

Purity of soil and crop

Over the past couple of years Bangladesh is benefiting from organic farming

SHYKH SERAJ

In 2007, a woman farmer-cum-entrepreneur Selina Jahan started inspiring many rural women towards agriculture and vermicompost with the help of local administration and agriculture department. She involved many women with diverse agricultural activities. Women in this region have gotten involved with agriculture, producing vermicompost and everyday they're trying to upgrade their livelihood.

Farmers have deep bonding with crops and soil. Crops on the soil give hints that humans need food. In contrast, devastated soil narrates its tremendous pain of losing the power to produce. Soil has given everything to the crops. We look towards the produce, however, we never think about the mother, the soil. Farmers who thought about this, they're now pretty terrified. In such a situation, soil begs nutrients from us. It seems like only a mother can understand what's been going on with the soil, another mother.

Selina Jahan of Narsingdi district has brought out women from home to lands. She has sown seeds of becoming 'self-reliant' amongst many women. Among many others in Rangpur, Jhenaidah, young farming entrepreneurs in Kushtia and across the whole country, there has been a revolution in organic farming through the hands of organic fertilizer in this imbalanced nature and soil where it's been tough to grow.

Hridoye Mati O Manush has been keen since its inception in 2004 and has



PHOTO: STAR

Selina Jahan: woman farmer-cum-entrepreneur

been following the key role players of agriculture who have been contributing to the development of the sector in real meaning. And, organic farming plays a vital part in nurturing the soil and increasing production. There are now many innovative organic farmers in Bangladesh by today who simply changed the whole scenario.

Women, who are faced with familiar crisis and pushed back at the wall, now they live on dreams to go ahead, inspired by organic farming. Women have become 'self-governed' doing vegetable garden, poultry farming and fruit orchards. Many women have already produced environment-friendly and pesticide-free crops and vegetables.

This is a war against toxins - a social movement against harmful chemicals. The revolution is to save soil, environment and the public health. Rural women are now involved with making vermicompost on their own. In a short time women have well-understood the significance of the natural plougher, vermicompost. Which one is hybrid, which can produce better fertilizer and which one can really bring good fortune for them?

Making the house, mixing worms with cow-dung, banana-tree and water hyacinth; producing fertilizer within 45 days and implementing it on fields - farmers have found great amusement in doing all these because, they're earning good money. The inspiration has gone

across many regions. In many parts of Bangladesh farmers are building vermicompost plant on their own. Each house in the plant is the work-field for an individual farmer.

Mobarak Hossain, Seuli, Abdul Majid, Reshma Akhter, Helal Uddin, Phul Jahan are the organic farmers who have spread across Bangladesh and many are now following their footsteps.

Bangladesh uses 50,000 Mt.tons of pesticides every year that costs around 50,000 crore BDT. 28,00,000 Mt.tons of urea is used as chemical fertilizer. These are devastating the environment and soil. To get rid of these harmful deeds, we really need organic fertilizer and an environment-friendly cultivation system.

To reduce the production cost, farmers need to produce environment-friendly crops and earn more. Farmers now move ahead with their indigenous knowledge as well as training. Apart from public and private initiatives, farmer's own effort is valued as the most commanding strength for Bangladesh's agricultural development.

"If you use organic fertilizer, then you don't need pesticides or chemical fertilizers", said Selina.

"When we'll use vermicompost at the beginning, the ratio will be: 5kgs for each decimal of land,

2.5kgs in the second and 1.15kgs for third year", she added.

"Is this the way the soil will get back its fertility", I asked.

"That's how the land will get back its fertility. For humans, milk is an ideal food. Organic fertilizers are best for lands. Keep this in mind", boldly replied Selina.

The inspiring organic farmers of Bangladesh are now growing organic paddy - enriched with organic compost they are now making themselves - they look greener than other neighbouring lands where chemical fertilizers were used conventionally. Organic fertilizer saves the cost by three times than the chemicals.

Success in the organic farming goes to the diligent farmers of Bangladesh. They have sacrificed their life to establish a healthy agriculture. And the pathfinder woman entrepreneur Selina could very well work with the agricultural extension system all over the country. We have to remember, if we do not treat the soil well, the soil will not treat us well with abundant healthy produce. Bangladesh would love to see these kinds of dedicated individuals in every region who will make us proud every day and enrich the precious soil of our country.



Shykh Seraj is an Agriculture Development and Media Activist. He is an Ashoka Fellow and an FAO A.H. Boerma Awardee. At Channel i, he is Director and Head of News. He is also Director, Planner and Presenter of the popular Agro-Documentary "Hridoye Mati O Manush".

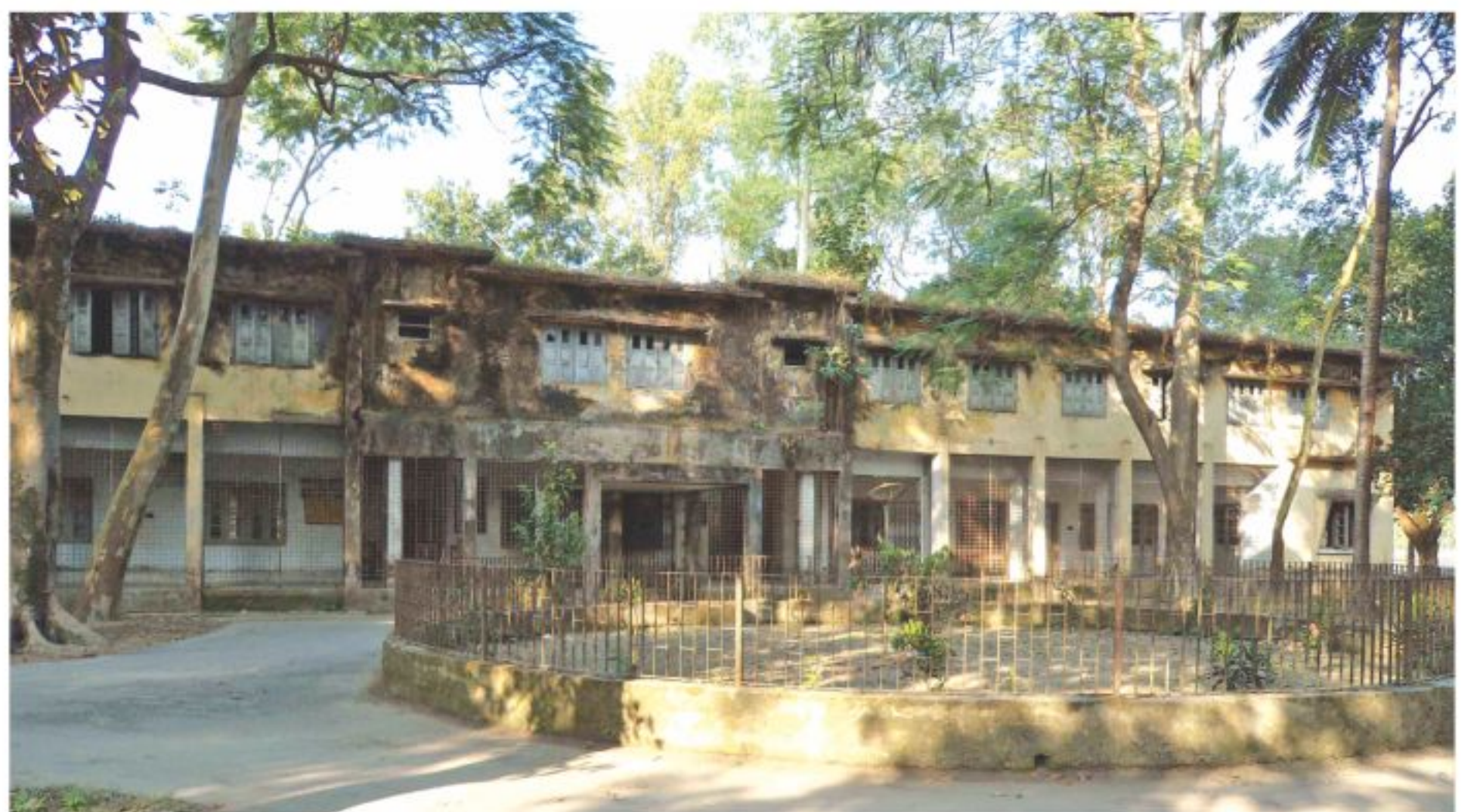


PHOTO: STAR

Ten-bed hospital 'Royganj Rural Health Centre'.

Ten-bed Royganj hospital facing various problems

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

People of ten unions under Nageswari and Bhurungamari upazilas of Kurigram district are suffering from medical facilities at the ten-bed hospital 'Royganj Rural Health Centre'.

According to Nageswari Upazila Health and Family Planning Office sources; the ten-bed hospital was established on 9.48 acres of land at Royganj union under Nageswari upazila in 1962 near Kurigram-Bhurungamari road to serve medical facilities to people of Phulbari, Nageswari and Bhurungamari thanas (now upazilas) under Kurigram sub-division (now district).

Besides, there are four first-class staff quarters for doctors, seven quarters for nurses and medical assistants and 11 quarters for fourth-class employees.

The electric supply poles, one separate room for water supply and one ambulance-cum-doctors' car are now inactive.

For providing medical service, there are 22 posts including two doctors in the hospital. Of them, now there are one medical officer against two posts, one pharmacist, one medical technician, one senior staff-nurse against four posts, two ward-boys, four MLSSs, two sweepers and one cook-man.

The medical officer, one ward-boy and one sweeper have been taken into Nageswari hospital through deputation while the posts of four assistant nurses and one Moshalchi are totally vacant in the hospital.

The hospital building and quarters were repaired once (in 1985) after establishing Nageswari Upazila Health Complex in 1984. From then onwards, the hospital and staff quarters have not been repaired or upgraded at all.

A local Abdus Sobhan, 65, said, "There was a training centre for rural physicians in the hospital before 1983. I took the training in 1982-1983. The area was moving forward due to an adequate hospital then some dishonest people stole some parts including iron grills, doors and windows of the hospital having no night guard or security man."

Chairman of Kachakata union Hashem Ali said, "Over two lakh people of the unions will be benefitted with medicine service if the 10-bed hospital is resumed properly. Then crowd of patients will be coming down in Bhurungamari and Nageswari health complexes."

Sub-assistant community medical officer Dr. Gautom Chandra Goswami, in-charge of the hospital, said, "Around 250 patients take out-doors treatment every day. Most of them are extremely-poor. The ten bed hospital should be resumed through repairing infrastructure as there are still previous posts of the hospital."

"Some locals cultivate vegetable in the hospital area which are not being used. Foliage have grown on the hospital and staff-quarters due to lake of proper care and maintenance. Letters have been sent to higher authority to repair the hospital, but no action has been found yet. As a result, its staffs have been taken in Kurigram Sadar and Nageswari hospitals through deputation", the UHFPO said.

The civil surgeon Dr. Lokman Hakim said, "We are trying to run the indoor activities in the hospital, although some residence infrastructures already have been unfitted for using. We have prayed to the higher authority (in Dhaka) to start Institute of Health Technology in the hospital."

DILIGENCE PAYS

Once a day labourer, Sarfaraj now employes over 40 men

KM REZAUL HOQUE, Gaibandha

Once working as a day labourer for survival, Sarfaraj Ali of Kalikadoba village in Gobindaganj upazila under the district is

now proud owner of a highly profitable nursery that employs over 40 workers.

"In 1996 I took training on nursery under RD-9 project of BRDB and

received Tk 10 thousand as loan to set up a tiny nursery on a 10-decimal plot on contract basis. I started growing saplings of wood and fruit bearing trees and sold those at different mar-

kets," said Sarfaraj.

"As my nursery named 'Nayon Sathi' gradually earned good reputation, people from far-flung areas started coming to collect saplings from here. Many nursery owners of Dhaka, Sylhet, Manikganj and Sirajganj districts collect saplings from the nursery that now covers 25 bighas of land," he said.

Anisur Rahman, a nursery owner of Belkuchi upazila in Sirajganj district, said this season he bought saplings worth Tk 2 lakh from Sarfaraj's nursery.

"I collect saplings four times a year from Nayon Sathi nursery," said Alamgir Hossain, a nursery owner of Harirampur upazila in Manikganj district.

"Saplings of at least 35 varieties of trees and plants, including wood, fruit bearing, spices and herbal, are produced in my nursery. Demand of saplings, especially those of fruit bearing trees is increasing fast," said Sarfaraj.

"Yearly turnover of my nursery stands at Tk 40 to 50 lakh. Forty to 45 labourers remain engaged in my nursery round the year. I am grateful to upazila agriculture department for extending all possible help to develop the nursery," he said.

Sarfaraj also raised a mother garden of different fruits including mango, lichi for producing quality graft plants that has wide demand in different areas.

"Sarfaraj has set a model of successful nursery in this area. Witnessing the success of Nayon Sathi, many other farmers also set up nursery," said Khorshed Alam, upazila agriculture officer, Gobindaganj.



PHOTO: STAR

Sarfaraj Ali tending plants at his Nayon Sathi nursery at Kalikadoba village in Gobindaganj upazila under Gaibandha district.

Obituary

Mr. Chowdhury Manzur Murshed

We express our deep condolences on the sad demise of Mr. Chowdhury Manzur Murshed, Member UCEP Association and former Member, UCEP Board of Governors at 9.20 pm on 16 September 2013 at a city hospital at the age of 86 (Innailahi -----Rajeun).

Mr. C. M. Murshed joined UCEP-Bangladesh as an Associate Member in the year of 1992. He was Member of UCEP Board of Governors during the period of 1993-1995 and 2009-2010.

Mr. C. M. Murshed was a retired diplomat and was the Ambassador of Bangladesh to Afghanistan, Rumania, Turkey and the People's Republic of China. He also was the Founder Trustee Member of IUB and Member of its Executive Committee, Director and Former Chairman of SMC, Founder Chairman of Air Link Bangladesh Limited, First Chairman of Bangladesh Textile Industries Corporation and General Manager of British Oxygen. He also served in many notable organizations before the liberation war of Bangladesh.

The Members of the UCEP Association, Staff and thousands of underprivileged children of UCEP express heartfelt condolence to the bereaved family members and pray to Almighty Allah to give them the courage and strength to bear this irreparable loss.

May his soul rest in eternal peace.



UCEP - Bangladesh

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