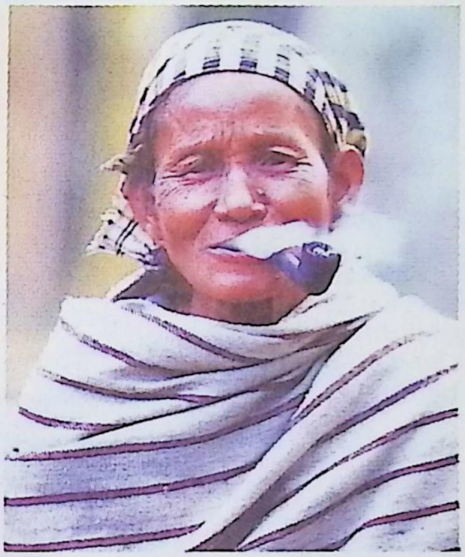
alien species in Chittagong, Cox's bazaar, the CHT and some other places." Monoculture is basically the practice of raising a single species of trees, generally of the same age, in a plantation as opposed to the large number of species of trees found in a native forest or in a mixed plantation. The irony is that monoculture plantation is a sad example of bad ecological strategy and acts as an agriculture crop, to be chopped down later for commercial purpose. Needless to say, biodiversity is being chopped to its very core.

In the concluding parts of the book, the author talks of hope for survival of the forest and of our rich bio diversity. He gives some ideas for methods of preservation, those that need not come from outside. He advocates encouraging the people to change their concept of growing forests rather than leaving them alone. Gain says, "We can plant trees, but we cannot create forests. It is important that we try to save our last forests." In the CHT, a hill left untouched results in it becoming green with myriad native species. In an abandoned jum plot, uncounted native species easily replace the old plot in a couple of years time. What can easily be done to curb the destruction of the forest is to make strict laws to close down illegal saw mills. Large institutions need to understand that simply planting trees is not enough, the tree must not be an alien species to that region as it will only result in further damage to the forest and its soil.



A Khyang woman smokes a pipe, a pastime for both the genders in the community.

It is interesting that Gain is not an ecologist nor is he a professional photographer. What he does have is a deep understanding of the forest and the will to preserve the last remaining forests in Bangladesh. These forests are rich in bio-diversity, and were once home to countless species of medicinal plants, exotic fruit trees and vegetables, herbs and creepers. In a century when the world is finally waking up to man's responsibility for global warming, "Stolen Forests" offers us sound justification as to why these forests need to be nurtured and why we need to leave our children's inheritance in the condition it was handed down to us. ■



A scene from the Dulahazra Safari Park.