

A new hope in poverty alleviation

Grants, not loans : BRAC project for the ultra poor in Rangpur, Kurigram, Nilphamari also encourages govt officials, local body members, elite

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

A BRAC project for the ultra poor in Rangpur, Kurigram and Nilphamari has not only raised hopes among the beneficiaries but also encouraged government officials.

Around 5,000 ultra poor women in the districts have been benefited by the project styled "Challenging the Frontiers of Poverty Reduction : Targeting the Ultra Poor" (CFPR-TUP), launched in 2002.

The ultra poor are selected and provided with cash grants, not loans.

Along with grants, necessary support is given on seven heads like cow and goat rearing, poultry, vegetable cultivation, nursery and small-scale business. The women themselves choose their occupation.

Moreover, if any recipient fails for the first time or faces loss due to accident, BRAC gives support for the second venture.

They no longer have to work at others' houses for bread. They have become self-reliant, which has upgraded their socio-economic status.

This has encouraged government officials, local body members and civil society leaders in the areas. Whenever a BRAC-enlisted ultra poor woman in project area face any

difficulty, government officials extend their helping hand immediately.

Civil society leaders say determination of the beneficiaries, hard work of BRAC field staff and sincere support of Gram Shahayak Committees and local government members have made the ultra poor women self-reliant and solvent.

Whenever the beneficiaries face any difficulty with their livestock or crops, government veterinary doctors and field level agriculture officials are always ready to offer any kind of service they need. Their services are vital because, for example, vaccination for livestock is supplied only by the Livestock Department.

"I am quite hopeful about the CFPR-TUP project", said veterinarian Deepak Ranjan Roy.

"This is why our field staff monitor their activities regularly. Sometimes vets treat domestic animals without any diagnosis and in many cases those die. But we are very much cautious that this does not happen with the ultra poor".

To avoid such incidents, BRAC has distributed ID cards among the beneficiaries so that they can be identified and their livestock properly treated.

Livestock Officer Abdur Rahman at Gangachara upzila in Rangpur

said, "The initiative is certainly great. Therefore, our field staff are working with the ultra poor women very sincerely."

The beneficiaries also appreciate the assistance with great appreciation. "Whenever called, he (Abdur Rahman) responds immediately and cures our animals", said one woman.

Agriculture official Abdur Sabur in Gangachara upazila said his block supervisors (field level staff) take utmost care if any of the women reports any problem regarding vegetable cultivation.

Local hospitals are also sympathetic. Ultra poor women with BRAC identity cards get free health care service and medicine at all health centres in eight upazilas of Rangpur. Doctors treat them with more attention and care.

Dr M Mohaddes, Civil Surgeon of Rangpur, said the programme has already contributed to poverty alleviation.

Soru Begum of Halhalia village under Domar upazila in Nilphamari had been suffering from eye disease for long. Dr Mizanur Rahman of BRAC health centre referred her to Syedpur Rotary Eye Hospital, where Dr

Shariful Islam operated upon her eyes.

Saru Begum said, "I am very grateful to the hospital staff, because they have given back my eyesight."

Dr Shariful said, "We take extra care for ultra poor people because they can not afford to buy medi-

cines."

Local government officials said BRAC field staff are always alert that the ultra poor are never deprived of service by government agencies. The beneficiaries have also become conscious about government services.



They are enthused... After a visit to a CFPR-TUP project area, Nilphamari Municipality Chairman Dewan kamal Ahmed, Additional Police Superintendent Md. Ali Azam, some members of the elite and journalists are having an exchange of opinion with BRAC's Human Resource Director Afsan Chowdhury at its office recently.

Students vow to resist HSC examinations

Class boycott, token hunger strike, 48-hr hartal announced for Rangpur edn board

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The Sarbodolio Chhatra Oikkyo, a body of students belonging to all parties, yesterday announced that it will resist holding of the upcoming H.S.C examination if its demand for setting up of Rangpur Education Board is not met by April 10.

Addressing a rally at the Zero Point in the town, its leaders also announced an agitation programme to press the demand.

It includes class boycott at all educational institutions in Rangpur on April 24, token hunger strike on April 25, 'mass demon-

stration' on April 26 and

48-hour hartal in the town on April 27 and 28.

Students also blocked the main road at the Zero Point for some hours yesterday.

Besides leaders of the Sarbodolio Chhatra Oikkyo, the rally was also addressed by, among others, president of Rangpur Shikka Board Bastobayon Committee (committee to realise Shikka Board) advocate Gazi Rahman and president

of Rangpur Bar Council advocate Shamshuzzaman.

Hundreds of students from different educational institutions in the town attended the demonstration

and the rally.

They said the districts in the northern region of the country need a separate education board for conducting examinations more smoothly, which will contribute to development of education.

This government says they want development of the education sector. Now, they have to prove their words by setting up Rangpur education board, they said. Otherwise, tougher action programmes will follow, they said.

They called upon the students and people of all the northern districts to observe the programmes to realise the demand.

'Only JP can save nation from crisis'

Ershad tells Rangpur polls projection rally

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Jatiya Party Chairman HM Ershad called upon the people to rally round his party, saying only JP can save the country from the present "critical situation".

He was addressing a public meeting in the town on Sunday to seek vote for Abdur Rouf Manik, JP candidate for the post of Rangpur Pourasabha chairman.

Ershad said the two major parties have led the country to a volatile situation as they are doing politics for power, not for people's welfare.

Dedicated and honest men should again come in politics, he noted.

The JP chief deplored the law and order situation in the country and held the two major parties for this.

The party in power can not improve the law and order as its leaders and activists are sheltering criminals, he alleged.

The people are worried and they want an end to this, Ershad said. "Only Jatiya Party can save the people from such a situation".

He said corruption increased in the last two and a half years.

The meeting was addressed by, among others, JP Presidium Member Shafiqul Alam Prodhan and Organising Secretary Moshir Rahman Ranga MP.

Nor'wester hits 5 Noakhali upazilas

UNB, Noakhali

A nor'wester lashed five upazilas here on Sunday damaging several hundred dwelling houses and standing crops.

The affected upazilas are Sadar, Begumganj, Companiganj, Chatkhil and Senbagh.

Five people of Begumganj upazila injured in the storm, were given first aid.

Administration sources said green chili, onion and other crops on several thousand acres of land were damaged.

A good number of trees were uprooted and electricity supply was disrupted.

Traffic movement on Khulna-Laxmipur-Chittagong and Chowmuhani-Laxmipur roads was suspended as trees fell on the roads during the storm.

SNAPS

Bomb explodes on Daulatpur BL college campus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A powerful hand bomb exploded beside Daulatpur Government B L College commerce building on Saturday morning.

None was injured or no damage was done due to the explosion although it created panic among the students.

Students have demanded arrest to the culprits and adequate security measures on the campus.

Shrimp trader gunned down

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A shrimp trader named Atiqul Islam alias Atiq, 40, was gunned down by unidentified miscreants at Dema village under Bagerhat Sadar thana on Saturday.

He was murdered when he was going home after saying Esha prayer at a local mosque.

Police said to this correspondent that hired outlaws might have killed him.

However, the motive of the killing is yet to be known, the police superintendent (SP) added.

Prisoner dies at Chuadanga hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A prisoner of Chuadanga jail died at the sadar hospital here on Sunday night.

The victim was identified as Milon Mia, 35, son of Nuru Miah of Darshana Pathan Para.

He was admitted to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital with chest pain where he died.

Milon was arrested on March 29 under Section 54. There was no specific charge against him.

Family members alleged that he was killed in police torture as the body bore injury marks.

But jail sources termed it as normal death.

Police sources told this correspondent they are investigating the matter.

Brother, sister get life for keeping phensidyl

BSS, Satkhira

Brother and sister were sentenced to life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) here for possessing contraband Phensidyl on Saturday.

The convicts, Habibullah Hobi and his younger sister Nurunnessa hailed from Parshemari village in Shymanger upazila.

The Additional District and Sessions Judge Court-2 also fined them 3,000 taka each, in default, to suffer two months more RI.

The Narcotics Control Department officials led by inspector Kazi Habibur Rahman raided the sadar hospital area on August 10, 2000 and arrested the convicts.

They recovered 60 bottles of Indian Phensidyl from their possession and handed over them to Sadar thana.

SUZANAGAR MUNICIPAL POLLS

4 cops among 15 hurt in BNP clash over candidature

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

At least 15 persons including four policemen were wounded in a clash between BNP rivals on Saturday night over selection of Suzanagar municipality chairman candidate. The clash occurred in presence of local member of parliament (MP) of Pabna-2 constituency Selim Reza Habib.

Six of the injured were admitted to hospital for treatment.

Pabna Police Control Room sources told this correspondent that BNP leaders along with local MP Selim Reza Habib met at Suzanagar Government Rest House to select a single chairman candidate in place

of three candidates who were campaigning for the upcoming municipal election.

In the meeting, BNP leaders Abdul Monaem, Azam Ali Biswas and Kamal Ali Biswas expressed their willingness to participate in the polls as chairman candidates.

As the meeting failed to resolve the issue, it was decided to resolve the issue through voting and Abdul Monaem was chosen as the popular candidate. Selim Reza Habib MP, declared him to be the party candidate. But the announcement annoyed both Azam Ali Biswas and Kalam Biswas. Their supporters locked in a clash in presence of the MP and other leaders at about 9 pm

on the day. Both the groups exchanged gunshots and exploded crackers resulting in injuries to 15 persons.

Police rushed to the spot, but four policemen including Sub-Inspector Raihan Hossain were wounded.

Local MP and other BNP leaders were forced to remain confined in a room for about two hours. Policemen rescued them from confinement.

On Monday, additional police were deployed in Suzanagar municipality area as the feuding candidates announced to hold meetings protesting the selection process.



PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

A prospect shattered ...Export of vegetables from Sylhet to the UK has decreased due to shortage of space in aircraft and frequent dislocation in flights of Bangladesh Biman. On an average, about eight tonnes are now exported in a week against about 11 tonnes earlier. Exporters say there is ample scope to raise the quantity if Biman gives more space and its three Air Buses maintain regular flight schedules in their three flights a week on Sylhet-Kuwait-London route.

BSF returns body of Bangladeshi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

The Border Security Force (BSF) of India on Sunday returned the body of a Bangladeshi national, Nayoz Sangma, 35, who was shot dead by Indian forest guards in Haluaghat border on Saturday.

The body was handed over to his family.

Haluaghat police sources told this correspondent, tribal Nayoz of Gobraakura village in Haluaghat upazila entered the Indian territory to cut wood. As he lost way, the Indian forest guards fired at him resulting his spot death.

After a flag meeting between the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and BSF on Sunday, BSF returned the body.

Husband gets life for acid attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A court here on Sunday sentenced one person named Saiful Islam, 35, of Nandibari village in Muktagachha to life-term rigorous imprisonment (RI) for throwing acid on his wife.

The court fined the convict 20,000 taka, in default, to suffer two years more in jail.

Local people caught him while he was fleeing after throwing acid on his wife Arfina, 22, at her father's house at Ghogha village in the same upazila on August 30 last year.

'Media role vital to contain HIV/AIDS'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Country Representative of UNICEF Morten Giersing has said the media can play an important role to create awareness about healthcare of children and women in Bangladesh.

He was exchanging views with journalists at the Mymensingh Press Club Sunday evening.

UNICEF's Dhaka Divisional chief

Dr. Saiful Islam, its local coordinator Fahim Uddin, Press Club Secretary Mozammel Haque and Md Nazrul Islam also took part in the discussion.

Giersing said UNICEF is also working on HIV/AIDS. Journalists can also help the people in creating awareness about the deadly disease.

Later, an open discussion was held on issues related to women and children. Local journalists working with different national dailies took part in it.

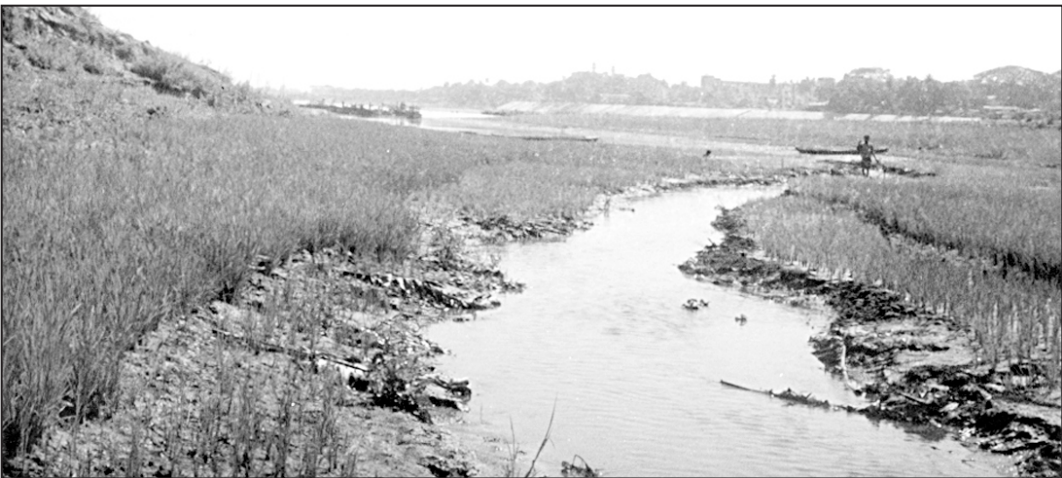


PHOTO: STAR

Resources turn problems...Old Brahmaputra is virtually dying all along its course in Mymensingh and Jamalpur. Once a lifeline for the people, the river bed is now filled with scrubs at Char Sitra union in Mymensingh Sadar upazila.