



Farmers wash jute fibre in a ditch at a village near Khulna recently. Cultivating jute, the once-renowned cash crop, is no longer a profitable option for farmers. Earnings from it are often lower than those from paddy or even vegetables, claim growers.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Dengue cases rise sharply outside Dhaka

Asian tiger mosquito emerging as a secondary vector in rural areas

HELEMUL ALAM

The number of dengue patients outside Dhaka has risen sharply this year, with many cases believed to be locally transmitted, a development health experts say is a serious concern.

While the *Aedes aegypti* mosquito has long been identified as the principal dengue carrier, experts suspect another species, *Aedes albopictus*, is contributing to the spread in rural and semi-urban areas as an epidemic mosquito vector.

Principal vector means the main mosquito species responsible for transmitting the dengue virus in a region, while species that normally play a minor role but can contribute to transmission, especially during severe outbreaks or under certain ecological conditions, are referred to as epidemic vectors.

When the surge becomes severe, epidemic mosquito vectors can become active alongside principal ones. While *Aedes aegypti* remains the principal dengue carrier, *Aedes albopictus* is emerging as a significant epidemic vector, particularly in rural areas.

A joint survey by the CDC, Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), and IEDCR, conducted between December 2024 and March 2025 in seven districts, found a significant presence of *Aedes albopictus* outside Dhaka.

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THE FADING FIBRE

Jute cultivation in Khulna declines sharply as prices fall, costs rise

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The Khulna district, once renowned for its thriving jute cultivation, was home to government-owned jute mills that formed the backbone of its economy.

Over the decades, however, these state-run mills shut down one after another, while privately owned mills were pushed to the brink of closure due to mounting losses.

As a result, cultivating jute, the once-renowned cash crop, is no longer a profitable option for farmers. Earnings

from it are often lower than those from paddy or even vegetables, claim growers.

This year, he planted just one bigha, mainly to produce fibre for household use and improve soil fertility.

"I can easily earn two to three times more by cultivating fish," he said. "It's also less tiresome than jute."

In his village, about 700 farmers once cultivated jute on nearly half their land. This year, only 30-35 farmers did so.

The situation is similar in Pathorighata, Hatbati, Hogol Bunia, Hetalbungia, Maimara, Surkhali, Boyerbhanga,

The target for 2025-26 has been set at just 1,257 hectares, with an expected yield of only 3,114 tonnes.

CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD

Jute cultivation costs farmers Tk 10,000-10,500 per bigha and takes about three months to harvest. After this hard work, a bigha of jute is sold at Tk 12,000-13,000, leaving farmers with little to no

profit.

Labour costs have also surged. Mrinal Bagchi, a farmer from

Khalashibunia in Batiaghata upazila, said, "Ten years ago, daily wages for agricultural workers were Tk 200-250. Now we have to spend Tk 800-900 per day."



Rising soil and water salinity, delayed flooding affecting sowing times, scarcity of high land, and heavy clay soil further hinder production. In some years, insufficient water disrupts the retting process, reducing both yield and quality.



from it are often lower than those from paddy or even vegetables, claim growers.

Subsequently, interest in farming jute -- known as the "golden fibre" -- has steadily declined, leading to a gradual but persistent fall in production across the region.

The impact of jute's decline is visible in villages across Batiaghata, Dumuria and Rupsha upazilas.

Around 15 years ago, farmer Brihespoti Boiragi of Hogol Bunia village cultivated

Debitala, Bandha, Rongpur, Soluya, Dhanibunia, Hajibunia, Bhulbaria, Noihati, Rupsha and Shihali.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), in 2021-22, jute was cultivated on about 1,493 hectares of land, producing around 17,892 tonnes. The following year, the cultivated area dropped to 1,316 hectares, with production falling to 16,020 tonnes.

profit.

Last year, production costs for each maund of jute ranged from Tk 2,200-2,700, while the selling price was Tk 2,300-3,000. This year, prices have fallen to Tk 2,100-2,200 per maund.

"Why should we take the risk of loss and the continuous burden of loans?" several jute growers asked. Many have switched to paddy, vegetables, or even

CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD

Farmers say they are giving up jute cultivation due to a lack of fair prices, a shortage of quality seeds, increased wages, high cultivation costs, water shortages, and what they describe as indifference from the agriculture department.

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Experts said addressing these issues through better water management, salinity control and improved cultivation practices is crucial to reviving the region's jute production.

"Lack of rain is a big challenge for jute farmers," said Mrinal. "Due to insufficient water, we suffer while retting the crop."

He said ten years ago he cultivated five to six bighas of jute, but in recent years, that has dropped to just four kathas.

Besides, farmers have long suffered

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DEATH ANNIVERSARY OF BANGABANDHU

Sporadic tense incidents at Dhanmondi-32

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Amid heavy deployment of law enforcers, a group of people, including BNP activists, have been in control of Dhanmondi-32 since Thursday evening, blocking those they suspected had come to pay tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on his 50th death anniversary.

The people, many of whom gathered under the banner of Chhatra-Janata (students and public), stopped pedestrians and commuters and questioned them whenever they suspected anyone.

Throughout yesterday, they assaulted several people, while others were forced to leave the area immediately. Police picked up at least two individuals to ensure their safety and later released them, witnesses and police said.

The number of visitors at the site this year was much lower than last year's August 15, which came just 10 days after the July uprising, which ousted the former prime minister and Bangabandhu's daughter Sheikh Hasina.

Around 9:45am yesterday, a woman went to lay flowers at the demolished house of Bangabandhu, but the police sent her back.

The woman, who introduced herself as an

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Sundarban market still a firetrap

Declared risky years ago, Gulistan market operates without safety measures



DIPAN NANDY

Like most other shopping malls in Dhaka -- a city of over 20 million people -- the Sundarban Square Super Market at Gulistan is a daily hub for thousands of buyers and sellers.

It's not just the people; goods worth crores of taka move in and out of its many floors every day.

Yet, like far too many establishments in this city, the market operates without an effective fire safety system -- disregarding not only the lives of those who work and shop there, but also the products that represent years of investment and sacrifice for traders.

Electrical wires dangle haphazardly, outdated meters sit dangerously in

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Several months ago, Dhaka South City Corporation cleared illegal structures from the banks of Jatrabari's 3km-long Kajla Canal. However, the encroachers have returned, building over 100 wooden bridges and shops across the waterbody. The area is once again crowded, and the canal is being polluted. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON