Afra village in Kachua upazila, said "I have

sold my green coconuts at Tk 28 per piece. I can sell the green coconuts every month. Selling green coconuts also boosts production. On the other hand, if I want to sell dried coconuts, I can hardly sell them twice a year."

Abul Hossain Khan, another farmer of the same area, said, "If I don't sell the green coconuts, it results in losses for me because rats and mites damage the fruits."

Mizan Sheikh of Sangdia village in Kachua upazila said, "The green coconut traders clean the top part of the coconut trees while collecting the fruits from our orchard, which is very necessary for an increased production."

Another farmer of Tangrakhali area in Kachua upazila also echoed the same saying that he does not wait till the coconuts dry up fearing rat and mite infestation.

"As I get four times more money by selling green coconuts, why should I sell dried coconuts?" he questioned.

A local trader Ripon Sheikh said, "As we get huge profit by selling green coconuts many others like me have engaged themselves in this business."

"We buy green coconuts at Tk 22-28 and sell them to the wholesalers at Tk 30-38," he said, adding that both the farmers and traders are happy with it.

A wholesaler of Fataypur Bazar of Kachua wishing not to be named said that they buy green coconuts at Tk 30-38 depending on the size and sell them at Tk 50-55 to the buyers based in Dhaka and the Northern region.

"Sometimes we get more money in the summer season. The green coconut business has made many unemployed people employed. At least seven to eight trucks of green coconuts are transported to different districts including Dhaka daily," he added.

Deputy Director of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Bagerhat Md Azizur Rahman said the sale of green coconuts has gained momentum in the district as the farmers are reaping good profit.

As the top part of the coconut trees are cleaned each time while harvesting green coconuts, the production has also increased, he added.



Traders load green coconuts on a truck at Fataypur Bazar of Kachua upazila in Bagerhat. The farmers and traders are enjoying a heyday as the business gains momentum in the district.

PHOTO: STAR

Russian airliner diverted to avoid Nato spy plane: Moscow

AFP, Moscow

A Russian airliner had to change course to avoid a Nato spy plane that was crossing its path above the Black Sea, Moscow authorities have said.

The alleged spy plane "descended rapidly" across the planned route for a Tel Aviv-Moscow Aeroflot service with 142 people on board, Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency said late Saturday

according to news agency Interfax.

"The direction and altitude of the commercial flight were immediately altered" to avoid a collision, the agency said, adding that the unknown plane did not respond to radio hails from air traffic control.

Interfax reported that the Aeroflot flight had to drop 500 metres (1,600 feet) to keep its distance from the reconnaissance aircraft, which the pilots saw from the cockpit with the naked eye.

We are looking for legal scope

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streets if the government does not take initiatives to send party Chairperson Khaleda Zia abroad for better treatment.

"Please release Khaleda Zia and send her abroad for better treatment immediately. Otherwise you [the government] won't find any way to escape when people will take to the streets. You will be accountable to people," said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

Addressing a rally organised by Sramik Dal in front of the National Press Club, he said Khaleda was imprisoned in an abandoned jail for more than two years and her physical condition reached such a level that if she is not sent abroad immediately, it would be tough for her to survive.

Students want half fare

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The students hit the street after bus fares went up lately following a hike in diesel prices. The demonstration got bigger and called for road safety after two students were killed in the capital by recklessly driven vehicles.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, some of the road safety campaigners of Nirapad Sarak Andalan said they did not accept the conditions put forward by the transport owners.

"The road transport and bridges minister had said similar words in 2016 and 2018. Following a road safety movement earlier, the prime minister had accepted students' demand for 'half fare'. However, everything went back to square one later. We were fooled," said Inzamul Haque Ramim, one of the campaigners.

Half fare for students must be ensured through the issuance of a gazette and it must be applicable for all modes of public transport, including buses, trains, launches and metro rail, across the country, he said.

Another group of agitating students voiced similar demands.

The "half fare system" should be ensured all across the country and throughout day and night, said the students who began their demonstration following the death of a student in the capital's Rampura recently.

In Chattogram, Arif Mainuddin, president of Ganatantrik Chhatra Council, a student platform, said "Our demand is to the government, not to the transport owners. We demand that students will pay half the fare in public transport anywhere in the country."

DEMO FOR SAFE ROADS ON

Students of several schools and colleges demonstrated on streets in Dhaka and several other districts, including Chattogram, Barishal, and Mymensingh, yesterday, demanding safe roads.

In Dhaka's Rampura, the protesters carried placards and cartoons highlighting irregularities and corruption in the transport sector. Speaking there, Shohagi Samia, a student of Khilgaon Model College, said a vested quarter was spreading propaganda against the demo in order to divert public attention towards a different direction.

She said that they would continue their movement until their 11-point demand was met.

The protesters said they would wear black badges today in memory of those killed in road accidents.

Carrying an empty coffin, another group of students, under the banner of Nirapad Sarak Andalan, brought out a procession near Shahbagh around 1:00pm.

Amid the presence of a huge number of police members, they marched towards TSC and held a rally there.

Inzamul Haque Ramim, a student of State University, said rain disrupted their demonstration in Dhaka, but human chain programme was being held in 18 districts across the country.

He alleged that the authorities obstructed their demo in Barishal. "Our demonstrations will continue. We will submit a memorandum to the railway ministry and the shipping ministry, seeking discounted fare for all students," he said.