



Workers at a farm in Darjeepara village under Tentulia upazila of Panchagarh are seen tending to the tulip bulbs being grown. With demand for the foreign flower being high in Bangladesh, farmers have increased its acreage in the current winter season.

PHOTO: QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT

# Tulip cultivation expanding as demand rises

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, *Thakurgaon*

Encouraged by their success in tulip cultivation last year, farmers across Bangladesh have sown the decorative plant in more areas of the country this winter season, especially in Tentulia upazila of Panchagarh.

After observing the high demand of foreign flower in local markets, Delwar Hossain, an agro-entrepreneur, imported about two lakh tulip bulbs from the Netherlands this season while the number was 80,000 in 2022.

Tentulia accounts for a majority of the acreage with at least one lakh bulbs having been sown in Darjeepara village alone, according to Hossain.

About two years ago, Hossain became the first to bloom tulips in Bangladesh when he sprouted the cold-weather crop in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila.

Seeing his success, the Eco Social Development Organisation (ESDO) recruited eight marginal farmers in 2022 to grow the flower on 40 decimals of land across Tentulia considering the region's conducive soil and weather conditions.

The project was financially supported by the state-run Palli Karma-Sahayak Foundation and the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

This year, a total of 20 marginal farmers are cultivating tulips on two acres of land, where they collectively sowed 86,000 bulbs on January 11 in hopes of blooming the plant within a couple of days, said Aynul Haque, project coordinator of the ESDO.

Around 16,000 bulbs were also sown in tubs so that buyers can easily keep them as decorative pieces at home or work.

Tulips of ten colours were planted this season, including the Antarctica (white), Denmark (orange), Lalibela (red), Dutch Sunrise (yellow), Strong Gold (yellow), Zantupink (pink), White Marvel (white), Mystic van Eijk (pink), Happy Generation (white-red) and Golden Ticket (yellow) varieties.

Tulip cultivation is being encouraged in Tentulia mainly to add to the region's scenic beauty and develop its economy by attracting more tourism.

With the peak of Kanchenjunga, the world's third highest mountain peak, being visible on clear days, Tentulia also boasts vast plains of greenery and archaeological sites, including Bhitargar, Imambara Mosque and Bodeswari Temple.

Three farmers of Darjeepara village -- Hosne Ara Begum, Morsheda Begum and Monowara Begum -- said they collectively cultivated 20,000 tulips on 20 decimals of land last year to get a profit of Tk 70,000 per person.

Md Jahangir Alam, upazila agriculture officer of Tentulia, said the country's weather is generally not suitable for cultivating tulips.

However, the temperature in Tentulia stays at around 20 degrees Celsius in daytime, showing promise of successful cultivation, he added.

Alam then said that acidic, sandy-

loamy soil with a pH of six-seven is ideal for growing tulips, which require a daytime temperature of within 20 degrees Celsius and night-temperature of five to 12 degree Celsius during the growth period.

Direct sunlight in the mornings and evenings is also beneficial for improving the flower's quality while partial shade, such as nets, are required during mid-day.

Limited use of chemical fertilisers along with enough organic manure is needed for preparing the soil as well, he added.

Hossain sells the tulip bulbs he brings from the Netherlands at a cost Tk 62 per piece in different districts in the country.

"The growers who became successful by cultivating tulips last year bought more bulbs this season," he added.

For example, an entrepreneur of Rajshahi's De Marche Garden who cultivated 1,000 plants last year, bought 5,000 bulbs this season.

Hossain cultivated about 70,000 bulbs in Sreepur upazila this year while it was 30,000 in 2021.

He also supplied around 5,000 bulbs to farmers in Jashore's Gadkhali, 6,000 bulbs to those in Rangamati, 500 in Bagherhat, 500 in Natore and 300 in Cumilla, among other districts.

Hossain then said the domestic

demand for tulips is growing fast.

"Higher quality flowers are currently imported but if we can continue cultivation, local currency would be saved," he added.

Hossain emphasised on government cooperation for the expansion of high-value flower cultivation, adding that if the government comes forward in this regard, it will create employment opportunities for youths all over the country.

He went on to say that as cut tulips can survive for around 30 days, the current harvest will be available in local markets from December 15 to February 15.

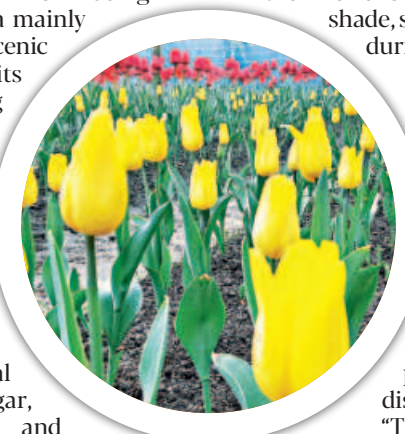
Md Shahid Uz Zaman, executive director of the ESDO, said a good number of visitors from different parts of the country have come to Tentulia to catch a glimpse of Kanchenjunga in recent years.

"So, if tulip cultivation goes as planned, it would be an additional attraction and promote the northern region's tourism sector, which will play a vital role in improving the lives of locals," he added.

Zaman then said that as winter lasts for about four months in Tentulia, the temperature is almost perfect for tulip cultivation.

Not only is the ESDO helping growers supply their produce to various flower markets, it also plans to help them cultivate other flowers during the rest of the year, he added.

Md Jahurul Islam, deputy commissioner of Panchagarh, said they have taken different initiatives to extend all-out support to small entrepreneurs for the sake of developing the district's economy and tourism.



# Smartphone sales of China lowest in 10yrs

REUTERS, *Shanghai*

China's smartphone sales fell 13 per cent year-on-year in 2022, the largest plunge for the sector in a decade as consumers spent cautiously, market research firm IDC said on Sunday.

The total number of devices shipped was 286 million, down from 329 million in 2022.

That meant total 2022 sales volume was the lowest since 2013 and the first time since then that annual sales have dropped below 300 million, IDC said in a report.

Android handset maker Vivo was the top-selling brand over the year, with a market share of 18.6 per cent. Its total shipments fell 25.1 per cent year-on-year, however.

Honor ranked as the second best-selling brand, with shipments growing more than 34 per cent, albeit from a low base.

Apple Inc was the third best-selling phone brand in 2022, tied with Oppo.

Apple's overall sales fell 4.4 per cent year-on-year, broadly outperforming the market downturn.

In Q4, despite being the top-selling brand in the three-month period, year-on-year sales for iPhones were still down, as supply chain issues caused by worker unrest at manufacturer Foxconn's plant in the city of Zhengzhou compounded worse-than expected demand, researchers wrote.

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The plunge in smartphone sales in China reflected the sector's performance globally. In 2022, global smartphone shipments hit 1.2 billion, the lowest since 2013 and a year-on-year fall of more than 11 per cent.

PHOTO: REUTERS/FILE

## 2 subsidiaries of Pran post lower profits

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Two subsidiaries of Pran Group -- AMCL Pran and Rangpur Foundry Ltd (RFL) -- saw a fall in profits during the July-December period of fiscal 2022-23 due to various pressures resulting from ongoing global economic crises.

Profits of RFL dropped 2 per cent year-on-year to Tk 2.14 crore in the first half of the current fiscal, the company said in a disclosure posted on the Dhaka Stock Exchange.

At the same time, RFL's earnings per share edged down to Tk 2.14 from Tk 2.19 during the same period the previous year.

The company owns and operates an industrial undertaking that manufactures and sells cast iron products that include tube well and irrigation pumps as well as their required spare parts.

RFL's sales in the July-December period remained almost the same at Tk 78.36 crore compared to Tk 78.81 crore during the same period of fiscal 2021-22, as per the company's financial report.



Similarly, profits of AMCL Pran fell 11 per cent year-on-year to Tk 3.09 crore in the first six months of 2022-23. As such, its earnings per share now stand at Tk 3.87 compared to Tk 4.35 previously.

However, the company's sales rose 3 per cent to Tk 154 crore in the period.

The principal activities of the Company throughout the year continued to be trading and processing of fruits, vegetables and other agro products.

Stocks of AMCL Pran dropped 1 per cent to Tk 240 while stocks of RFL fell 0.58 per cent to Tk 154 yesterday.

## Crown Cement's profit surges in Q2

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Crown Cement PLC reported a 371 per cent surge in profit in the second quarter of the ongoing financial year on the back of higher sales.

The cement manufacturer raked in Tk 14.70 crore in profit in the October-December quarter of 2022-23, up from Tk 3.12 crore reported in the identical quarter of 2021-22, according to the unaudited financial statements.

Thus, Crown Cement posted earnings per share of Tk 0.99 for October-December against Tk 0.21 in the same quarter of FY22.

The EPS climbed in the second quarter thanks to an increase in revenue, said the cement maker in a filing on the Dhaka Stock Exchange.

The profit, however, fell to Tk 9.36 crore in the first half of the ongoing financial year from Tk 11.14 crore in the same half a year earlier.

The EPS was Tk 0.63 in July-December of FY23, down from Tk 0.75 in the first half of FY22.

The profit declined in July-December owing to an unprecedented foreign exchange loss, the filing said.

The taka has lost its value by about 25 per cent against the American greenback in the past one year and nearly 14 per cent in July-December, data from the central bank showed.

With the second-quarter profit, Crown Cement returned to profit.

The company incurred a loss of Tk 5.35 crore in the July-September quarter of FY23.

Shares of Crown Cement closed at Tk 74.40 on the DSE on Thursday.

## Pakistan lifts prices of petrol, diesel

REUTERS

Pakistan's ministry of finance announced on Sunday petrol and diesel prices would rise by 35 rupees (\$0.1400) a litre after the country's currency value plummeted this week when price caps were removed.

The decision came days before an International Monetary Fund mission will visit Pakistan later this month to discuss the stalled ninth review of the country's current funding programme.

Last week, the Pakistani rupee lost close to 12 per cent of its value after the removal of price caps that were imposed by the government but which were opposed by the IMF.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said at a press conference on Sunday he hoped the announcement would dispel speculation on social media of a higher price hike or that petrol supplies would run dry.

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