

# Bitter blow to Tangail honey producers

## A huge quantity unsold just for lack of processing

MIRZA SHAKIL, back from Kapasia, Gazipur

Tangail: Unbelievable though, about 50 tonnes of honey are lying unsold with commercial apiculturists only in Bhuapur upazila in Tangail district.

The honey was produced since November last year in mustard fields and orchards in different areas of the upazila.

The huge quantity of honey is unsold as big buyers including pharmaceutical companies and food processing industries want processed honey, which they import.

Apiculturists can not supply processed honey as they do not have technological facility for this, said Dulal Miah, secretary of Bhuapur Upazila Apiculture Cooperative Association. A processing equipment costs around Tk 80 lakh, he said during a recent

visit to the area.

The big buyers import most of the honey from India and Australia.

A huge amount of foreign exchange is spent for honey import every year. Nurul Islam, Director of Bangladesh Institute of Apiculture (BIP) in Dhaka, when contacted could not specify the quantity of honey imported annually. "It (the imported quantity) is several hundred tonnes", he said.

"There are at least 25,000 apiculturists including over 200 commercial producers in the country. They produce at least 1,100 tonnes of good quality honey a year in the country", he said.

Honey, possibly the best food item gifted by nature for humans, is used for producing medicines and food items.

This correspondent found 109 maunds (about four tonnes) of

honey stored at Dulal's house.

He said AP, a food processing company, bought 75 maunds of honey from him last year but they are yet to strike a deal this year.

"I contacted another big pharmaceutical company (Square Pharmaceuticals), but they want processed honey".

They import processed honey from India and Australia, Dulal said.

Abul Hossen, director of Apiculture Development Organisation, said, although a huge quantity of locally produced honey remains unsold, Bangladeshi companies import it.

About 200 apiculturists produce around 250 tonnes of honey in Bhuapur, Gopalpur, Ghatail, and Madhupur upazilas in Tangail district a year.

Apiculturist Ariful Haque of Bhutia village in Gopalpur upazila

said he produced 20 tonnes of honey during the last mustard season but most of it is still unsold due to lack of buyers.

This correspondent also found stocks of honey with many other commercial apiculturists. Abdul Hye of Rasulpur village has 20 tonnes. Another five tonnes are stored at the house of Abdus Salam at Ambaria village in Madhupur upazila and Naosher Ali of the same village has six tonnes. Ashraf Ali and Faruque Miah of Agterilla village have four and three tonnes respectively.

Two and a half tonnes are stored with Babul Miah of Balarampur village and four tonnes with Jewel Miah of Betua village in Bhuapur upazila.

As a large quantity of the honey remained unsold, its production declined by around 50 per cent this year in litchi orchards in Raniganj area in Kapasia upazila in Gazipur district, they claimed.

Drought and spraying of insecticide in orchards also accounted for the fall in production as use of insecticides killed millions of honeybees.

On the other hand, apiculturists are facing problem in preserving their honey produced during mustard cultivation season, they said.

Coming from different parts of the country, at least 21 apiculturists started honey production in litchi orchards in Raniganj union in Kapasia upazila in Gazipur district in first week of March this year.

They said they produce honey during five seasons in a year: From mustard flowers from first week of December till last week of January, Guji Til (an oil seed) fields from last week of January to first week of March, litchi gardens during March, in Sundarbans during March-April and from Sada Til (oil seed) fields from second week of April to second week of June. The rest of the year is off-season for honey cultivators.



PHOTO: STAR

Apiculturist Abu Taleb collecting honey from a litchi orchard at Raniganj in Kapasia upazila in Gazipur district.

# Pipeline water keeps life sweet

## 300 families in a Gaibandha village get supply for all purposes

K M REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Unlike other areas, farmers in Fulbari village do not have any anxiety over irrigating their IRR-Boro lands or scarcity of safe water for household work during the current summer season.

Most houses have pipeline supply of arsenic-free water for use and to irrigate paddy fields.

Life in the village in Gobindagnaj upazila in Gaibandha district has changed since the Bogra Rural Development Academy implemented a pilot project under its Centre for Irrigation and Water Management (CIWM) programme three years ago.

Households in the village get safe water at a nominal charge of Tk 50 per month. They no more use hand operated tube-well for drinking water. The cost of irrigating IRR-Boro land is Tk 2,000 per acre.

The pilot project was implemented in 2003 at a cost of Tk 8.40 lakh. The programme included construction of a big overhead reservoir with a capacity to store 40,000 litres of water, a deep turbine pump and laying of underground pipeline.

Over 300 families are getting pipeline water at houses and also for irrigation, said Mahmud Hossain, Director of Bogra Academy in charge of the CIWM programme.

Though the project was initially aimed at supplying arsenic-free drinking water and irrigating lands, it now serves manifold purposes. Dried up ponds are being refilled for fish cultivation and raising ducks and seedlings at nurseries are watered regularly.

This is a bright example how poor villagers can change life with minimum cost and effort, the director said while talking to this correspondent.

Fulbari Multi-purpose Samity, a co-operative society, played the key role in implementation of the programme. The money (Tk 8.40,000) for the project was given as a long term loan from the academy which is being refunded in 10 installments in 10 years.

This year water from the project is irrigating 50 acres of IRR-Boro lands. The reservoir has a capacity to cover 100 acres, the director said.

We will be able to reach the target to cover 100 acres by next two years, Mahmud said.

Soft loans totalling Tk 7 lakh have also been given to 165 members of the Samity for setting up small businesses.

"I started a small business by borrowing Tk 5,000 from the Samity. Now I have a capital of about Tk 20,000", said Abdul Hamil, a member of the Samity.

"Earlier, my family had to remain half-fed during Monga (a pre-

harvest period when there is no work in villages in northern districts)", said Abdul Jobbar.

The academy also provided 'foundation training' on different income generating activities for poor peasants to increase their livelihood.

Meanwhile, eight rice mills, 20 poultry farms, three dairy farms and a good number of nurseries have been set up in the village.

Intestinal and other diseases in the village have been drastically reduced since implementation of the project, said Abdul Wahab, Executive Director of the Samity.

The academy got the Independence Award in 2004 for the project.



The reservoir in Fulbari village in Gobindagnaj upazila in Gaibandha (left) from where arsenic-free water is being supplied to houses and paddy fields.



PHOTO: STAR



PHOTO: STAR

Buddhist monks brought out a silent procession in Khagrachhari town yesterday protesting attack on indigenous people and alleged rape of two girls in Mohalchhari on March 3. Several clashes took place between Bangalees and indigenous people in the area last month.

## JATKA PROTECTION Fishermen yet to get aid to survive during ban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Poor and jobless fishermen are yet to receive money allotted under 'Jatka Extinction Protection Programme' of the government.

This is because of failure of the authorities concerned in preparing a list of fishermen although five out of seven months already expired.

The Department of Fisheries has banned fishing of 'Jatka' in seven months of the year from November to May, according to sources in Patuakhali District Fisheries Office. An amount of Tk 20 lakh was allocated for distribution among poor and jobless fishermen to create alternative jobs like vegetable gardening, rickshaw or van pulling, rearing of goat, duck or hen, tailoring and other jobs during the period.

An amount of Tk 4.50 lakh each was allocated for Patuakhali and Galachipa upazilas, Tk 4 lakh for Kalapara, Tk 3 lakh for Baufal, Tk 2 lakh for Dashmina and Tk one lakh each for Dumki and Mirzagaj upazila.

A taskforce committee was formed from union to district level to monitor the programme. The committee launched drives in different rivers to resist fishing of 'Jatka' during the ban period.

In February, 12 drives were launched in different rivers and 630 kg of 'Jatka' and 24,425 metre net worth about Tk 5 lakh were seized.

When asked, three fishermen, Solaiman, Kashem and Abul Hossain, expressed their ignorance about the programme. They said they did not hear about allocation of fund for them by the government.

When contacted, senior fisheries officer Bankim Chandra said, 'We could not disburse the amount due to failure of the taskforce committee in submitting the list of poor and jobless fishermen.'

## One killed in clash over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

A man was killed and 10 persons were injured in a clash over land dispute between two rival groups at Nawabgaon village in Jtna upazila yesterday.

Siddique Mia, 25, died on the spot when attacked by rivals as he, along with some others attempted to take possession of a disputed land, Ashraf Hossen, officer-in-charge of Itna police station said.

Four of the injured were taken to Itna Upazila Health Complex.

## 25 injured in Rangpur clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

At least 25 people were injured in a clash between two groups of people at Chatra village in Pirganj upazila yesterday over construction of a dam across a beel (water body).

Police arrested one person—Abdul Hamid, 40—of Khairpara village.

Police and locals said a local fish farm built a dam across the water body to retain water for fish cultivation. This kept water stagnant on nearby lands, making those uncultivable for about three years.

Yesterday's clashes erupted when some people of Khairpara and adjoining villages attempted to cut the dam.

Police rushed to the spot, 15 km off from the upazila headquarters and quelled the violence.

# Coconut shell being used to produce mosquito coil

SHEIKH MD SHAHIDUL ISLAM, back from Bhairab

BRAHMANBARIA: Coconut shell is no more useless. It is now a raw material for producing mosquito coil.

Use of coconut kernel in preparing delicious cakes is a tradition in Bangalee culture. Use of its coir for making ropes and mattresses is also not new.

Its shell is now a commercial item, thanks to the innovative idea of a small entrepreneur in Bhairab, a commercial centre on the bank of Meghna in Kishoreganj district.

To make mosquito coil, the coconut shell is powdered crushed in a crusher machine. The dust is turned into paste and then some chemical ingredients are mixed to make pulp, from which mosquito coil is produced.

The shell is crushed in a machine fitted with motor, which can be installed in a small room.

The coil produced from coconut shell is better than those produced from wood dust collected from saw mills. Coil produced from wood dust does not burn well and the cost of production is also higher. As coconut shell is oily, its coil burns well and so has a good market demand.

The factory owner who innovated the idea said he supplies the dust to coil producing companies in Dhaka. He started the business one and a half years ago.

Asked why he does not produce coil himself, he said he is earning good profit by supplying coconut shell dust alone. But he knows the process to produce coil.

For that, he will have to install a small factory in the BSCIC (Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation) industrial estate and take permission, which involves a lot of hassle.

The owner said he buys the

shell from people who collect the coconut waste from different areas of Bhairab, Brahmanbaria and Kishoreganj towns and from rural areas. At least 100 people earn their livelihood by selling shells to him, he said.

He buys the shell at Tk 50 to 60 per maund and sells the dust at Tk 300 to Tk 350 per maund to coil manufacturing companies. On an average, a man or a woman can collect at least one maund of shell a day, he said.

At times, small boatloads of coconut shell also arrive at Bhairab river port from different areas in nearby Comilla, Narsingdi and Brahmanbaria districts.

He said he has a plan to set up a coil producing factory with coconut shell in near future.



PHOTO: STAR

A procession organised by the National Oil and Gas Protection Committee in Dinajpur town yesterday protesting proposed open pit mining of coal in Phulbari.

## PHULBARI COAL

# Procession, rally protesting open pit mining

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

People, joined by political party activists and professionals yesterday brought out a big procession and held a rally in Dinajpur town protesting the proposed open pit mining of coal from Phulbari coal mine.

Several hundred people including women from Phulbari joined the programmes.

They also submitted a memorandum to the Prime Minister through the Deputy Commissioner to press the demand.

The procession, brought out from in front of Dinajpur Press Club and paraded the town streets. The processionists carried banners and chanted slogans against open pit mining, which will displace hundreds of people and damage cultivable lands and the ecology in about 135 square mile area in two upazilas.

After submitting the memorandum, the processionists held a rally

where speakers said they will go for tougher agitation if the government allow open pit mining.

The rally was presided over by Md. Mossadeque Hossain Labu, convener of Dinajpur unit of the National Oil and Gas Protecting Committee.

The Phulbari coal mine is being developed by Asia Energy, a subsidiary of London-based Carbine Mining Group.

Sources said the company has done feasibility study and test drilling in five square kilometre area in Phulbari.

It has submitted a plan to the government. The company may start coal extraction next year after completion of its study in September if the government approves the plan, the sources said.

The coal deposit in Phulbari has been estimate at about 572 million tonnes.

## UP member held with heroin

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Bangladesh Rifles personnel arrested a Union Parishad (UP) member with six grams of heroin and 25 phensidyl bottles from Kadamtala Bazar in the Sadar upazila.

The arrestee—Anwarul Islam—, hailing from Kashempur village is a member of Agardari UP. He has been handed over to police, said Anwarul is a rug peddler.

## Computer fair ends in Sylhet

A week-long computer fair ended in Sylhet town, says a press release.

Held at R N Tower in Chowhatta intersection, the fair was organised by Flora Limited. Noted educationist Prof Dr Kabir Chowdhury opened the fair.

Flora Limited managing director (MD) Mustafa Shamsul Islam was present as chief guest. Its vice president SM Moniruzzaman was also present at the inaugural session.

A training on 'Digital Photo Studio' was imparted to students and other interested visitors.