

Resources for ultra poor eaten up

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 "legally 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 53CFT 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 Rajibpur 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 lack, sanctioned for earth filling at Ropypur 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 Gharial 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 June.

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

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 Kaus.

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 complaints 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 plunder

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 six-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, officials 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's 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 Fazlul Haque Aspi said, "We are getting tremendous results from the interim management programme".



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

PHOTO: STAR

"The government is sincere to keep it going. People irrespective of political opinions support implementation of the gigantic task", Aspi added.

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

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.

headed.

"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.

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 Jilur 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, Jhenidah

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

The victim, Taib Uddin Ahmed, 45, was run over by a truck near Bata intersection section here at about 8 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.



PHOTO: STAR

BNP First Joint Secretary General Tarek Rahman talking to Farid Mia during a visit to his poultry farm in Gaibandha on Monday.

'BNP believes in politics of production'

Tarek Rahman visits poultry farm, addresses party men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

BNP believes in politics of production and is fighting to remove poverty hunger, its First Joint Secretary General Tarek Rahman said.

The party does not believe in politics of revenge, he said and urged party men to follow the ideal.

He was addressing a party workers' meeting at Islami High School ground here on Monday.

He criticised opposition par-

ties, saying, "They are pursuing politics of violence and hartial and obstructing BNP's politics of development". They are criticising the government for the sake of criticism. This will do no good to the people, Tarek said.

"You have to work hard to change the life of the commonman. Otherwise, it will not be possible to develop the country".

He also advised BNP leaders and workers to shun intra-party feud and to make it stronger.

The BNP leader also called upon the affluent section of the

society to come forward to the help of the poor and the underprivileged.

At the meeting, Tarek Rahman pledged to extend all possible help for development of Gaibandha, including construction of a bridge on Teesta river at Sunderganj, flood control embankments and setting up of an agriculture college in the district.

Presided over by Gaibandha BNP President Hamidul Huq Chhanna, the meeting was addressed by, among others, Abdul Mottaleb Akanda MP, BNP central leader Saiful Alam Suja, Sheikh Samad Azad, Syed Belal Hossain Yousuf, Fouzia Akhter, Sahadat Hossain Sujan, Abdur Razzak Sona, Abdul Monaf Alamgir and Tawhiduzzaman Shawpon.

Earlier, Tarek Rahman visited the poultry farm of Farid Mia at Rambadra village under Sunderganj upazila. He was greatly impressed seeing Farid Mia's success and said this will inspire others in boosting the rural economy.

More protests against Khulna editor murder

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Political and socio-cultural organisations and journalists' bodies continued to protest the killing of Humayun Kabir Balu, editor of Khulna-based vernacular daily, the Janamabumi and president of Khulna Press Club on June 27.

Our Staff Correspondent from Rajshahi reports: Rajshahi Union of Journalists (RUJ) brought out a procession and held a protest meeting at Shaheb Bazaar in the city on Monday morning.

Chairman of RUJ president Mustafizur Rahman Khan Alam, the meeting was addressed, among others, by Hasan Millat, Zamirul Rahman, Arun Shil and Tabibor Rahman.

In the evening, Rajshahi Press Club (RPC) and Rajshahi Metropolitan Press Club (RMPC) held separate protest meetings. The meetings were chaired by RPC

president Anu Mostafa and RMPC president Dayem Uddin.

Rajshahi City Press Club, Udichi, Sammilito Sangskritik Jote, Mukti-juddha Sangsad and Mukti-juddha Mancha also held similar meetings.

The speakers condemned the killing and demanded exemplary punishment to the killers. Prayers were also held for salvation of the departed soul.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent reports: Journalists here condemned the brutal killing in a meeting on Sunday.

town on Monday afternoon. Former member of parliament (MP) Monsur Ahmed presided over the meeting. It was addressed, among others, by SM Shawkat Hossain, Firoz Ahmed, Kazi Kamal, Insur Ali and Abdul Mannan. Satkhira Reporters' Club also held a protest meeting at the club on Monday with Mizanur Rahman in the chair. Prof Abu Ahmed, Subhash Chowdhury, Kalyan Banerjee and Ram Krishna Chakraborty addressed Satkhira district Bhumihit Samity, Workers' Party and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) also protested the killing and demanded immediate arrest and punishment to the killers.

Our Mymensingh local units of Reporters' Unity, Journalists' Union and Sangbadik Samity brought out a joint procession in the district town on Monday. After the procession an hour long sit-in demonstration was held in front of the office of the deputy commis-

sioner (DC) at 12 noon. Later, a meeting was held which was addressed by journalist leaders advocate Monamme Haq, secretary of local Press Club, Ataul Karim, secretary of Journalists' Union, A H M Motaleb, Zillur Rahman Khan, of Sangbadik Samity, Sultan Uddin Khan, president of Reporters' Unity, Nazib Ashraf and president of Bangladesh Photo Journalists' Association.

A memorandum was also submitted to the DC.

A BSS report from Faridpur said journalists at a meeting in the town on Monday morning condemned the murder of Balu.

The speakers demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

A three-day programme was announced in the meeting which includes protest meeting, mourning procession and submission of a memorandum to the Home Ministry demanding arrest of the killers.