

A gamechanger for shrimp farming

Genome sequence discovered for deadly white spot syndrome virus

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

Dr Aftabuzzaman, a physician by profession, started shrimp farming in Satkhira back in 1968. His farm was doing very well until a deadly infection left most shrimps of his farm dead in 1994. The infection was caused by white spot syndrome virus.

"It was then we came to know about the deadly virus infecting shrimps in farms across Cox's Bazar, Satkhira, Khulna and Bagerhat," said Aftabuzzaman, also a former state minister for fisheries and livestock and former president of Bangladesh Frozen Food Exporters' Association.

"Many left shrimp farming between 1994 and 1998 as a result," he said.

The white spot syndrome virus is still a great threat to the shrimp farmers in the country as there is no effective medicine or vaccine against it.

However, a group of researchers, from Chittagong University, Dhaka University, icddr,b and Chittagong Veterinary

and Animal Sciences University, has discovered the genome sequence of the virus and also identified a new variant of it.

The researchers said the discovery will pave the way for developing an effective vaccine.

"The virus is lethal and highly contagious, and is responsible for causing white circular spots in shrimps, eventually leaving those dead within two or three days. This causes an annual loss of around US \$60 billion to global shrimp sector," said Prof Dr Mohammad R a k n u z z a m a n , chairman of Department of Fisheries at DU.

The virus infection can wipe out the entire stock of shrimps of an enclosure within a week," he added.

Shrimp cells have a receptor called "Rab7" as an accessory protein, through which the virus enters the shrimp's body to multiply and weaken the host until the shrimp dies, said Professor Adnan Mannan of Genetic Engineering and

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Rab rescues woman, arrests 'abductors and rapist'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rab arrested four people of a family in Rajshahi city's Padma Residential Area on Thursday night over the abduction and rape of a woman.

The arrestees are Alamgir Royel, 40, of Hetomkhan area, his wife Helena Khatun, 30, sisters-in-law Dilara Begum, 35, and Momtaz Begum, 42, said a Rab press release yesterday.

The victim lost her mobile phone while she was shopping in Rajshahi Court Station area on Thursday afternoon.

Later, Royel took her to his home saying he would help her find the phone. Royel then raped her while his wife and sisters-in-law recorded the incident. They also demanded Tk 5 lakh from her. Acting on a tip-off, a Rab 5 team rescued the woman from Royel's rented house and arrested the four.

Royel was previously accused in a case filed under Children and Women Repression Prevention Act, said the press release.



Traders load Ganjia paddy onto a horse-driven cart after purchasing it from farmers at a market in Char Jorgach on the Brahmaputra riverbed. PHOTO: STAR

GANJIA RICE

From Brahmaputra shoals to cities

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

A rare paddy variety, which is cultivated in the remote shoals of Brahmaputra basin under Kurigram district, is slowly but surely making its marks in the country's rice market.

Grains from this indigenous paddy -- Ganjia -- are smooth and red in colour, and the rice cooked from it is highly nutritious. As such, health-conscious people are gradually opting to consume Ganjia rice, thereby leading to higher demand for it in city areas, including Dhaka.

Earlier, farmers used to produce this paddy variety on a subsistence basis, cultivating it for their own consumption and for people in nearby areas. Owing to the growing demand, farmers from around 100 shoals under Kurigram's Chilmari, Roumari and Rajibpur upazilas are cultivating this paddy variety.

Local rice traders buy the paddy wholesale from haats (markets) in shoal areas and send it to rice traders in the cities.

At present, Ganjia paddy is being cultivated on 500-600 hectares of land in shoal areas under the three upazilas, according to the Department of Agriculture Extension in Kurigram.

This paddy variety, cultivated in Aman season between December and February, has a low yield of around 7.8 maunds per bigha of land, compared to 14-15 maunds per bigha in case of other varieties.

"We grow this paddy on shoal land where silt accumulates after floods. It used to be a rather neglected variety. However, it does



Farmers displaying Ganjia paddy at the local haat in Char Jorgach area of Kurigram's Chilmari upazila. The variety, due to its nutritional content and unique reddish colour, has become a preference for health-conscious people around the country.

not cost much to produce Ganjia paddy, as it requires no irrigation or fertiliser. No diseases attack the paddy sapling so it does not require pesticides either," said Nuruzzaman Sheikh, a 65-year-old farmer of Char Shakhahati in Chilmari.

"We buy each maund of Ganjia paddy for Tk 1,150-1,200 from farmers at haats in shoals. It costs Tk 50-60 to transport each maund from the shoals. We sell each maund at Tk 1,300-1,350 to traders in Dhaka and other places. Usually, each maund of this variety produces around 25-26 kilogrammes of rice at a cost of Tk 55 per kilo, while other varieties produce 28-29kg," said Mokaddam Ali, a paddy trader in Chilmari's Jorgach Char.

Nahid Hasan, a teacher and columnist from Chilmari, said, "At present, almost all Ganjia paddy produced in our area are going to the cities due to higher demand."

Contacted, Biplab Kumar Mohanta, deputy director of DAE in Kurigram, said "Ganjia paddy is an indigenous variety from the shoal areas, not developed by the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute."

"For ages, farmers have been traditionally producing it only on Brahmaputra River shoals. They also maintain their own reserve of the paddy seeds. As the rice produced from this paddy is smooth, nutritious and red in colour, its demand is increasing among city dwellers," he said.

No research has been conducted by DAE on Ganjia paddy yet, he added.

Government of the Peoples Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Jail Superintendent
Joypurhat District jail
www.prison.joypurhat.gov.bd

Memo no.58.04.3800.133.008.24- 553 Date 09-02-2024

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