

# 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 upazilla 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 upazilla 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 upazillas 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.

Saru Begum of Halhalia village under Domar upazilla in Nilphamari had been suffering from eye disease for long. Dr Mizanur Rahman of BRAC health centre referred her to Syedpur Rotury 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 Afisan Chowdhury at its office recently.

## 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.

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.

## Split in BNP, AL over Netrakona municipal polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

The ensuing municipality election has divided both the ruling BNP and the Opposition Awami League (AL) internally over selection of chairman candidates.

Two BNP candidates are campaigning for the post of municipality chairman. They are district BNP general secretary advocate Mahfuzul Haque and another BNP leader, also an ex-commissioner of Netrakona Pourasabha Abdul Wahab Bhuyian. At present the leaders and workers of the ruling party are also divided.

Meanwhile, Tafisiruddin Ahmed was selected as the AL chairman candidate. But Nazrul Islam Khan, another prominent party leader declared himself as the chairman candidate and began election campaign. Many leaders and workers of the party back him to make Nazrul winner in the election.

## Woman dies after 'faulty' operation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sakthia

A housewife died on Saturday at an unregistered nursing home at Shyamnagar upazila headquarters allegedly due to wrong operation.

Ayesha Khatun, 50, wife of Mazed Mollah of village Nakipur in Shyamnagar upazila, underwent operation in her ovary on Friday at the nursing home. She died the next day, her husband said.

On contact, Shyamnagar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Solaiman Mondal said he closed the nursing home and asked police to take action against the doctors for the wrong operation.

## 2 babies drown in Bogra

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Two babies drowned in a pond at Chechuria village under Kalai upazila in Joypurhat district on Saturday.

The deceased were identified as Sampod, 2, and his sister Suma, 4. Both of them are children of Samsuzzoha, an assistant teacher of Udyopur Non-government Primary School at Kalai.

Police and family members said Suma and Sampod were playing on a bank of a pond beside their house. At one stage of playing they fell down the pond. Locals rescued them in an unconscious state and shifted to Bogra Mohammad Ali Hospital where attending doctors declared them dead.



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 Gobrakura 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.

## '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.

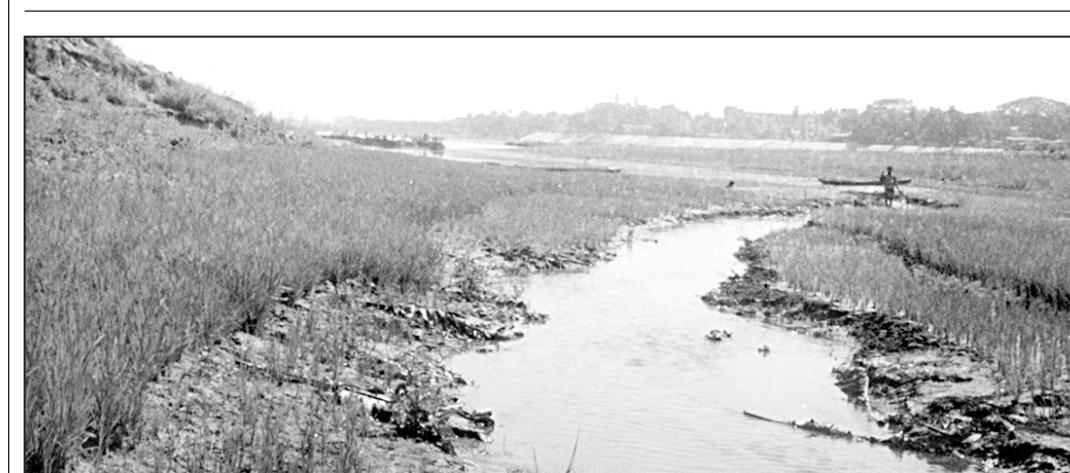


PHOTO: STAR  
Resources turn problems... Old Brahmaputra is virtually dying all along its course in Mymensingh and Jamalpur. Once a lifeline for the people, the river bed is now filled with scrubs at Char Sitra union in Mymensingh Sadar upazila.

# 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 Oikyo, a body of students belonging to all parties, yesterday announced that it will resist holding of the upcoming HSC 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

strat 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 Oikyo, the rally was also addressed by, among others, president of Rangpur Shikha Board Bastobayon Committee (committee to realise Shikha Board) advocate Gazi Rahaman 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.

## 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 Chowmohani-Laxmipur roads was suspended as trees fell on the roads during the storm.

## Prisoner dies at Chuadanga hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtha

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 Nurunessa hailed from Parshemari village in Shyamganj 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.