



Tea saplings grown by Bangladesh Tea Board in Bandarban being nursed before distribution among local landowners. PHOTO: STAR

## CHT landowners start tea plantation

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU,  
Bandarban

Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB) has started implementing an ambitious programme to encourage tea plantation under small private holdings to increase its production.

There is a tremendous prospect for raising tea gardens in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, which will increase production and export manifold, BTB officials told this correspondent.

Bangladesh is now exporting only one per cent of the total demand for tea in the world. This can be increased to at least five per cent if tea cultivation is extended in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, they said.

To start with, BTB is helping 22 landowners to raise tea gardens on a total of 22 hectares of land in Sualock and Majherpara areas in Bandarban Sadar upazila. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is providing assistance for this.

The landowners are being given a loan of T 1.26 lakh loan per hectare to encourage small tea holdings, they said.

The loan will be given in five installments. Besides, more Tk 15,000 will be given to each farmer to buy tea seedlings to be supplied from BTB nurseries.

They said they have a target to bring 3,475 hectares under tea plantation in three upazilas in Bandarban.

Bangladesh Tea Board will provide all technical support to the farmers. Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) is supervising the loan program.

BTB will also supply about two lakh 'cuttings' to the 22 farmers selected for raising the small holdings.

BTB officials said at least 46, 850 hectares of land are suitable for tea plantation in the three hill districts of Bandarban, Rangamati and Khargachhari.

In the initial stage, 6, 332 hectares in four upazilas under Khagrachari, 3475 in three upazilas in Bandarban and 1,250 hectares in three upazilas in Rangamati will be brought under tea cultivation under the supervision of BTB, they said.

Prof. Md Osman Goni, President of Bandarban Tea Estate Owners Association says, prospective tea growers will be encouraged now as the BTB will provide all assistance and financial support has been assured.

Seeing the prospect, some local investors have also taken initiative to raise tea gardens on their lands in the hills, he said. Some of them have collected cuttings and seedlings from various tea estates in Sylhet for raising gardens, he said.

AKM Jahangir, a small prospective tea cultivator says, "I think, there is a bright future for tea cultivation in the CHT hills. I have also started raising a small garden".

Despite the prospects, none took the initiative in the past because there so many hurdles. This will be easier now with assistance and technical support from BTB, he happily noted while talking to this correspondent yesterday. Some other investors have also interested to invest money in this sector, he added.

## Postal scam detected at upazila

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Gaibandha

In an internal audit, defalcation of about Tk one lakh from savings accounts has been detected at Sunderganj upazila post office.

Postmaster Sultan Ali is absconding since beginning of the audit. A case was filed with Sunderganj police station.

Postal Operator Anil Chandra is now working as post master in-charge, sources in the audit team said.

A team comprising Postal Inspector Abdul Hamid and Assistant Inspector Fazlur Rahman is now auditing accounts at the post office. The team was sent there following detection of scam in Gaibandha Head Post Office.

Team sources said they have also detected other irregularities at Sunderganj post office.

## Saidpur traders protest extortion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Traders yesterday brought out a silent procession near the railway market in Saidpur upazila town in protest against extortion and harassment allegedly by a tax official and a labour inspector.

This was followed by a street corner meeting organised by Saidpur Traders' Association.

The speakers demanded immediate measures to stop the illegal acts.

Presided over by Mostak Ahmed, the meeting was addressed by Azmal Sarkar, Abdul Hadis, SM Shamsul, Mozammel Haque and other transport leaders.

A six-hour token hunger strike was also observed on Tuesday. Shops and business establishments remained closed during the strike.

## Eviction drive resumes in Jessore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

The district administration yesterday resumed its eviction drive to free the river Bhairab from the encroachers.

Five illegal structures were demolished on the eastern side of the Dartana bridge yesterday noon.

Earlier, a number of land grabbers had applied to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) to grant them seven days' time on June 19 to remove their structures. The district administration granted them time which expired on Sunday.

The Deputy Commissioner said steps will be taken to remove all the legal complexities and the eviction drive will go ahead.

# Dinajpur BKSP may fall silent from tomorrow

All staff including trainers likely to lose jobs for lack of fund

KANKAN KARMAKER, Dinajpur

The Dinajpur chapter of Bangladesh Kriya Shikkha Protisthan (BKSP), which fulfilled a long cherished dream of sports lovers and fans in northern districts, will fall silent from tomorrow.

Thirty-five employees including coaches will no more be in service. Their services were under a development project of the youth and sports ministry, which ends today.

Their services have not been transferred under the revenue budget while construction of the sports complex is yet to be completed.

"Thirty-five employees including myself will be unemployed from tomorrow", lamented Shamima Sattar Mimun, Deputy Director of the BKSP while talking to newsmen at her office yesterday. "Today is my last day in office".

She said their services have not

been transferred under the revenue budget while the project period ends on June 30. The sports training centre was set up by the Ministry of Youth and Sports under its development head.

The training institute's fate is now uncertain as there will not be any more expenditure, development work and salaries for 35 employees, she said.

An amount of Tk 13.5 crore has so far been spent for creating

sports training facilities, officials at the institute said. Training facilities including two playgrounds, a swimming pool, hockey stadium, gymnasium, administrative building, a 100-bed hostel for trainees, staff quarter have been completed since the work began in 1997. But many facilities are yet to be built.

The complex was built under a government plan for two sports training institutes, one in Dinajpur and the other in Chittagong.

The complex here has been set up on 12.4 acres of land along the Dinajpur-Dhaka highway, six miles from the town.

In the first phase, the past government had allocated Tk 4.5 crore in 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 financial years.

In the second phase, more Tk 9 crore was allocated for infrastructure development.

The BKSP authorities appointed 35 employees including one deputy director, one chief coach, two cricket coaches, two football coaches, two athletics coach and a watchman in the last two financial years.

It started functioning early last year. Since then, at least 10 sports meets including an under-14 cricket championship and a women's football championship were held in the complex.

On November 5 last year, State Minister for Youth and Sports Md. Fazlur Rahman visited the complex and expressed satisfaction over its performance. He told local people that he would request Prime Minister Khalada Zia to



The administrative building of BKSP complex in Dinajpur may not be lively with sports lovers and fans from tomorrow any more. PHOTO: STAR

## SEARCH FOR COAL IN PIRGANJ

# Underground explosion blamed for damage of many house walls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Crack have appeared on mud walls of a large number houses in four villages in Khalashpir in Pirganj upazila, allegedly due to underground explosions made for survey of a prospective coal mine.

Talking to this correspondent, many people in Magura, Kouchapara, Charhalia, and Kadirabad villages claimed that the walls cracked due to the explosions because the earth

shook during the blasts.

Sunwin Mining Company of China, hired by Hosaf International, is surveying 12 sq km area in Khalashpir for about three months.

The affected villagers are demanding compensation.

Local Union Parishad Chairman Saiful Islam told the Daily Star that he talked to Hosaf International officials and they have agreed to pay compensation, but the offer is too small.

When contacted, Pirganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Azizul Islam said he has not yet been officially informed of the damage cause to houses in Khalashpir.

"Affected people should be compensated if this has happened there," the UNO said.

This correspondent talked to Anup Kumar, geologist of

Hosaf International at Khalashpir. He said mud walls may crack during underground

explosions.

The Geological Survey of Bangladesh, after a preliminary survey, earlier estimated that there could be a deposit of 700 million tonnes of bituminous coal under 30 to 40 feet depth in 25 square kilometre area in Khalashpir.

Hosaf International started a geological survey of the area in January 2005 under a contract with the government.

# Rupsha JCD men occupy mill,shop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The president of Khulna district unit of Jatiyobadi Chatra Dal (JCD), Shaikh Abu Hossain Babu, and his followers occupied a saw mill and a telecom shop on Tuesday at Senerbazar under Rupsha upazila in Khulna district.

According to eye witnesses, three persons including a woman severely injured when they came under attack by the JCD activists while trying to resist the illegal occupation.

The injured persons are undergoing treatment in Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH). They are Shahida Khatun, 45, Manik Dutt, 48 and Rezaul Karim, 40.

According to eye witnesses, JCD activists led by Babu stormed into 'Haji Akbar Saw Mill' and 'Arif Telecom Shop' with arms in their hands. They went on a rampage there and damaged furniture.

The JCD men allegedly looted a Tk 80,000 and some cell phone cards.

A signboard reading 'Icegati Sporting Club' was hung in front of the

occupied Saw mill by JCD president Abu Hossain Babu himself.

He also threatened owners of the saw mill and the telecom shop not to go to police or court, witnesses claimed.

Despite the threat, proprietor of the Telecom shop, Tarikul Islam, lodged an FIR at 4:30 pm yesterday with Rupsha thana, accusing eight persons. The accused include Shaikh Abu Hossain Babu and his two younger brothers Shaikh Abu Saeed and Shaikh Abu Zafar.

According to OC Abdus Salam, the accused are absconding. But the complainant told this correspondent that all the accused were seen playing cards at noon yesterday inside the saw mill and telecom shop.

Abu Hossain Babu was arrested by RAB in January this year on charge of toll collection, illegal grabbing of government land and tender snatching. But he was released after three days under the influence of ruling party men, it was alleged.

# Tk 472 cr budget for Sylhet City Corpn

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The Sylhet City Corporation (SCC) yesterday announced a Tk 472.18 Crore budget for 2005-2006 fiscal year without imposing any new tax on the city dwellers.

SCC Mayor Badar Uddin Ahmed Kamran announced the budget at a press conference, held at the SCC auditorium in presence of all the ward commissioners.

The SCC's income includes a government grant of Tk 100 crore under its Annual Development Programme (ADP), Tk 100 crore grants for flood rehabilitation projects, Tk nine crore revenue from city corporation markets, Tk 80 from govern-

ment's special development grant, Tk 100 crore as grants for slum development and other projects and Tk 30 crore from holding tax.

An amount of Tk 29.33 crore will come as revenue from other SCC sources.

The major heads of expenditure include Tk 5.7 crore for establishments, Tk 20 crore for education, Tk 4.81 crore for health and sanitation and over Tk 6.5 crore for improving water supply system.

Allocations have been kept for construction and repair of roads, bridges, drains, bus and truck terminals and development of parks.

10x3

8x3