



Cultivation of turmeric at the hilly area of Wagga in Rangamati.

Turmeric cultivation thrives in CHT

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Indigenous Jhum farmers in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) have become more interested in turmeric cultivation as it is more profitable than other crops.

Easy method of cultivation, less monetary involvement and less risk of animal or pesticide attack are also the reasons for turmeric cultivation.

The farmers last year produced around 34,400 metric tons of turmeric worth about Tk 7 crore in Rangamati, sources at the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) said.

Currently, almost all the indigenous farmers cultivate turmeric as it is more profitable than any other crops such as paddy and banana.

The farmers said they prefer

cultivation of turmeric because pests do not attack their turmeric fields. On other hand, wild animals often invaded and destroyed paddy, banana, maize, ginger, papaya and other crops in the jhum farms whereas the animals usually spare turmeric fields.

The recent rat invasion in the paddy fields, which attributed to a severe food crisis in the CHT, has also prompted the jhum farmers to change their mindset to shift from their traditional crop cultivation to turmeric, they said.

Jhum had been the main source of livelihood for the farmers in the past. They gradually have lost their interest in jhum cultivation and many of them in the district have become solvent by cultivating turmeric.

Initially, they took turmeric

cultivation as a means of additional earning. Now most of them consider it as the main source of income, farmers told The Daily Star correspondent during a visit to their fields at some upazilas of the district.

"I earned Tk 40,000 selling 18 mounds dried and six mounds of raw turmeric last year," said Sadhana Debi Tangchangya, a farmer at Wagga in Kaptai upazila.

Sadhana said she sowed four mounds of seeds in the current season and three mounds last year.

Deba Kumar Chakma, another farmer at Bogachhari village in Bhusionchhara under Barkal upazila, said he earned Tk 50,000 last year and hopes to earn double this year.

Deba said he has sowed seven mounds this season while it was

five mounds last year.

"I brought 16 mounds of turmeric and got Tk 34,000 by selling this. I have more 20 mounds of dried turmeric. I will sell it when the price would go up," said Fuzukya Chakma at Suvalong Bazar.

DAE sources said 2633 hectares of land have been brought under turmeric cultivation this year in Rangamati whereas it was 2150 in the previous year. Total yield of turmeric was 34,400 metric tons last year and it would be higher this year. Hectare-wise production of turmeric was 16 metric tones last year and it would increase this year, they said.

All ten upazilas in Rangamati and most upazilas of Bandarban and Khagrachhari are also cultivating turmeric in small and large scale, DAE sources said.

They said various types of turmeric including Sinduri, Dimla and Pabna are being cultivated. Of these, Sinduri is of the best quality.

Farmers said a mound of dried turmeric is being sold at Tk 1500 to Tk 1800 while it was Tk 1200 to Tk 1500 last year. Per mound of raw turmeric is being sold at Tk 300 to Tk 400.

Chairman of Rangamati Hill District Council Jagat Jyoti Chakma told The Daily Star that they would provide turmeric and ginger seeds to the hilly farmers.

Ramoni Kanti Chakma, DAE horticulturist, said the farmers can grow more crops if they get proper technical support. Ramoni said they cannot do this due to inaccessibility and farmers seldom come to their office for necessary suggestions.

Hanging bridge on Toimathoi Chhara opens up opportunities

SHAHIDUL ISLAM, back from Matiranga

"Shashwata Bangla", a hanging bridge, on the Toimathoi Chhara at Parshuramghat in Matiranga upazila under Khagrachhari hill district is not just a bridge to help people cross to and from the remote locality. Rather, it is more than that because of its far-reaching impact on the tiny area, alienated from modern civilisation for many decades.

The area is located about five to six kilometres off Matiranga upazila headquarters and the serpentine and zigzag road is all earthen with numerous pimples and dimples. The area is divided into 20 small paras (villages).

The bridge not only linked an isolated locality with other parts of the world but it also ushers in hope and aspiration for the poor, marginalised tribal people who are accustomed to lead a down-under livelihood from generation after generation.

People like Kanchan Tripura, Ajit Tripura, Lalit Bikash Tripura and Greeha Rani Tripura of the Parshuramghat were once so despondent that they couldn't dare to anything but jhum culti-

vation and lead lives completely devoid of any dream or hope both for themselves and their next generations. Basic needs such as primary education, healthcare, safe motherhood and sanitation, and trade or business were matters of utopia to them until recently in absence of a bridge on the Toimathoi Chhara canal that separated the poor tribes and the small locality from everything.

Nature mother had everything to offer in abundance to the area -- terrain of hills, beautiful fountains, dense forest, fertile land and lush green. But despite nature's so much favour, Parshuramghat and its people failed to come out of the clutches of poverty as the Toimathoi Chhara stands as a 'Himalayan' barrier in-between "Parshuramghat" and "Economic progress and emancipation."

With Ringkhum Chhara on its north, Toimathoi Chhara on east, Boro Pilak river on south and Feni river on the west, Parshuramghat usually destined to live in wretched condition for a period of three to four months during monsoon every year

when the entire locality remains detached from other parts like a water-locked island. The heavy onrush of hilly water comes down on Toimathoi Chhara to make its current so ferocious that the people dare not to cross it (Toimathoi) with boat or other means risking their lives.

During monsoon, the people remain marooned and faced untold sufferings including hunger as they couldn't go to upazila headquarters to sell their harvest and seasoned fruits. Besides, their children couldn't go to school, the nearest one is about five kilometres away the locality. Many of them die without getting treatment due to the inaccessible communication to health complex for lack of a bridge.

Finally, the immense trials and tribulations the Parshuramghat people go through every year drew attention of the 26 Field Regiment of Matiranga Zone of Bangladesh Army and they decided to build a bridge, badly needed by the people for long, there. With direct supervision of Lt Col Abdullah Al Yousuf, Matiranga zone commander, construction of the

bridge started in late August. A Parshuramghat Bridge Implementation Committee was formed headed by Major Mahmud and a contingent of 40 young army jawans successfully completed the dream bridge after two months of hard labour.

"The most remarkable aspect of the 191-feet-long and 4-feet-wide bridge is its easy construction method and design. But because of inaccessibility of the area, mobilisation of resources for the bridge takes most of the construction time instead of actual work," said Lt Col Yousuf to The Daily Star adding that the total cost was only Tk 5 lakh but it could be at least Tk 15 lakh if it was done in conventional way.

About naming "Shashwata Bangla" of the bridge, the zone commander said, "The name is symbolic reflecting the harmony between the tribal and Bengali people and we believe this harmony is the real essence of our history, culture and tradition."

The smiles of Kanchan, Ajit, Lalit, Greeha Rani and other tribes of the area reflect how happy they are now when this correspondent talked to them during formal inauguration of



the bridge on October 22.

"The bridge has opened up an opportunity for elevating our livelihood and socio-economic condition," Kanchan, father of two sons and a daughter, said.



Indigenous people cross over the hanging bridge constructed by the Bangladesh Army (Matiranga zone) on the Toimathoi Chhara canal at Matiranga under Khagrachhari.

He said, "I think I would now be able to do other businesses along side jhum farming and earn additional money."

Ajit, Lalit and others echoed similar and thanked the army for

building the bridge.

Guimara Region Commander Brigadier General Md Latiful Haider inaugurated the bridge as the chief guest at a ceremony chaired by Lt Col Yousuf held

near the bridge. Khagrachhari Hill District Council Chairman Monindra Lal Tripura and Matiranga Upazila Nirbahi Officer Afzalur Rahman were guests among others.

theweekthatwas



Participants are seen at an event at the divisional sports competition of persons with disability at the MA Aziz Stadium here on Thursday.

Nur Muhammad, vice presidents: Mohammad Ozair and Khursadur Rahman, Secretary: Mohammad Rashed, Joint Secretary: Syed Manjur Quader, Treasurer: Yusuf Mansur, Joint Treasurer: Mohammad Haroon, Director (club administration): Alihussain Akberali, Director (club membership): Abdul Gaffar, Director (public relations): Ahmed Zibran, Director (service project): Sazzad Mohammad Chowdhury, Director (Rotary Foundation): Habib Mohiuddin, Sergeant-at-arms: Abdul Hamid, Joint Sergeant-at-arms: Mohammad Sohail, Bulletin Editor: Sheikh Abdus Salam and Joint Bulletin Editor: Mohammad Ekram Ullah Chowdhury.

Cultural competition concludes

Nazrul Memorial Cultural Competition concluded in the port city on Friday. Classical Photo Gallery organised the competition at city's Nasirabad Government Boys High School.

Social Worker and MEB Group Managing Director Shamsul Alam inaugurated the competition as the chief guest. Photographer Abdul Awal chaired the inaugural ceremony.

Woman Councillor Saheda-Kashem, Chittagong Divisional Sports Organisation Joint Secretary Mohammad Aminul Islam, Fashion Designer Rawshan Ara Chowdhury and the Competition Committee Adviser Abdur Rahim were present among others.

Over 600 students from 110 educational institutions took part in the

competitions of song, dance and recitation.

Workshop on HIV/AIDS held

Speakers at a workshop said the fatal disease HIV/AIDS appeared as an epidemic form in the world and Bangladesh is not also out of its risk.

They called upon all to wage a social movement for protecting the disease.

They were addressing the workshop on "HIV/AIDS" organised by Narcotic Control Department at Chittagong Circuit House on Saturday.

Home Secretary Mohammad Abdul Karim was the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony of the workshop while Chittagong Divisional Commissioner

Hossain Jamil, Additional District Magistrate ABM Azad and Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) Commissioner Mohammad Maniruzzaman spoke among others.

Child Rights Week observed

Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA), a non-government organisation, observed Child Rights Week on the Shishu Academy premises in Bandarban on Thursday.

On the occasion, a colourful procession with the participation of indigenous children was brought out and a discussion was held.

Speakers at the discussion said the environmental issue is now the prior factor for welfare of the children.

They said there is no alternative to creating mass awareness on conservation of environment and taking integrated action for an end to vulnerability towards mankind and children as well.

Freedom Fighter UK Ching inaugurated the programme while the district Civil Surgeon Syed Abdul Salam, Assistant Commissioner (Land) Sabbir Ahmed, Save the Children Sweden-Denmark Programme Officer Siddiqui Rahman, BTV local representative Monirul Islam Monu, BITA Project Coordinator Swagata Dhar and Programme Officer Lablu Marma spoke it.

Later, rural children performed at a cultural programme. The children from the BITA also staged a child drama and puppet show in Tangchayanga and Marma languages.

Rupali Bank managers' conference held

A conference for the managers of all branches of Rupali Bank Limited in greater Chittagong was held at Chittagong Chamber House auditorium on Saturday.

General Manager of the bank Mohammad Anamul Islam Khan was the chief guest at the conference

chaired by Chittagong Eastern Region Deputy General Manager Gazi Mohammad Amir Hossain.

Anamul in his speech underscored the need for increasing the quality of customer care and achieving the annual target through new investments.

He also put up his directives regarding increase of business in this region. Chittagong Western Region DGM Mohammad Peyar Ahmed Bhuiyan and officials of different branches addressed the conference.

Later, the chief guest handed over

crests to the best managers of the east and west regions for the year 2005.

Chittagong Mid City Rotary Club executives

Rotary Club of Chittagong Mid City celebrated its charter presentation and 5th installation ceremony at Chittagong Club auditorium on Thursday.

Rotarian AKM Samsuddin was the

chief guest at the ceremony presided over by Club President Dr Abdus Salam.

Rotarian Abdul Ahad, Aminuzzaman Bhuiyan, ABM Wadud Ullah, Charter President Syed Faiz Ur Rehman, Past President Habib Mohiuddin, Immediate Past President Alihussain Akberali, different Rotary District and Zonal leaders, eminent businessmen and professionals participated in the ceremony.

Later, Dr Salam announced the name of the office-bearers for the year 2008-2009.

The office bearers are: President:



Commerce Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman addresses the inaugural ceremony of silver jubilee celebration of Chittagong Eye Infirmary and Training Complex at Pahartali on Saturday.