

# 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 Bhupur 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 Bhupur 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 Bhupur, Gopalpur, Ghatal, 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 Nausher 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 Bhupur 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 Sundarban 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 IRRI-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 Gobindanagar 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 IRRI-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.

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 Jobber.

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.

"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.

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