



Sajahan Ali Badsha showcases fruits at his orchard in Boktarpur village under Pabna's Ishwardi upazila. His farm called "Ma Moni Krishi Khamar" is home to all manner of hybrid crops with his biggest seller being papaya.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

Single hybrid farm changes face of Ishwardi upazila



INSPIRING STORIES FROM THE FIELD

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Agriculture is a key sector of Bangladesh's economy but most people never dream of becoming a farmer as even those with the slightest education hope to make a living through other professions of more repute.

However, Sajahan Ali Badsha, a resident of Boktarpur village in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila, has broken the mould by first taking up the plough while studying for his Secondary School Certificate before going on to become an iconic farmer in the region.

Badsha started farming in the 1970s to bear his educational expenses and has received numerous medals since then, including the Agricultural Important Person award this year.

Badsha adopted hybrid farming as a means to attain success and as such, he mainly grows profitable crops alongside traditional varieties.

Upon advice from a relative, Badsha started cultivating a hybrid species of eggplant on 2.5 bighas of land in 1978, when he earned Tk 36,000 from his first harvest.

This initial success prompted him to continue farming alongside his regular academic work. Within the next 5-7 years,

Badsha was farming multiple hybrid crops alongside paddy and jute.

"As I was getting profit, I leased some adjoining lands to increase cultivation," he said.

After completing his graduation in the 1980s, Badsha was already earning Tk 2.3 from each harvest.

Finding his fields to be profitable enough, he did not bother searching for other professions even after completing a masters and instead established the "Ma Moni Krishi Khamar" by leasing more land.

"Most farmers cultivated paddy and jute back in the 70s and 80s so I decided to try something different by growing hybrid varieties of eggplant, papaya, cauliflower, and other seasonal vegetables," Badsha added.

But of all his crops, it was papaya that brought him most success from the early 1990s.

"Papaya cultivation has brought both profit and fame in my life," the farmer said.

Badsha started farming hybrid papaya in his turmeric field as a co-crop but after seeing how remarkably profitable it was, he leased another 100 bighas of land to grow the fruit.

His success in papaya farming brought him a silver medal in the Bangabandhu Agriculture Award of 1997 while he eventually secured gold in the 1998 edition.

Considering the success,



Badsha expanded papaya cultivation every year.

"The highest amount of papaya I had cultivated was 110 bighas in 1998," he said.

Just when everything was on the up and up, massive floods in 2004 destroyed his crops but that did not stop him from farming again.

"It was a huge loss but I planted vegetables and fruits again after the storms had passed," he added.

This year, Badsha has planted several prize worthy local and foreign fruits as well as vegetables and other traditional crops on about 63 acres.

He is growing custard apples on 12 acres at the Ma Moni Krishi Khamar while 8 acres are being used for farming litchi, 7 acres for papaya, 2 acres for avocado,

3 acres for mango, among other crops.

Badsha also regularly produces paddy, jute, spices and lentils.

"In my 50 years as a farmer, I realised profit cannot be earned from a single crop every year, he told The Daily Star.

Asked what advice he has for other farmers, Badsha said to go for cultivation in a planned way.

He has also done away with the use of middle men for selling his produce by opening his own outlet in Dhaka.

"When my agriculture work developed, I realised that profits from selling crops to traders in local markets were not sufficient. So, I took the initiative to open outlet in the capital," Badsha said.

As was the case with his

farm, continued success allowed Badsha to expand the number of outlets, which supply wholesale shops with his own vehicles to reduce transportation costs.

As such, it goes without saying that Badsha has become an inspiration to others, especially those in his village.

"Badsha showed us how typical agricultural work can be profitable. I was inspired by him to cultivate turmeric in my 3-bigha litchi orchard to earn extra profit," said Mehedi Hasan, a farmer of Shahapur village of Ishwardi upazila.

Dr Saiful Alom, deputy director of Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Pabna, said many people in the area now cultivate multiple crops.

Badsha has played a vital role in changing the entire scenario of agriculture in the region for the past three to four decades.

"Once upon a time, local farmers would only cultivate paddy, jute, lentils and other traditional crops. Now though, most of them grow vegetables and fruits items as well to earn more profit," Alom added.

Badsha was the first farmer in the district to become an Agricultural Important Person while there are now dozens with the award in the district.

In addition, there are 22 are nationally awarded farmers and 3 institutions in the region, turning Ishwardi upazila into one of the biggest agricultural hubs in the country.

DIGITAL DARE

Are we safe from cyber hackers?

MAHTAB UDDIN AHMED

Mr Jones is a mafia leader who manages all his secret deals and finances on his laptop, which is his regular companion.

One day when he tried to open the laptop, he could only see a dark screen and a message saying the control of the laptop is taken over by someone sitting in Russia. He was tempted to notify the police, but his instincts reminded him that exposing all his confidential information could land him behind the bars for the rest of his life!

With his back against the wall, Mr Jones decides to settle the matter with the hackers by paying a few million dollars using digital currencies. Well, these cyber hacks can happen to you too, save the argument that you are no Mr Jones!

Back in the day, criminal hackers would only aim for targeted victims to realise a handsome ransom. Now, their scope has broadened multi-dimensionally, including selling valuable data, credit card details for marketing purposes, health information leakage on the dark web, theft of corporate business information like business plans and trade secrets, stealing money from financial institutions, ransoms from ransomware attacks by infecting corporate systems with malware, and the list can go on.

According to Palo Alto Networks, a sharp increase of more than five times was recorded in the average payout to such gangs in 2021 over 2020.

In Bangladesh, understanding the importance of cyber security and data breach is at a nascent stage despite the Bangladesh Bank cyber heist in 2016, the Sonali Bank cyber scam in 2013, and the hacking of several private banks. Even some government agencies' systems got hacked by a casual hacker.

Telecom operators are known for having strong cyber security defence, and yet I have seen them being regular targets. The most noteworthy global hackings include the attack on Yahoo, the Singaporean government and Sony's PlayStation network.

However, not all hackers are bad. There are good hackers as well and they are called ethical hackers. The job opportunity in this area is growing exponentially and these hackers mostly work for organisations, including consultancy firms which provide cybersecurity services.

In the era of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, our vulnerability to hackers has never been more. There are potential risks in vehicles with sensors, smart homes, artificial intelligence, and the cloud for storing data. The new model for electric vehicles is getting software-based and as such, they are increasingly getting vulnerable to hackers.

With the phenomenal increase in cyber and ransomware attacks coupled with growing dependence on digitalisation, it is critical to remember why paying malicious hackers is never a good idea. This is because it only serves to encourage them more in such illegal activities and at the same time, continues to make the organisation or individual more vulnerable.

The best solution to combat this malice is to invest in a robust security system, a comprehensive incident response plan, and a disaster recovery plan so that one can contain any reputational or financial damage caused, and get back-up running. Other general ways to keep yourself or the organisation safe are to delete suspicious emails, refrain from clicking on unknown links, create strong passwords, and change passwords frequently.

Bangladesh is on the journey of shifting the Digital Bangladesh gear to a digital society and digital economy. To make the progress sustainable, it is absolutely crucial to focus on and adapt a cyber security enabler.

The author is a telecom and management expert.



Dhaka stocks up despite poor participation

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Shares on the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) were slightly up yesterday despite the poor participation of investors amid the ongoing economic crisis.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the premier bourse in Bangladesh, inched up 7 points, or 0.11 per cent, to close at 6,215.

Turnover, an important indicator of the market, fell to Tk 323 crore, down 40 per cent from the previous session's Tk 540 crore.

The DS30, the blue-chip index, slipped 0.29 per cent to 2,189 while the DSES, the shariah compliant index, was down 0.33 per cent at 1,354. Of the securities, only 46 advanced, 28 declined and 240 did not show any price movement.

In its market analysis, International Leasing Securities Ltd said the pessimist investors continued their selling binge from the opening of the session except for the last hour of the day.

Confused about the direction of the market, amid the dragging uncertainty, shaky investors remained on the sidelines and were reluctant to make fresh investments in stocks. With high inflation eating into people's savings, deposits flow to banks in the first quarter of the current financial year declined by half, the brokerage house said. Chartered Life Insurance Company

topped the gainers' list with a 9.89 per cent increase.

Apex Foods shares rose 8.04 per cent, Advent Pharma was up 7.26 per cent while Bangladesh Monospool Paper Manufacturing and ADN Telecom both advanced more than 5 per cent.

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Orion Infusion suffered the highest correction, sliding more than 7 per cent. GPH Ispat shed 5.29 per cent while Ambee Pharmaceuticals, Fine Foods, and Sonali Paper & Board Mills lost more than 2 per cent.

Genex Infosys Limited was the most-traded stock with its shares worth Tk 24 crore transacted. Chartered Life Insurance Company, Sea Pearl Beach Resort & Spa, Orion Pharma, and Padma Islami Life Insurance also witnessed significant turnover.

The Chittagong Stock Exchange dropped for the second consecutive day.

The Caspi, the all share price index of the bourse in the port city, lost 0.93 points, or 0.0051 per cent, to close at 18,339.



Farmers harvesting aman season paddy in Gaibandha's Gobindaganj upazila. Amidst apprehensions of an upcoming global food crisis, farmers of the northern districts have so far availed bumper yields and good market prices. Harvesting of the aman paddy is going on in full swing in the northern districts right now. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ