

Orchards replacing shrubs in the hill districts

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

A good trend is marked in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). Orchards are replacing shrubs on hills and slopes.

This will benefit the area doubly bringing affluence to the people and stop soil erosion that damages the ecology, which brings disaster at times.

In last several years, at least 6,000 gardens of fruits, medicinal plants and timber have been raised by private individuals on hitherto barren and fellow lands.

Besides adding to the beauty of the hills, this has created sanctuaries for wildlife, particularly birds.

At least 170 types of wildlife including birds now get their safe habitat, environmentalists said.

Agriculture Extension Department officials said this has been possible due to initiative and

campaign by AED and forest department and cooperation of hill people both Bangalee and tribesmen.

The CHT peace accord signed in 1997 during Awami League government contributed greatly to it as it helped maintain peace in the hills, AED officials said.

Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board and three hill district councils also provided assistance in this regard, they said.

According to Khagrachhari AED, about 2550 personal forests, fruit orchards and medicinal gardens were established in the district in last 10 years. Their number is 2009 in Rangamati and 1789 in Bandarban, they said.

Some seven lakh people are benefited directly or indirectly from the gardens.

But one thing is still unresolved. There is no storage or processing

facility in the CHT. A good portion of the produce rot for lack of these facilities, they said.

Fruits produced in the area could earn foreign exchange if these facilities could be created.

Earlier, Jumma farmers used to clear shrubs and forests and till the lands, which cause massive soil erosion. Raising gardens and forests has stopped this.

Tusar Bashu in Betchhara in Dighinala upazila in Khagrachhari said, he has 102 varieties of fruits and medicinal trees on his 17-acre garden raised in 2004.

A National Awarded winner, Tusar said he is getting fruits from his garden, which is worth about Tk one crore now. Many others in the area are now following him, he said.

Col (rtd) Nurunnabi, said he has a vast orchard and timber forest in Manikchhari under Khagrachhari district, which is worth at least Tk 50 lakh.

Another national award winner, Humaun Kabir said he is very happy that his Sukhi Nilganj garden now draws visitors.

It is a wonderful feeling when I see birds chirping in the garden.

Deputy Director of Rangamati AED Laich Uddin said besides benefiting the owners, the gardens and orchards have stopped soil erosion in those areas.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) in Bandarban Abdul Mabud said the gardens help protect the biodiversity of the hills.

Deputy Director of Khagrachhari AED TM Monjurul Islam said it is high time to set up cold storage or fruit processing plants so that the people can benefit more.

District Council Chairman Monindra Lal Tripura said over phone that steps should be taken right now to set up storage and processing facilities to retain people's interest in raising orchards.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

2nd convocation of Sust Dec 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

The second convocation of the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) will be held on December 6.

The first convocation was held in 1998.

President Iajuddin Ahmed is likely to attend the inaugural function as chief guest. A total of 2943 former students will get certificates at the convocation.

Sust Vice Chancellor Prof M Aminul Islam at a press conference on Saturday said preparations are afoot for holding the convocation successfully.

Fourteen meritorious students will get President's Gold Medal while 52 will get Vice-Chancellor's Award. Besides, two former students will be get PHP degree, one will get AMD and 12 will get Mphil.

A budget of Tk 50 lakh has been made for the function, which will come from UGC grant and university fund, the VC said.

Dhaka-Saidpur direct train service opens

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

With the inauguration of intercity train 'Nilsagor Express' on Saturday, direct rail communication between Nilphamari district and capital Dhaka has been established, bringing good prospect of development, especially for the monsoon-affected north districts of the country.

The commander of 222 Brigade, Brig Gen Jamil Ahmed Khan, and the general manager of Western Zone of Bangladesh Railway (BR), AKM Mushfiqur Rahman, jointly inaugurated the journey of the train.

Nilphamari Deputy Commissioner Khondokar Mokhlesur Rahman, high officials of BR, Western Zone and high civil and military officials attended the ceremony, among others.

Equipped with nine modern and luxurious coaches imported from Indonesia, 'Nilsagor Express' will run on the broad gauge line between Saidpur Railway Station and Dhaka Cantonment station.

There is plan to extend the train route to bordering Chilahati station, Divisional Superintendent of Saidpur railway workshop Iftekhar Hossain said.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

BSF kills 47 on southwestern borders in 11 months

150 injured, 80 abducted

AMANUR AMAN, Kushtia

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) killed 47 Bangladeshi on southwestern (SW) borders in eleven months since January.

Over 150 others were injured by BSF during the period on Jessor, Kushtia, Meherpur, Chuadanga, Jhenidah and Sathkhira borders.

BSF also abducted at least 80 Bangladeshis during the period. At least 50 of them are in Indian jails and the rest were handed over to Bangladeshi Rifles (BDR) after flag meetings. At least 70 incidents of exchange of fire between the two border guards took place on SW borders during the period.

Last year, 74 Bangladeshis were killed and around 60 abducted by BSF in the area.

The latest incident of killing took place in Sathkhira on Saturday in which cattle trader Liton, 30, was shot dead on Kushtia border in Sathkhira upazila.

On previous Monday, cattle trader Rafiqul Islam was shot dead on Amudia border in Sathkhira Sadar upazila.

BSF said BSF men opened fire

about 500 yards inside Indian territory about 4:30am when Rafiqul and some other cattle traders were returning to Bangladesh with cattle.

On Friday and Saturday last, Indian border guards gunned down five Bangladeshi cattle traders on Benapole border in Jessor.

According to sources in BDR, police and newspaper reports, seven Bangladeshis were killed in January, one in February, five in March, three in April, four in May, six in June, three each in July and August, four each in September and October and six in last 27 days of the current month.

At least 18 of the victims were cattle traders.

Of the total, 22 were killed on Sathkhira and Benapole borders.

Incidents of killings and abduction continued though BSF at high profile meetings agreed not to fire on Bangladeshis without provocation. BDR and BSF signed several agreements to maintain peace on borders and resolve 'major disputes through discussion', BDR sources said.

"But BSF continued killing

Bangladeshis," a high official of BDR in southwestern region told this correspondent seeking anonymity.

This correspondent visited different border areas in the region recently and talked to local people.

They said BSF has created a panic on the border. Even farmers are afraid of going to their lands close to the whole nation.

"BSF picked up my son Habib when he was working on our field on October 26. He is now Indian jail," farmer Abu Bakar of Teral border in Chuadanga said.

The last daylong sector commander level meeting between the two border guards was held at Mirpur in Kushtia on July 4 where the two sides discussed issues including killing of Bangladeshi nationals by BSE smuggling of explosives, firearms and drugs from India, sheltering miscreants and other border crimes.

"Their [war criminals] arrogance is no doubt a challenge to the nation. The whole nation is united for trial of the war criminals, who killed innocent people during the Liberation War. Their offence is unpardonable," said Awami League central leader Prof Abu Sayed in his speech as chief guest at the meeting.

"We always urge them to show tolerance on issues, particularly involving innocent civilians," Lt Col NM Noor Islam, BDR Sector Commander in Kushtia told this correspondent over phone.

Reopen Saidpur-Dhaka air route to boost trade

Businesses in northern districts demand

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Business circles in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur have demanded reopening Saidpur-Dhaka air route to boost investment in the area, particularly in the Uttra Export Processing Zone in Nilphamari.

There are around Tk 1,400 crore local and foreign investment proposals in the EPZ, but the investors are shy because of lack of regular and quick communication between the industrial area and the capital and gas supply, top officials of the EPZ told this correspondent recently.

At least 30 big business houses are eager to invest in the EPZ but they are not coming forth due to the problems, they said.

The officials said the investors are interested because of lower rent and other charges in the EPZ and availability of cheap labour in the area. Investments in the EPZ could easily create at least 50,000 jobs in the monsoon prone area, they said.

They said they appealed to the authorities for resumption of the air link as soon as possible.

Similar appeal was also made by Syedpur Traders Association, sources said.

Besides investments in the EPZ,

the air route would boost businesses through Burimari, Bangladesh and Hili land ports like to Saidpur-Dhaka air route for a safe, quick and comfortable journey, said Shamsuzzaman Shamu, president of Exporters and Importers Association of Greater Rangpur and Dinajpur.

Saidpur Airport Manager Sadhon Kumar Mohonta told this correspondent that an executive of Hong Kong-based Uttra Sweater Manufacturing Company at Uttra EPZ recently told him that their foreign buyers are unwilling to come to the EPZ due to absence air shop.

Tourist spots like Kantaji temple, Dinajpur museum and Tentulia tea garden's magnificent landscape are also in the area airport.

Bangladesh Biman authorities stopped service on the route on February 19 this year on the ground of loss due to shortage of passengers.

President of Nilphamari Chamber of Commerce and Industry Sohel Parvez told this correspondent that chambers of eight northern districts in greater Rangpur and Dinajpur including Nilphamari sent letters to the ministry concerned to reopen the air route.

They also sought intervention of high-ups in the government in this regard.

Businessmen doing export-

Scrap CHT peace accord, Samo Adhiker demands

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Parbata Chattagram Samo Adhiker Andolon (PCSSAA) yesterday submitted a memorandum to the chief adviser through the Khagrachhari deputy commissioner demanding cancellation of 1997 Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace accord.

The accord was signed between the government and Parbata Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) President Santu Larma.

Santu Larma has no right to sign papers of peace accord on behalf of CHT people, the PCSSAA leaders said in the memorandum signed by Dousta Muhammad Chowdhury.

Terminating the treaty 'discriminatory, partial and unequal' for Bangla speaking people, they said it should be cancelled considering the greater interest of CHT people.

Later at a press conference at their office in Khagrachhari town, the PCSSAA leaders said indigenous Santals living in different areas in Chittagong Hill Tracts are not getting any benefit from CHT peace accord.

District Samo Adhiker Andolon leaders Mohammad Shahaz Uddin, Nuruzzaman, Joynal Abedin, Nurunnabi Chowdhury, Abul Kashem, Anwar Hossain, Abdul Momem and over 100 representatives were present at the press conference.

Trial of war criminals is nation's demand

Pabna FFs say

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The speakers at a freedom fighters' assembly in Bera upazila in the district said trial and punishment of the 1971 war criminals is now

demanded of the whole nation.

Bangladesh Mukti Joddha Sangsads Bera upazila unit command organised the assembly at Bera Public Library auditorium yesterday afternoon.

"Their [war criminals] arrogance is no doubt a challenge to the nation. The whole nation is united for trial of the war criminals, who killed innocent people during the Liberation War. Their offence is unpardonable," said Awami League central leader Prof Abu Sayed in his speech as chief guest at the meeting.

"We always urge them to show tolerance on issues, particularly involving innocent civilians," Lt Col NM Noor Islam, BDR Sector Commander in Pabna told this correspondent over phone.

According to a press release issued by Rab, Enamul Huq Enam from a shrimp enclosure at Pakighacha upazila in Khulna yesterday and recovered two light guns (LG) from his possession.

According to a press release issued by Rab, Enamul Huq was arrested when he was holding a secret meeting there with his associates for planning criminal activities.

One of his associates, Md Ibrahim Hossain, was also arrested there.

The arrestees in statements made to Rab during interrogation admitted their involvement in crimes including kidnap, murder and robbery in the area.

They are FIR-named accused in several criminal cases, the press release said.

'Ensure rights of Harijans'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Speakers at a workshop here yesterday urged the government to enact laws to ensure rights of Harijan in every sphere of social life.

Dr Moslem Uddin, Registrar of Kushtia Islamic University (KIU) was chief guest while writer and columnist Prof. Dr. Rashid Askari and Amanur Rehman Aman, Assistant Registrar of Islamic University addressed the programme as special guests.

According to findings by FAIR, at least 10,000 Harijan people live in Kushtia and half of them are deprived of civic rights.

Harijan children are the worst victims of social deprivation as they are not allowed in all educational institutions.

Jubo League leader held with arms

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Members of Rab-6 arrested Jubo League leader Enamul Huq Enam from a shrimp enclosure at Pakighacha upazila in Khulna yesterday and recovered two light guns (LG) from his possession.

According to a press release issued by Rab, Enamul Huq was arrested when he was holding a secret meeting there with his associates for planning criminal activities.

One of his associates, Md Ibrahim Hossain, was also arrested there.

The arrestees in statements made to Rab during interrogation admitted their involvement in crimes including kidnap, murder and robbery in the area.

They are FIR-named accused in several criminal cases, the press release said.

রাজধানী উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ

রাজাক ভবন, ঢাকা

বিজ্ঞপ্তি

গৃহায়ন ও গণপূর্ণ মন্ত্রণালয়ের প্রশা-৬/গজ-০১/২০০৭ তা-১১/১১/২০০৭ ইং এর জারিকৃত অফিস আদেশ ম