

Sericulture project in CHT bears all signs of neglect

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, Rangamati

Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Sericulture Project saw no remarkable progress in last five years although a huge amount of government fund has been spent for the purpose.

Funded by ministries of textile and jute and CHT affairs, Bangladesh Sericulture Board (BSB) is implementing the Tk 5 crore project for sericulture extension in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari hill districts.

tricts.

But manpower shortage, lack of monitoring by project officials and mismanagement are the major obstacles on the way to success of the project, local sources said.

The three-year project was launched in 2005-2006 financial year and later extended for two more years.

A total of Tk 3 crore has already been spent and Tk 2 crore more has been allocated for extension of the project, official sources said.

Under the project, a regional office staffed with

only five persons was set up in Rangamati. Three centres, one in each hill district, and 12 sub-centres, four in each district, and a 'reeling centre' in Lama of Bandarban were set up, BSB sources said.

With a manager at each centre and only a demonstrator at each sub-centre, there has not been any significant progress of the project.

Some two lakh mulberry saplings were distributed among 1,000 farmers in three districts. Silkworms that make silk eat the leaves of mulberry trees.

Only 3,500 kilograms of cocoons worth Tk 5 lakh were produced through rearing 16,000 silkworms while 77 kg of silk yarn is the only outcome of the project during the last three years. A kg of silk yarn is now selling at Tk 1,500 in the local market.

During a recent visit to different project sites at Hajaribagh, Balukhali, Udandi Adam, Vedvedi, Rangapani and Deppoyachhari, this correspondent found only a few mulberry trees at a site.

Farmers have cut down their mulberry trees while

there is hardly any supervision by project officials.

Growers said as per conditions they were to get of giving cash money for planting mulberry saplings, 5 kg of fertiliser and five or six days training to them but project officials have cheated them.

Even most of the growers did not get the price of cocoons they got from their garden, they alleged.

"I got five kg cocoons by rearing silkworms in my mulberry garden. But the project officials did not pay me the price. So I have lost interest in the work," said Minu Chakma, a grower at Udandi Adam of Vedvedi.

Bimoleni Chakma, another farmer, said she got 1,300 pieces of cocoons from her mulberry garden but the officials gave her only Tk 300 as price.

"Project officials gave 200 mulberry saplings to each family. But they did not provide any financial support. They gave us one day training and took signatures on blank papers," said Mili Chakma, a grower at Rangapani.

About 20,000 saplings were given to 75 households at Deppoyachhari village in 2008. But not a single farmer is rearing silkworm now as the officials gave them nothing except saplings and did not even visit the area later, locals said.

"Officials encouraged us to grow silk yarn by planting mulberry saplings. I worked hard but the officials did not provide me any financial support," said Somiran Chakma at Deppoyachhari.

Bhala Ram Chakma, Subal Moni Chakma, Sadhan Chakma and Shanti Chakma also echoed the same.

BSB Chairman Sunil Kanti Das said, "It will take time for production of cocoon and silk yarn as mulberry tree takes at least three years for sprout of leaves. I will see if there has been any irregularity by the staff."

Kanchan Baran Das, project director of sericulture extension project, said more manpower is needed for the purpose and the task would be easier if the project was implemented through an NGO.

IN QUEST OF FOOD, SHELTER



A rare species of monkey, earlier staying at a jungle in Keshabpur upazila of Jessore district, now moves around near human habitations in Shaikupa upazila of the same district as the depleting jungle can no longer provide it with food and suitable living condition.



Plantations of mulberry trees under Chittagong Hill Tracts Sericulture Project remain neglected due to authorities' failure to provide growers with necessary support as per agreement. Inset, only a few trees in a mulberry plantation in Rangamati district have survived as growers, facing losses in the venture, are cutting down the trees.

Farmers cry for power, agitate in 2 districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Farmers staged demonstrations in Chapainawabganj and Faridpur yesterday and the day before demanding smooth supply of electricity to keep irrigation pumps operational.

In Chapainawabganj, several hundred farmers of Sadar upazila took a procession at the district headquarters at around 10:00am and paraded the main streets of the town, reports our correspondent.

The agitating farmers later submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner demanding at least 18 hours power supply per day for irrigating Irri-boro fields in Barind region.

They said Irri-boro fields have dried up due to lack of water as they cannot operate power pumps and shallow tube-wells to irrigate the croplands for frequent power outage.

The farmers alleged they are getting elec-

tricity only for 3 to 4 hours during daytime while for 6 to 7 hours at night. "Our Irri-boro plants will die if the situation continues," the farmers said, demanding immediate steps to save their crops.

Deputy Commissioner KM Ali Azam assured the farmers of taking necessary measures to resolve the nagging power crisis.

In Faridpur, about 200 farmers kept the local power office in Sadarpur upazila under siege for two hours on Tuesday, according to our correspondent.

The agitated farmers locked the main gate of the power office and staged a sit-in on the office premises demanding smooth supply of electricity to the power pumps to keep them operational for at least 16 to 18 hours a day.

On information, Sadarpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Oliur Rahaman rushed to the spot and pacified the agitators.



A large number of farmers of Barind area bring out a procession in Chapainawabganj town yesterday demanding smooth power supply for irrigation in Irri-boro fields.

Rest two KHDC councillors quit in face of agitation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Khagrachhari Hill District Council (KHDC) has finally become 'BNP-Jamaat free' as the rest two councillors resigned yesterday in the face of local ruling party men's agitation against three councillors and chairman of the council.

The two councillors who stepped down yesterday are Animesh Dewan Nandith and Sanu Mong Marma.

They handed over the resignation to Tarun Kanti Ghosh, chief executive officer of the council, around 5:30 pm. They also showed personal problems as reasons for resigning from their posts.

Earlier on March 26, the leaders and workers of eight local bodies of Awami League (AL) vowed to make the district council "BNP-Jamaat free" and continue agitation until the chairman and the three councillors are

removed from the hill council.

Khagrachhari Hill District Council chairman Ruhity Karbari resigned on Monday showing poor health and personal problems while councillor Abu Bakar Siddique stepped down the next day.

Local AL leaders said Karbari and the councillors belonged to BNP-Jamaat alliance and so they did not cooperate with the government.

Sources said Karbari is the vice president of Mohalchhari upazila unit BNP, councillor Animesh Dewan Nandith is the vice president of Sadar upazila BNP, councillor Sanu Mong Marma the organising secretary of district Jubo Dal while Abu Bakar Siddique is a member of district unit Jamaat.

BCL District President Mong Shu Prue Chowdhury Apu yesterday said they won the battle against BNP-Jamaat men. Now they want to see the council being run jointly by old and young leaders within a short time.

Schoolboy abducted in Chuadanga freed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Schoolboy Faruq Ahmed, abducted by a gang of criminal from Belgachi village under Almadanga upazila of Chuadanga district on Monday, was released Tuesday evening.

Family sources said Faruq returned home Tuesday evening as his abductors released him.

They quoted Faruq as saying that the abductors took him to a bridge at Natna under Kushtia sadar upazila at around 7:00pm and set him free. The location is only two kilometers from Faruq's house.

Faruq reached a nearby village at around 8:30pm and narrated the story of his abduction to the villagers who immediately took him to his house.

He told police that a gang of seven picked him up at gunpoint from their village while he was returning home after playing football with his friends at a field at the village at around 7:00pm.

"They took me blindfolded to an unknown place in a microbus and kept me in a dark room," Faruq said.

Immediately after kidnapping Faruq, a class ten student of Belgachi High School, one of the gang members phoned his father Hossain Ali Babu demanding Tk 10 lakh ransom for his release. Two hours later, the gang member again phoned Hossain Ali and asked him to pay Tk 5 lakh for his son's release.

Different sources said Faruq's family bought his freedom on payment of Tk 1.75 lakh. When contacted, Hossain Ali Babu declined to say anything on the issue.

Grabbing of temple lands in 2 dists sparks protests

STAR NATIONAL DESK

People of Hindu community held separate programmes in Jessore and Madaripur town yesterday demanding recovery of temple lands from illegal occupiers and punishment to the criminals who injured devotees.

Hundreds of people joined a human chain at Daratana intersection in Jessore town yesterday in protest against grabbers' attack on devotees at a Kali Mandir at Khathaltola village under Moshimnagar union in Monirampur upazila of Jessore, reports a correspondent.

After the programme under the banner of Khathaltola Sarbojanin Kali Mondir Committee at noon, they submitted a memorandum to the land minister through deputy commissioner.

"Area of two-hundred-year-old Kali Mandir at Khathaltola village was 33 decimal which was mentioned in the land records of 1927 and 1962. But in 1979 one Akkel Ali in cooperation with some dishonest government employees leased the temple land," Khathaltola Sarbojanin Kali Mondir Committee Secretary Nimai Chandra Kundu said at the human chain programme.

"Since then, worship at the Kali Mondir has been done on a three decimal land. On March 10, some local goons led by Akkel Ali, Hazrat Ali

and Rajab Ali tried to make a room on that land. As the Hindu devotees protested, the criminals attacked them, injuring eight people. They also demolished the altar," he said.

Devotees demanded exemplary punishment to the attackers and return of the mandir land.

A correspondent reports from Madaripur: The committee to recover the endowed property of Sarbojanin Kalimata Mandir at Madaripur Pura Bazar has announced a four-day programme to press for their demand to recover the endowed property of the temple from illegal occupiers.

The programme, announced at a press conference at Radhagobinda Mandir at the town yesterday afternoon, include mass communication today, staging a sit-in in front of Shipping Minister Shahjahan Khan's house at the town, demonstration on Saturday and sit-in in front of the deputy commissioner's office on Sunday.

Following a February 18 High Court order to recover the property from illegal occupation, Madaripur district administration on March 16 issued a seven-day notice to the grabbers to remove their illegal structures.

But the grabbers managed a show cause notice on the deputy commissioner from a lower court.

Businessman murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Kotwali police recovered the body of a businessman from the bathroom of his rented house in the city's Mendibag area Tuesday night.

Victim Intiaz Hossain Montu, owner of Maysa Transport, hailed from Mirpur in capital Dhaka.

Police arrested three suspects-his second wife Lipi Akhtar, her relative Moziron Begum and employee Roman Ahmed.

Police produced them before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court yesterday with a prayer for five days remand, officer-in-charge of Kotwali police station said.

Intiaz had been living along with his wife at the rented house for the last one year, police said. His first wife with two sons stay at Mirpur in the capital.

Police said, Intiaz returned home after midnight on Monday with two other people. However, the two left the place after some time.

Police said the wife of the deceased and two others others are being quizzed to find the clue to the murder.

The body, found in a sack, bore marks of injuries on different parts, they said.

PM to open pvt power plant

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina is scheduled to formally inaugurate a private power plant at Fenchuganj in Sylhet at 11:00 am on April 3.

It will be her first visit to Sylhet since take over of power by the grand alliance.

Private plant Barakatullah Electro Dynamics has been supplying 50 MW electricity to the PDB's national grid since October last year. It was set up on a plot attached to the 90 MW Combined Cycle Power Plant of PDB by the Kushiya in Fenchuganj upazila.



Hundreds of people of Hindu community form a human chain in Jessore town yesterday demanding recovery of temple land from grabbers and punishment to the criminals who injured eight devotees and damaged altar of the temple.

ভোলা উকিলপাড়ায় নিজাম-হাসিনা ফাউন্ডেশন হাসপাতালের উদ্বোধন



১ এপ্রিল বৃহস্পতিবার ভোলা উকিলপাড়ায় নিজাম-হাসিনা ফাউন্ডেশন হাসপাতালের উদ্বোধন। উদ্বোধন করবেন বিচারপতি ফরিদ আহমেদ। এ হাসপাতালে গরীব, অর্থের অভাবে যারা চিকিৎসা করতে পারে না, তাদের বিনামূল্যে চিকিৎসা সাধারণ রোগের চিকিৎসা ও রোগ নির্ণয়ের প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা করা হবে।