



Fruit grower Ayub Ali of Santoshpur village in Mymensingh's in Phulbaria upazila is seen tending his Jaaldugi variety pineapple field.

PHOTO: STAR

Jaaldugi brings high profit to growers

Cultivation of the early variety pineapple helping many farmers make a fortune

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Cultivation of Jaaldugi, an early variety of pineapple, has changed the fortune of many farmers in Phulbaria upazila over the last couple of years.

A larger number of farmers in different villages of the upazila are cultivating the early variety pineapple for a higher profit for the last few years.

Ayub Ali, one of the top fruit growers of Santoshpur village, is expecting to earn a good profit from the early variety pineapple, cultivated on his eight acres of land, this season.

The 51-year-old, who lives near the Santoshpur Reserved Forest, said he cultivated Jaaldugi, a small sized early variety pineapple, on eight acres land and expecting to harvest those in between February and early March.

As the fruit is harvested in early of the year, which is usually off-season for pineapple, so it

has a good demand, he said, adding that growers can sell their pineapple at a high and earn a good profit from it.

Ayub, who started from cultivating Jaaldugi variety on one acre land five years ago, has gradually expanded the cultivation area and now there are about one lakh and fifty thousand plants in his field.

If everything goes well he is expecting to earn a profit of Tk 25 lakh this season, Ayub said.

Ayub said he has been involved in pineapple farming for over 30 years.

In 2019, he earned a profit of Tk 2.5 lakh from Jaaldugi cultivation, Ayub said, adding that the profit was about Tk 10 lakh in 2020.

Like Ayub many pineapple growers of Santoshpur and other adjacent villages in the upazila have been getting a good profit from their produce for the last couple of years as they are enjoying a high fair price of the early variety

pineapple.

Farmers said some of the growers are earning double profit from their mixed orchard round the year.

Another farmer of the village Fazlul Haque said he has been growing Jaaldugi variety pineapple on one acre land for the last three years. He earned a profit of Tk 4 lakh this year and eyeing a double profit in the coming season.

With the development of communication and information technologies, now farmers can directly contact their clients to know the actual market price of their produce, another grower Abdul Hye said.

Maznu Mia of the locality said many growers of Santoshpur and adjacent Krishnapur, Balughat, Harirambari and Kastagara villages have changed their lot through pineapple cultivation in recent years.

Locals said alongside pineapple

cultivation of different fruits has created seasonal job opportunity for nearly 50,000 people in the upazila.

Naugaon Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Mozammel Hossain said pineapple is cultivated at a large scale in different villages under Naugaon and Rangamatia unions of the upazila and it is a cash crop for several thousand farmers.

Contacted, Phulbaria Upazila Agriculture Officer Jesmin Nahar said there are over 15,000 pineapple growers in the upazila.

Of them, about 1000 farmers are involved in mixed fruits cultivation and getting a good profit every year, she added.

The pineapples, especially Jaaldugi and Honey Queen variety, produced in the upazila are famous for its taste as both the soil and weather of the area are suitable for pineapple cultivation, she further said.

Dotara artiste Shuklal struggling for survival

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Once Dotara artiste Shuklal Roy used to pass busy days attending one programme to another enthraling his audience with his musical rendition. But since the onset of Covid-19 pandemic, there is hardly any musical programmes in the village leaving Shuklal who is fondly called Dotara Shuklal in a perennial crisis for survival.

This Dotara artiste hails from Kalisthan village of Kamalabari union of Aditmari upazila in Lalmonirhat.

"As there is no programme because of the pandemic, nobody calls me," he said.

Though the veteran artiste as well as his family is struggling for survival, he still wears a big smile on his face.

"Somedays I can manage some food and somedays we go unfed. I try to run my family working as a day labourer but people often refuse to give me work as I am a person belonging the community of musicians," he also said.

Despite suffering from hunger pangs, Shuklal is trying to preserve the tradition of music in rural Bengal. Alongside playing the Dotara, Shuklal is also a prolific singer having prowess on different genre of Bengali songs especially Bhawaiya.

He is adept in folk songs and kirtan songs. He can play flute, harmonium, drum, ektara, sarinda and all other traditional musical instruments.

His family comprises of his wife Sudha Rani and two sons Ripon Chandra Roy and Jiban Chandra Roy. The elder son Ripon is studying at a college and the younger one is in a school.

His wife Sudha Rani has to work as a day labourer in the village now. Shuklal does not have any land property except for the homestead.

Shuklal said that he had three Dotaras. Due to financial crisis, he has sold two of them for Tk 3,000. He cannot repair some other musical instruments due to lack of money.

"I'm a man of music. I don't like other works. Besides, I can't do any other works properly," he said.

"There is a severe crisis of money in the family and now I have only one Dotara left. I don't know how long I will be able to retain this one," he further said.

Shuklal's wife Sudha Rani (38) said "My husband regularly plays the Dotara suffering from hunger pangs. All my frustration and agonies are dispelled with the mellifluous rendition of his Dotara."



Alongside playing the Dotara, Shuklal is also a prolific singer having prowess on different genre of Bengali songs especially Bhawaiya.

PHOTO: STAR

Another key accused

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He added that the process of bringing key accused Ashik, who was arrested by Rab, from Madaripur to Cox's Bazar was underway.

Meanwhile in Noakhali's Chatkhil upazila, a rickshaw puller raped a woman who was waiting by the roadside for a vehicle to reach a polling station to vote in the fourth phase of the union parishad election.

According to the FIR, the woman got out to vote at a polling station near her home yesterday.

A rickshaw puller named Sarwar Hossen, 28, took her on his rickshaw and went to a farmhouse instead and raped her there.

A farmer came to rescue her after hearing her screams. The rapist had fled the scene by then.

Abul Khair, officer-in-charge of Chatkhil Police Station, told The Daily Star that a case was filed in

this regard.

"We sent the woman to Noakhali General Hospital for medical tests. The accused is on the run. We are trying to arrest him as soon as possible."

In Chuadanga, police yesterday arrested two people on charges of raping a woman after a case was filed with Chuadanga Sadar Police Station.

The arrestees are Rubel Hossen, 32, and Nazim Uddin, 30.

The FIR said that on December 25, the woman was picked up by three people around 8:00pm when she was on her way back home from grocery shopping. They forced her into a mango orchard and raped her.

Mohammad Mohsin, OC of the Chuadanga Police Station, told The Daily Star that the victim kept the incident a secret out of fear of social stigma. However, on Monday she filed the case against the three.

Indonesia rejects

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children, we must pay attention to their health," executive director of Amnesty International Indonesia Usman Hamid said in a statement.

The UNHCR also called on Jakarta to let the boat's passengers disembark, pointing to the unseaworthiness of the boat.

Badruddin Yunus, a leader of the local fishing community, told AFP that fishermen who had visited the boat reported there were 120 people on board, including 51

children and 60 women.

He said the engine was broken and the refugees could not communicate with the local fishermen due to the language barrier.

Last year, hundreds of Rohingya who fled persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar arrived in Indonesia.

Many have since escaped to Malaysia, drawn by its substantial population of more than 100,000 Rohingya.

130-year-old time capsule

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time capsule hidden in the base of the statue of General Robert E. Lee, who commanded the Army of Northern Virginia during the Civil War, contained relics such as buttons and bullets, Confederate currency, maps, a rare picture of assassinated president Abraham Lincoln in his coffin and other items.

The box will be opened on Tuesday at 1:00 pm (1800 GMT), Northam said in a later tweet, adding that it had been X-rayed.

"Experts believe there may be coins, books, buttons, and even ammunition from the Civil War," he said.

A different shoebox-sized container found in the base of the statue was opened by conservators last week but was clearly not the time capsule mentioned in the

1887 newspaper piece.

It contained three water-logged books, a photograph in a soggy cloth envelope and a coin.

The items appeared to have been mementos left behind for posterity by some of the workers who erected the statue.

The time capsule found on Monday is about twice the size.

Lee's statue in Richmond, the Virginia city that was the capital of the South during the bloody 1861-65 conflict, was taken down in September, one of a number of monuments to the pro-slavery Confederacy removed in recent months.

The statue became the focus of protests for racial justice last year following the death of George Floyd, a Black man who was murdered by a white police officer in Minnesota.

BIWTA officials, vessel authorities

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See such role of the association," Justice Enayetur Rahim, who was a secretary of the association, told Aneek R Haque, a lawyer for a writ petitioner.

With the observation, the bench directed the government to give financial assistance to victims of the MV Abhijan-10 launch fire incident. It also sought all probe reports on the incidents, a list of people who died and got injured and fitness reports of launches and ships across the country.

The HC bench ordered the authorities to submit the list of dead and injured in 30 days and the reports on the fitness of launches and ships in 90 days.

Besides, the court issued a rule asking the officials concerned of the government to explain why their inaction in taking measures to prevent the incident of fire on the launch should not be declared illegal.

The bench came up with the directives and issued the rule following two separate writ petitions filed by Supreme Court lawyers Saumitra Sarder and Md Eunus Ali Akond.

Meanwhile, Monir Hossain 38, a construction material businessman from Dhaka's Demra, filed a case with Jhalakathi Sadar Police Station in connection with the fire incident.

Eight named, including one of the owners of the launch, and 15 to 20

unnamed people were made accused in the case, said Saiful Islam Sohag, inspector (investigation) of the police station.

Complainant Monir said his sister Taslima Akter, brother-in-law Sumon Sardar, nieces Sumaiya Akter Mim and Sumona Akter Tasnia and nephew Zonayed Islam Baizid were on MV Abhijan-10 on December 23.

Around 3:10am on December 24, Taslima called Monir and said the fire broke out in the launch. After that, her phone was found switched off.

Monir went to Jhalakathi the next morning and tried to identify their bodies but could not as the bodies were burnt beyond recognition.

Omicron may overwhelm healthcare

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The hundreds of thousands of affected residents there joined the 13 million people in the city of Xi'an, who entered a sixth day of home confinement as China battled its highest daily case numbers in 21 months.

"I'm about to be starved to death," wrote one Xi'an resident on the Twitter-like Weibo platform.

"There's no food, my housing compound won't let me out, and I'm about to run out of instant noodles... please help!"

Many Xi'an residents have similarly complained on social media about the restrictions, which include a ban on driving and only one member of a household permitted to go outside for groceries every three days.

This lockdown is the most sweeping in China since the similarly-sized city Wuhan was cut off from the world in the early days of the pandemic.

The surges in many countries have been propelled by the highly transmissible Omicron variant.

The WHO warned against complacency even though preliminary findings suggest that Omicron could lead to milder disease.

"A rapid growth of Omicron... even if combined with a slightly milder disease, will still result in

large numbers of hospitalisations, particularly amongst unvaccinated groups, and cause widespread disruption to health systems and other critical services," warned WHO Europe's Covid Incident Manager Catherine Smallwood.

To hold back the tide, European nations brought back curbs with painful economic and social consequences.

Facing record-high infections, France stopped short of issuing a stay-at-home order but called on employers to make staff work from home three days a week where possible.

Sweden and Finland required negative tests for incoming non-resident travellers from yesterday, a day after Denmark -- which currently has the world's highest rate of infection per capita -- applied the same measure.

In Germany, private gatherings are now limited to 10 vaccinated people -- or two households where any unvaccinated people are present -- and nightclubs have been closed. All sports competitions will now be held behind closed doors.

Beyond social strife, the pandemic has been punishing economically, in particular for sectors like travel.

Some 11,500 flights have been scrapped worldwide since Friday, and tens of thousands more delayed, during one of the year's busiest travel periods.

Multiple airlines have blamed staffing shortages caused by spikes of Omicron cases.

The surge in the US has been fuelled by the Omicron variant, as well as large pockets of unvaccinated residents and a lack of access to quick and easy testing.

President Joe Biden said Monday some US hospitals could be "overrun" but that the country was generally well prepared.

He stressed that Omicron would not have the same impact as the initial Covid outbreak or the Delta variant surge this year.

"Omicron is a source of concern, but it should not be a source of panic," Biden said.

In an effort to prevent mass labour shortages during the surge, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Monday cut the isolation period for asymptomatic cases from 10 to five days.

The US is the nation hit hardest by the pandemic, and is closing in on its daily high of 250,000 cases recorded last January.

Limited-scale booster

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of Burn and Plastic Surgery, 250-bed TB Hospital in Shyamoli, Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Hospital and Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital.

The total number of booster dose recipients could yet be known as no official concerned of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) could be reached for the information.

Speaking to reporters earlier in the morning, Dr Shamsul Haque, member secretary of the National Covid-19 Vaccine Deployment Programme, said, "Those who have received two doses of any Covid-19 jab will get an SMS to receive the booster dose. We have sent orders to all hospitals to start administering booster shots."

Only those who have received two shots of any of the five Covid-19 vaccines among frontline workers or people aged 60 years and above will get a Pfizer, Moderna or AstraZeneca shot as booster dose, said a DGHS circular signed by Shamsul, released on December 26, 2021.

The five vaccines which have so far been used in the countrywide campaign are produced by Oxford-AstraZeneca, Moderna, Pfizer, Sinopharm, and Sinovac. Shamsul said, "A few hospitals have started administering booster doses today [yesterday] while other hospitals across the country will begin in a day or two."

On December 19, the government introduced the booster dose on trial basis by administering Pfizer vaccine to 17 frontline workers and senior citizens.

On Monday, Lokman Hossain Miah, senior secretary of the health and family welfare ministry, said they would introduce booster doses in Dhaka from Tuesday to test the Surokkha registration app.

Country logs 4 new

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from the others. The samples of the 33-year-old woman was collected on December 8 while the rest on December 23.

Earlier on Monday night, GISAID published the country's third Omicron Covid case on its website, which was also detected in Dhaka through active surveillance.

On December 9, two cricketers of the Bangladesh women's cricket team became the first in the country to test positive for Omicron after returning home from their tour of Zimbabwe.

Amid the reports of Omicron infections, the government stepped up health screening at all ports in the country from December 3.

The first case of Omicron variant was reported in South Africa on November 18. Since then, cases have been reported in at least 119 countries or territories, according to media reports.

The variant has caused a spike in new cases of Covid-19 across Europe and America.

Post-polls violence claims 3 lives

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said the family will file a murder case. In Habiganj, at least 25 people were injured in a clash between supporters of Firoz Kabir, who defeated him, Shaharul's family members alleged.

However, Ezar Uddin, officer-in-charge of Gobindaganj Police Station, said he was not aware of anyone being beaten to death.

Shaharul's nephew Anwar Hossain

said the family will file a murder case. In Habiganj, at least 25 people were injured in a clash between supporters of Firoz Kabir, who defeated him, Shaharul's family members alleged.

Additional law enforcers have been deployed in the area to prevent further violence, said Saiful Islam, OC of Lakhai Police Station.

In Joypurhat, a man was injured, and several houses and businesses were vandalised in Bhadsha UP on Monday during a clash between supporters of AL chairman nominee Swadhin Sarwar, who won the election, and Haidar Ali, an independent who lost, locals said.

On Sunday, at least three people were killed as polls were held in 838 union parishads.