

Resources for ultra poor plundered

IFS programme in Kurigram launched by WFP, govt 'virtually fails' due to corruption

RAFIQUE SARKER back from Kurigram

RANGPUR: The second phase of Integrated Food Security (IFS) programme launched in nine upzilas in Kurigram district failed to serve its purpose due to alleged irregularities by a section of local LGED officials.

It was launched jointly by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the government to improve financial condition of 16,500 destitute women by providing them work so that they can be brought under mainstream development programmes, including micro credit and income generating activities.

The Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS) and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) were given the responsibility to implement the programme.

A total of Tk 5'32 core and 127 tonnes of rice were sanctioned in the current financial year for projects. RDRS sources seeking anonymity said, WFP and Bangladesh government gave a "great opportunity" for poverty alleviation through the IFS programme. But it "virtually failed" to attain the objective.

One third of the targeted destitute women could not be brought under the mainstream programmes due to misappropriation resources by a section of LGED men, who were mainly responsible

for the project, they claimed. IFS is a pilot project of WEP and the government.

As per the circular of the programme, 500 women of every targeted union living below poverty line worked in groups in 33 unions. Every group had a 'users committee'.

The first phase of the programme started in 2002. Second phase launched in March this year has just been concluded.

Under the programme, every beneficiary was supposed to get two kilograms of wheat or rice and an amount equal to the market price of two kg rice or wheat for digging every 53 CFT earth.

Many of the beneficiaries complained to this correspondent during a recent visit to the areas that they were not given their due wages. At many places beneficiaries they that LGED men even did not let them know the actual quantity of wheat or rice they were entitled.

During the last fifteen days, the women who worked at different projects in upzilas complained to the authorities concerned that their legal wages was not paid.

Many a destitute women in Roumari and Rajarhat upzila complained that two-thirds of rice and money against their wages were misappropriated by the project implementing authorities.

Irregularities were also detected in Rajjipur and Sader upzilas where the poor women complained that

they got only one third of their wages. The authorities took advantage of the illiteracy, they alleged.

Although RDRS monitoring cells were there, they were oblivious of what the government officials were doing, they alleged.

Zafar Ali, Chairman of Kattalbari union alleged that about 90 percent resource of Tk one lakh, sanctioned for earth filling at Roypur Madrasa and Dasherhat High School ground was misappropriated by the implementing authorities. Works on these projects were shown "complete" within three days, he said.

Abdul Hamid, former chairman of Belgachha union under Sader upzila alleged that implementing authorities in collaboration with chairmen of 'users committees' misappropriated two-thirds of the resources sanctioned against eight projects in the unions.

Khuki Rani, 'users committee' chairperson of Group No 10 in Ghariar Danga union under Rajarhat upzila told this correspondent that despite repeated request the authorities did not let them know the quantity of the allotment against their project.

She alleged that although there was provision to make payment to the supervisors through separate dispatch order and allotment, the authorities paid wages in the same dispatch order and allotment. Mina Rani of the same group alleged

that measurement of their work was not taken immediately after completion of the earthwork. It was taken after rain washed away the earth. Delaying the measurement was their tactics to deceive them, she alleged.

About fifty percent of the project work under second phase could not be completed in Rajarhat and Ulipur upzila, said RDRS director (Social Empowerment) Imrul Kaes.

He showed early rainfall as the main cause. Amzad Talukder, a local social worker ridiculed this. He said 50 percent work is incomplete due to an unholy alliance among the RDRS, 'users committees and LGED men.

Rajina, chairman of Kazipara 'users committee' in Daldolia union under Ulipur upzila said each woman in her group got only 60 kg of rice and Tk 1200 in place of 120 kg rice and Tk 2000.

It was alleged that there was no supervisor in any of the five unions under Ulipur upzila to take measurement of the earthwork.

When contacted, Salauddin Ahmed, Executive Engineer of Kurigram LGED, said a huge number of written complains from different upzilas were received at his office in June.

"As I am not concerned with the project, I sent those to the PD (Project Director)" he said.

Tanguar Haor saved from plunderers

Interim management by Sunamganj district admin yields 'big success', tenure extended

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet.

The Ministry of Environment & Forests (MOEF) has extended the interim management of Tanguar haor by Sunamganj district administration for another six months in view of the "big success" in protecting the fish resources.

The seen-month interim management period that began in November last year had expired on May 3 this year.

A Tk 25 lakh proposal sent to the MOEF by Sunamganj district administration for extension of the period also got approval, official sources said.

Under the interim programme, the district administration in co-operation with local authorities is guarding the 3868-acre huge waterbody through deployment of joint forces comprising BDR, police and Ansars under supervision of magistrates.

"Big quantities of fries of indigenous fishes are now available in the haor", said Mahendra Nath Shaha of Jamalganj upazila, hailing the government decision.

"The interim management yielded big success. We are determined to keep it on until a comprehensive management strategy to save the nationally important waterbody is finalised by the government," Sunamganj Deputy Commissioner Jafar Siddique told The Daily Star.

"We have got all out support from all quarters", he added.

"Preparation of a strategic plan for sustainable management of the internationally known waterbody is underway and will be finalised within months", he said.

When contacted, ruling party Whip and minister-in-charge of Sunamganj district Fazul Haque Aspia said, "We are getting tremendous results from the interim management programme".

"The government is sincere to keep



PHOTO: STAR

One of the many beautiful spots in the Tanguar Haor in Sunamganj district, snapped on Sunday.

it going. People irrespective of political opinions support implementation of the gigantic task", Aspia added.

Fishery officials said due to strict vigilance by law enforcers during the last 7 months, fries of different depleting species of indigenous fishes worth crores of taka have been saved in 46 beels in the Tanguar haor.

Fishes worth at least Tk five crore were plundered in five years prior to the programme, sources had said earlier.

The Tanguar haor was freed from encroachers in November last year following an order by the Prime Minister. The district administration took full control of the waterbody spread in Tahirpur and Jamalganj upzilas in Sunamganj district.

Law enforcers patrol the waterbody

with speedboats and four temporary camps headed by magistrates have been set up. Use of current nets has been stopped and groups having political links driven out.

But, lawmaker from the constituency and Sunamganj district BNP secretary Nozir Hossain had been opposing the idea from the very beginning.

He told The Daily Star last week that it is not possible to save the huge waterbody using police and BDR.

"From the very beginning of the interim management programme, I had been against it".

"So called environmentalists did not give correct advice. Tanguar should be brought under a long term and sustainable management plan", he added.

"Some people are misleading the policymakers", Nozir claimed while terming the interim management programme "costly and a whimsical decision".

The Tanguar haor is home to 60,000 birds of different species and 140 varieties of sweetwater fishes.

It was declared an Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) in 2000 and was taken up as a Ramsar Site. But implementation of the Ramsar Project remained uncertain due to indecision of policymakers and failure in selecting financial investors, leaving it for plunder by influential groups till it was put under the interim management programme, ordered by the MOEF following the Prime Minister's intervention.

Banshkhali carnage: Another prime accused nabbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Another prime accused in the sensational Banshkhali carnage was nabbed on Saturday.

The arrested is Akber Ali, 25.

Police arrested him from Khankhanabad area in Banshkhali upazila at around 2.30 am.

Eleven members of Tejendra Sheel's family at Shilpara village in Shadhanpur union of Banshkhali upazila were burnt alive on November 18 night last year.

With this, six of the prime accused in the bloodbath were arrested so far.

Earlier, Mahbub Rashid, Abdul Karim alias Kala Karim, Mokhtar Ahmad, Md Hasan alias "Army" Hasan and Nasiruddin Toto alias Totaiya were arrested.

Police have already completed the investigation and are likely to frame charges against 18 persons shortly, police said.

The investigating officer (IO), ASP Clarence Gomez of Satkania circle told this correspondent they await an approval from the headquarters in Dhaka. The charge-sheet will be submitted without any change unless anything new is found within the period, he added.

CUET teachers' silent procession on campus

CU CORRESPONDENT

Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET) teachers took out a silent procession on the campus on Saturday demanding fulfillment of their various demands.

The demands included withdrawal of a show-cause notice served on seven teachers and postponement of appointment of 53 new teachers.

The procession was followed by a meeting on the EME building premises with Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology Teachers' Association (CUETTA) president Engineer Md Abdul Wazed in the chair.

Speakers threatened to go for a greater agitation if their demands

are not met before June 29.

Among others, CUETTA vice president Md Ibrahim Khan and general secretary Mir Swaki Kaosar addressed there.

Earlier, the authority had served a show-cause notice against seven teachers of the university on May 16 as to why they would not be fired from the university. On June 16, CUETTA brought out a silent procession on the campus demanding appointment of a renowned engineer as the university's vice chancellor.

Protesting the show-cause notice, the teachers had begun a programme of class-boycott for an indefinite period on June 2. Then the university was declared closed on June 5 till June 19. Afterwards, the administration extended the closure till June 29.

Procession demands rapists' trial

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Demanding punishment of rapists, over 1000 people held a protest meeting and brought out a procession in Gideri union in Gaibandha Sadar Upazila on Sunday, organised by the Gaibandha Women and Child Repression Resisting Committee.

The meeting, held at Gideri Primary School grand, was addressed by college teacher Golam Sadek Lebu, the committee's Convener Abdul Aziz Sarker, Gideri Union Parishad member Anjuman Ara Begum, Emdadul Huq, Mozaher Mia, Arifa Sultana, Rawshan Ara Begum.

Mawlana Abdus Sobhan presided.

A ten-year-old daughter of a day labourer was raped allegedly by Ashraf and Hannan while she was going to her grand father's house in Gideri on June 12 evening.

Some local people caught one of the alleged rapists but he was released by mediators in exchange of money.

Shoyeb murder case: Hearing of 'naraji' petition July 14

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

A magistrate's court here on Sunday fixed July 14 for hearing of the second 'naraji' petition in Shoyeb murder case, alleging that innocent people were included in the charge sheet by dropping names of main accused.

Earlier, the court had asked the criminal investigation department (CID) to re-investigate the case by a high official after submission of the plaintiff's first 'naraji' petition.

Shoyeb Moral, 38, of Prijala village in Assassumi upazila was shot dead in a gun battle between two rival groups over possession of a disputed Waqf property at Puijala village in June 2, 2001.

Abdur Rahman had filed a case with Assassumi thana accusing 48 people.



PHOTO: STAR

The Kesargati embankment is threatened at Assassumi in Sathkira due to erosion by the Kholpetua river.

Tk 36 cr deficit in RU budget

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Rajshahi University passed a budget of Tk 98 crore with a deficit of Tk 36 crore.

The University Grant Commission (UGC) approved Tk 58.35 crore for the university, sources said.

Avoiding the Finance Committee and the Senate, the budget was passed at an 'extra ordinary meeting of the Syndicate' held at the Vice Chancellor's office recently, sources said.

RU Treasurer Prof Abdul Jabbar Khan placed the budget at the meeting, held with Vice-chancellor Prof Faisal Islam Faruki in the chair.

Of the total budget, Tk 2.85 crore will be provided from RU's own

resources.

The RU authorities formed a seven-member committee for lobbying for additional grant of Tk 10 crore by the UGC. The committee left for Dhaka to convince UGC, the sources said.

The VC however declined to term the budget a deficit one. "The former RU administration had left a Tk 20 crore deficit", he said.

Of the total, Tk 39.71 crore, will be spent for salaries and allowances of the teachers and employees and Tk 12.39 crore for students' welfare.

Tk 1.50 crore will be earned from academic sectors and Tk 4.27 crore from rent of land, buildings and from publications and others sectors.

15 Bangabandhu memorial complex staff in miseries

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

Fifteen employees of Bangabandhu Sreeti Shoudha Complex, a memorial complex at Tungipara, are not getting their salaries since December, 2002.

The government did not allocate fund following handing over of the complex to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, according to a reliable source.

Earlier, the employees urged the prime minister to take steps to mitigate their sufferings on emergency basis and sought immediate measures for proper maintenance of the complex.

Meanwhile, the employees said the Power Development Board (PDB) could disconnect power line of the complex at any time due to non-payment of electricity bill amounting to Tk 2,00,000.

SNAPS

Jailer stand-released

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

A jailer of Kishoreganj Jail was transferred and stand-released on Sunday for his involvement in an attempted sexual abuse of a woman who came to the jail to see her husband earlier.

The Inspector General (IG) of Prison, Md Jillur Rahman stand-released the jailer, Nazrul Islam, after investigation, done on Friday. He was asked to join Sherpur Jail on Monday.

Policeman killed in road accident

A CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidaha

A police habilder was killed in a road accident here on Saturday.

The victim, Taieb Uddin Ahmed, 45, was run over by a truck near Bata intersection here at about 9 at night when he was on duty, according to police sources.

However, the killer truck was seized but the driver and the helper fled away. A case was filed.

Killing of Khulna editor protested in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Journalists in Gaibandha at a protest meeting on Sunday condemned the brutal killing of Humayun Kabir Balu, President of Khulna Press Club and editor of local daily Janmabhumi and demanded punishment of the killers.

The meeting expressed grave concern at the increasing killing of journalists and terrorist activities all over the country and deplored that none of the killers have been punished.

Presided over by Gaibandha Press Club President Gobinda Lal Das, the meeting was addressed by, among others, Mosiur Rahman Khan, Abu Zafar Sabu, Mofizul Huq Tara, K M Rezaul Hoq, Abedur Rahman Shawpon, Jannatul Ferdous, Shahabul Shaheen Totaand Jubeyar Ali.

Police informer killed by extremists

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Extremists hacked too death police informer Ashik, 24, and injured another -- Sohel, 27 -- Sunday night behind Khalishpur Shishu Park.

Sohel is now being treated at Khulna Medical College Hospital.

Janajuddho faction of PBPC has claimed responsibility for the murder, branding Ashik as a 'class enemy'.

Police said, the extremists went to Ashik's house in the guise of rickshawpullers, picked up the two and took them behind the park.

Ashik's wife Meherunnesa said her husband was compelled to work as a police informer giving up his profession as a rickshaw puller. He helped police nab many 'extremists' in the last two years, she said.

Sohel was also a rickshaw driver in Dhaka. He came to Khulna early this year. "My son was also compelled by police to work as informer", said his father Rajab Ali at Housing Colony in Khalishpur.