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Doormats produced by poor women in Lalmonirhat are exported to Germany

Welcoming development

S DILIP ROY, Khagrachhari

Five villages in Lalmonirhat district bringing valuable foreign currency by producing doormat and exporting to Germany. The Doormat production is bringing new job opportunities to the locals for the poor families. The five villages are near Bangladesh-India border hit by monga (seasonal food shortage).

CARE Bangladesh trained the locals under Setu Project in the district 18 months ago. Before the project began, the villagers were in extreme poverty. Now, the families are doing better facing monga.

Many feel that many more factories should be built in the area, thus providing more job opportunities for the poor locals.

Kolpona Begum, 42, wife of Abdul Matin at Balapukur village of Aditmari Upazila said, "I received training from Setu Project of CARE Bangladesh, Lalmonirhat district unit on producing doormat 18 months ago, and I started working in the factory at Balapukur Classical Handmade Products BD. I am earning Tk. 3,500 to Tk. 4,200 every month producing doormats in the factory. My earning supports my poor family of two children studying.

Sondhya Rani, 35, wife of Nirmol Chdnro Roy at Vatapara village of Aditmari upazila, a worker of the factory said that each woman can produce 10 to 14 doormats working from 8:00 am to 5:00pm every day. They get Tk. 14 to produce one piece of doormat. She said, "I can produce at least 10 doormats every day. I save some money and the rest is used for my children's study expenditure. She added that her six member family was facing starvation before she started working at the factory.

Honufa Begum, 42, a worker of the factory said that they produce doormats that are exported to Germany. Unfortunately, their wage is limited and is topped in a margin. She feels that their

wage should increase according to the profit gained by the exporting companies. "We should get Tk. 20 to Tk. 25 for producing one piece of doormat. She admitted that the company gave them new opportunities. She also feels that Government should step up and build more factories.

Mobarok Hossain, 45, a local at Balapukur village said, company spends Tk. 120 to Tk. 130 for producing each piece of doormat, and is sold at around Tk. 500 to Tk.600 on the foreign market. He feels that the wage is not proportionate to the sales.

Obiron Nesa, 52, wife of late Abdul Hamid at Vatapar village said that she was a jobless woman two years ago. She said, "I have not only lifted myself and my family out of extreme poverty but now I lead 25 other poor women in the village working in the doormat factory which is a perfect model for eradicating poverty not only at Balapukur village but also in the district," she said. She added that before the project, poor villagers could only afford one meal a day.

She also added with grief, "We had no respect in the society. We could not send our children to schools. Now, all who are working in the factory have built our own houses, eat well and our children go to schools," said doormat producer Morzina Begum, 40, at Balapukurvillage.

Shefali Rani, a worker of the factory said that doormat factory gives her means to overcome poverty. Her earned money is used to spend for studies two brilliant children of hers in the local school.

The Supervisor of the doormat factory, Akter Hossain said, "now, they are not poor, they are not neglected anymore - they are now producing producing world class products in the village. A worker earns a minimum Tk 3,500 to Tk 4,200 a month, but there are many who earn more than that.

Bina Rani Saha, an official of the Setu project of CARE Bangladesh said that the earned money is used for savings, insurance, medical expenses, employment, education, homestead repairs and repaying debts: ultimately it helps them to exit the cycle of poverty. "Their products are acclaimed all over the world. The whole process can be more streamlined," she said.

Langurs facing extinction

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

The Bengal langurs locally known as Hanuman, is under the threat of extinction. In Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) forest, illegal deforestation is driving this species to extinction.

It is widely known that a section of forest officials and staffs directly help loggers and timber traders to illegally cut down forests thus destroying their habitat.

Hanuman is also known as gray langur and leaf monkey. According to the officials of Khagrachhari Divisional Forest Office (DFO) species authority identified it in 1797. Hanuman can be found at Gobamara under Manikchhari Upazila, Swarnatilla under Matiranga, Patachhara under Ramgorh Upazila in Khagrachhari district and Bagaihat reserve forest under Bagaichhari Upazila in Rangamati district.

Sindukchhari Upazilla Parishad Chairman Suinu Prue Chowdhury said that they used to see large numbers of langurs in the forest even 20 ago but wild hanuman is now endangered due to deforestation and clearing bushy places for orchards. There are also a section of tribal people who netted Hanuman as food.

Gyanendu Bikash Chakma, an indigenous leader at Bagaihat under Bagaichhari Upazila in Rangamati district said that forest land is squeezed by land grabbers.

Divisional Forest officer (DFO) Md Jahurul Alam said Hanuman's scientific name is Semnopithecus Entellus. These langurs are largely gray in color while some are yellowish with a black face and ears. The Bengal Hanuman is able to live in tropical, sub-tropical and mangrove forest. The species can also survive in artificial, terrestrial plantations and even in rural gardens. Regarding diet habit, DFO Jahurul Alam said that Hanuman mainly take fruits, fruit buds, shoots, roots, seeds, grasses, leaves of trees, herbs and grasses in the forest.

A female Hanuman usually gives birth to a single infant, although twins do occur. Most birth occurs at night. Infants spend their first week attaching themselves to their mothers' chest and mostly just suckle or sleep. Around one and half month old infants vocalize more and in the following months, the infants are capable of quadrupedal locomotion and can walk, run and jump.

Denying forest officials involvement with vanishing forest that reducing wild animals, Jahurul said the wild hanuman is threatened due to residential & commercial development, hunting & trapping terrestrial animals, fire & fire suppression in CHT for jhum cultivation, raising agriculture & aquaculture, establishing housing & urban areas inside the forest areas, he added.

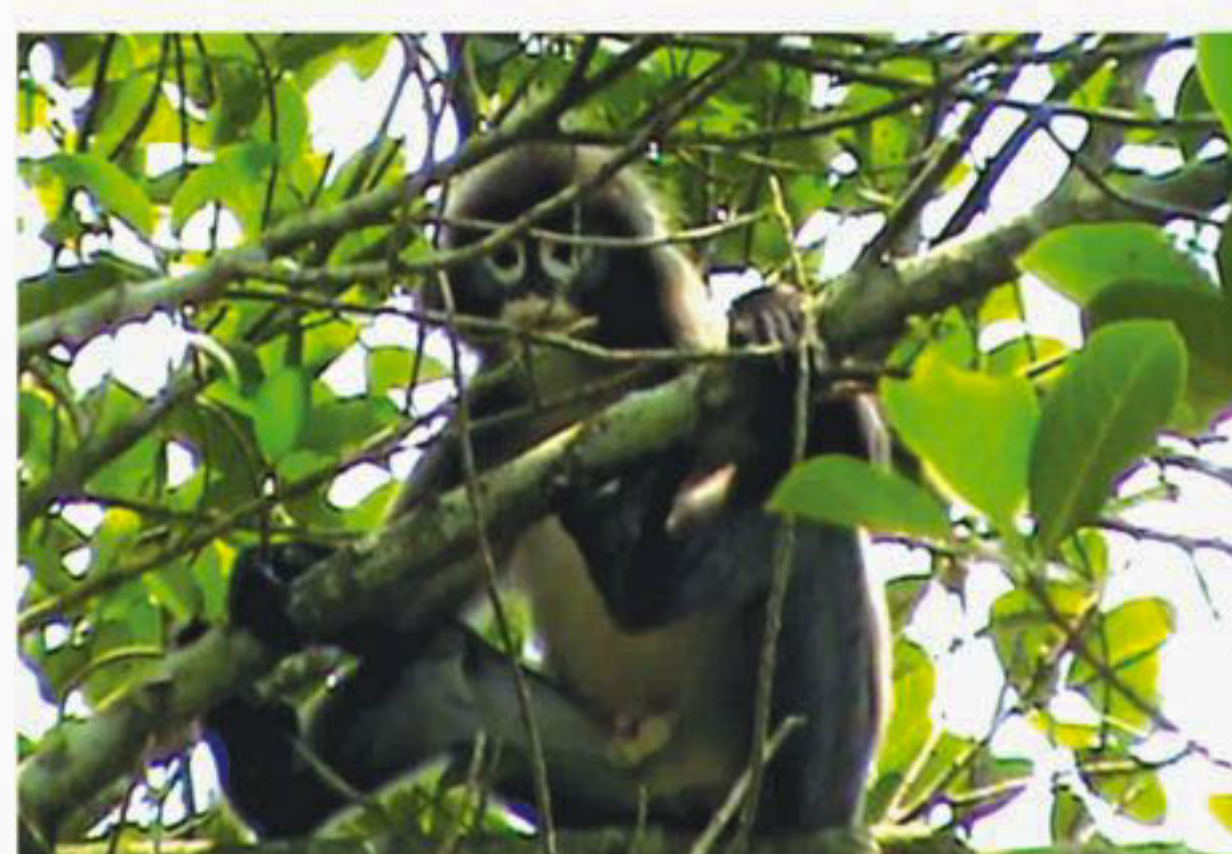


PHOTO: STAR

Langur in Bangladesh is in the verge of extinction

School to remember a poet



PHOTO: STAR

Debattor Kobi Bonde Ali High School in Pabna, inset, poet Bonde Ali Miah

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR
TOPU, Pabna

One of the most noted Bengali poets of 20th century; poet Bonde Ali Miah remains closer to the hearts of music connoisseurs of Bengal. A school at Debottar Bazar of Atghoria Upazila in Pabna is a concrete memorial of this great poet. The school, named; 'Debottar Kobi Bonde Ali High School' keeps the memory of this poet among the youngsters of the district.

Born in January 17th in 1906 at the village of Narayanpur of the district town, poet Bonde Ali is considered one of the best literary geniuses of the country. After his death in June 27, 1979, the poet's peers established the school in 1988.

Highlighting life and work of the poet, school authority observes death anniversary and birth anniversary programs every year. Authority of the school organizes special programs including special offering, children's cultural competition and discussion focusing on the literary work of the poet", said Amirul Islam Ranga, president of Debottar Kobi Bonde Ali High School.

Like other years, the school chalked out day-long programs on Thursday

(June, 27, this year) marking the 34th death anniversary. A discussion focusing on the life and work of the poet held at the school premise. The event was chaired by Amirul Islam Ranga, president of school managing committee.

The speakers on the occasion pointed out that Bande Ali Miah is a poet of our simple and typical rural life in Bangladesh. His verses depicted simple rural life - free from complexities and the din and bustle of mechanical life. He was not only a poet but also a famous painter and script writer.

The memory of the poet was fading away in his hometown after his death. Few of us took the initiative to keep the memories of the poet alive in his home district. Therefore, the school was established here, nine years later to his death, said Amirul Islam Ranga, also the founder of the school.

The school was included in government MPO (Monthly Pay Order) list in 1996. At present, there are over 500 students in Debottar Kobi Bonde Ali High School. "We do not have enough class rooms for all the students", said Mahatab Uddin, headmaster of the school.

"Government has sanctioned a two storied build-

ing containing six class rooms which is not enough for over five hundred students. A long tin shed class room was made with school funds seeking a permanent class room for the students." the headmaster said. Due to the lack of accommodation, we could not start a museum for the poet inside the school although steps were taken earlier. The headmaster added that all the activities held at the school is done using school funds; no government support is offered.

'Char-Jamai', the first book of the poet Bonde Ali was published in 1927 from Calcutta Ashutosh Library'. Till his death the poet wrote 84 books including poetry, prose, drama and lyrics. His most famous poem 'Maynamotir Char' was published in 1931 from D.M Library in Calcutta. It is considered one of the best pieces of Bangla literature.

Poet Bande Ali was a school teacher by profession in Calcutta until 1947. He was the editor of the two periodicals: 'Bikash' and 'Bhorer Alo'. After the partition, the poet returned to his hometown in 1947 and led his life drawing and writing books. Later, he was appointed in Rajshahi Radio Center in 1964 until his death in 1979.

Roads badly damaged by tidal surges need repair

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bhola

Roads up to a length of around 125 kilometres have been damaged in three upazilas of the district due to recent tidal surges and downpour.

The badly damaged roads include five kilometres of Paranganj-Sahamadar Road, five kilometres of Tulatoli- Baliakandi Road, and 10 kilometres of road from Elisha to Janata Bazar in Bhola Sadar upazila.

Besides, tidal surges caused damage to eight kilometres of road from Borhanuddin town to Nur Miar Haat, five kilometres of road from Matiar Pukur to Mollar Haat, three kilometres of road from Raniganj to Mollar Haat, three kilometres of road from Raniganj to Pirganj, four kilometres of road from Majhibari to Farazi

Bhola

Bari, and 10 kilometres of road from Talukder Haat to Deula Shantir Haat in Borhauddin upazila; 10 kilometres of road from Kunjer Haat to Tazumuddin, five kilometres of road from Muchir Kona to Khaser Haat, five kilometres of road from Khaser Haat to Gurinda, two kilometres of road from Khaser Haat to Mongol Sikder via Chachra, and seven kilometres of road from Khaser Haat to Bangla Bazar in Tazumuddin upazila.

A portion of the road to Tazumuddin Launch terminal was washed away during a recent tidal surge. Locals made a footbridge on the damaged portion of the road.

Locals said these roads have developed numerous potholes and ditches and vehicles ply the roads amid risk of accident. They have urged the authorities concerned to take immediate steps to repair the roads.

Jahurul Islam Nakib, chairman of Kachia Union Parishad under Sadar upazila, said all roads in the union have been damaged due to two tidal surge within a span of 45 days badly damaged the roads.

Contacted, SM Akbar, executive engineer of LGED in Bhola said they have made a list 30km damaged roads of Sadar upazila and 16km damaged roads of Borhanuddin upazila for renovation. They will make a complete list of all damaged roads in the three upazilas soon, he added.

14 injured in clash over relief distribution

A CORRESPONDENT, Bhola

At least 14 people were injured in a clash over distribution of relief in Daulatkhan upazila on Monday afternoon.

The injured include Gias Uddin, Sheikh Kamal, Mohiuddin, Liton, local UP members Harun and Bazlu.

The clash took place at 2:00pm when the chairman and members of Uttar Jaynager union parishad misbehaved with Cyclone Mahasen victims who came to receive the relief, alleged locals.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control, said Mobasser Ali, officer in-charge of Daulatkhan police station.

Despite making repeated phone calls, this correspondent could not contact the UP chairman for his comment on the incident.

In Moulvibazar, at least 20 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups of two villages in Rajnagar upazila on Monday night, reports UNB.

Locals said there had been a longstanding conflict between Chunnu Miah of Konagaon village and Minhaj Ali of Khaspremnagar village over a local issue.

As a sequel to the conflict, men of Chunnu and Minhaj, equipped with lethal weapons, locked in a fierce clash around 09:30 pm, leaving at least 20 people injured on both sides.

Being informed, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

The injured were rushed to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital and another local hospital.



PHOTO: STAR

Nearly complete Dhaleshwari Bridge at Elasin in Tangail district sees movement of heavy vehicles for tolls weeks before its formal opening for traffic scheduled for the middle of next month.

Vehicles ply, pay tolls before formal opening of bridge

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Modes of transport including heavy vehicles are using Dhaleshwari Bridge at Elasin in the district much before its formal opening scheduled for middle of the next month.

Over three weeks ago, vehicles started plying the bridge for tolls although Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is supposed to open it formally after the Eid next month.

While visiting the bridge on Monday, this correspondent found different vehicles including goods-laden trucks crossing the bridge after paying tolls while the works for lighting on the

bridge and that on the approach roads were going on.

Men of the lease holder of the ghat were collecting Tk 250 from each passenger bus, Tk 200 from truck and Tk 45 from three-wheeler for crossing the bridge.

Badal Miah, manager of the toll collector, claimed that the vehicles were crossing the bridge as the ferry service on the river has remained suspended for the last few days due to technical glitches and inundation of the terminal by floodwater.

Asked about the matter, Shawkat Ali, executive engineer of Roads and Highways Department (RHD) in

Tangail, said, "I knew nothing about the vehicular movement on the incomplete bridge. I will investigate the matter."

He added that the ferry service resumed yesterday.

The bridge on the Dhaleswari River was a long time demand of the people of southern part of Tangail district as the bridge would facilitate their road communication both inside and outside the district.

The work for construction of the 515-metre-long bridge started in March 2010 with an estimated cost of Tk 35 crore 50 lakh while Tk 5 crore 22 lakh was estimated for the construction of its 1.3 kilometres approach

roads on both sides.

All works of the main bridge except lighting have been done and the remaining task will be completed by this month, RHD sources said.

Sources, however, said a part of the guide embankment meant for checking erosion by the river has been damaged while low quality construction materials were used for approach road construction.

Refuting the allegations of using low quality materials for construction of the approach road, the RHD executive engineer said extra concrete slabs are stocked at the site to face erosion threat.



PHOTO: STAR

Numerous potholes have developed on roads in three upazilas of Bhola due to recent tidal surges and downpour. Photos show two badly damaged roads--Kunjerhaat to Tazumuddin and Khaserhaat to Bangla Bazar--in Tazumuddin upazila of the district.