

Occupational therapy at CRP cures disabled farmers

SKYKH SERAJ

I present to you a unique paradise of love, called the Centre for the Rehabilitation of the Paralysed, or CRP in short. Most of the people in our country are farmers who regularly face different occupational hazards. Many of them suffer injuries and ultimately some of them become physically disabled. These people have access to CRP's occupational therapies, which are curing them fast.

A foreign lady planted a seed of love in Bangladesh 45 years ago. Today we feel so proud to say that she is ours. She is Valerie A. Taylor, a legendary physiotherapist. In 1969, she came to the then East Pakistan from Kent, England, as a volunteer of VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas), an international development charity, when she was only 25 years old. She was repatriated from Bangladesh during the liberation war, however returned during September, 1971 in the middle of heavy war across Bangladesh. She persevered with her skills to give service to wounded freedom fighters. She wanted to set off a physiotherapy institution in Bangladesh, for the first time in the country. The dream finally came true in 1979. CRP is situated in Savar, at the outskirts of Dhaka on 10 acres of land. Here, on more than 150 beds, physically disabled people are being healed. You can literally see them coming back to life. Starting its humanitarian voyage in 1979, CRP now has nine centres where 780 dedicated souls work relentlessly to give service to at least 50,000 patients every year.

I entered one of the prime spots at CRP, which, I think should be named 'Ananda

Kanan' (Garden of Bliss). Physically disabled people regain their strength from soil, crops, fruits, flora and nature itself from this very garden. Here, they are strengthened to become self confident, through very innovative occupational therapy. When they'll go back, they'll start a new life in nature, with farming activities. I saw a group of 20 patients, people who have suffered different accidents—some fell from tree, or an auto-rickshaw. But most of these people were involved with agricultural activity. These people will go back to their home after long term treatment. They'll start working on what they used to — farming. Swapan, who comes from Comilla, fell from a tree and became disabled. His dreams lost route. But they are coming back now through rehabilitation.

"What happened to you?"

"I fell from a tree and my spine was severely injured."

"Do you believe that you can work like before when you go back?"

"Definitely. I feel joyous when I am involved with agricultural activity with the modified tools. It gives me immense hope."

There is a raised bed section in the plot. To cut the cost, they're using bamboos here. I could see how easily patients can work on the bed, sitting on a wheelchair. I saw a patient was busy with tomatoes that he grew himself with the cooperation from CRP occupational therapists. Tasin, a child full of dreams is from Chourhash, Kushtia.

"I can't straighten my fingers. With good care in CRP, now I can walk on support with the help of my therapist. The muscle power



PHOTO: ADITYA SHAHEEN

A disabled patient at CRP tending to his garden.

of my fingers is very poor, that's why I can't straighten them. As I do different agricultural activities, my level of activity in my fingers is gradually increasing."

Another patient was really happy as he can now work the way used to do in the past.

"Even as a patient I can work like a farmer. It's certainly a great feeling."

There are many volunteers from home and abroad who joined CRP to serve the cause of humanity. Their philosophy has changed entirely.

Fatema Tuz Zohora, Occupational Therapist at CRP believes that there is nothing called disability. "If we can raise the bed and modify the tools, the patient can also work like a regular farmer. I don't see any difference", says Fatema.

I saw a special kind of a spade and the patients are using it easily. It's quite long and very light. It's made so simply that they can easily

do the spade work, sitting on the wheelchair. When the patients are ready to go home, they're brought to a special place for two weeks before they depart. The place gives them the image of a rural house, their past. This is a two-week adaptation dwelling where I saw vegetables, pigeons and homestead gardening.

Finally it was time to meet the ever-smiling Valerie A. Taylor, the lover of life and the human spirit.

"What's your observation on Bangladeshi people?"

"Bangladeshi people are like my family members. The hospitality in this country is remarkable."

"Why didn't you go back



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Making bats for a living

Hitting poverty out of sight

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

In remote areas of Jhenidah, nine lower caste families are producing and distributing cricket bats and stumps to different parts of Bangladesh to make a living. While talking to the Daily Star, Abdul Aziz, coordinator of RHECO (Rural Health Education and Credit Organisation), informed that nine families are involved in the trade. The cricket materials are in great demand here as cricket is a popular game. Traders of nearby districts throng here to collect cricket bats and stumps from the village.

The heads of the nine families of Shalkupa village are Kishor Kumar, Ashok Kumar, Poritosh Kumar, Prashad Kumar, Porimol Kumar, Krishna Kumar Dipok Kumar, Prodip Majumdar and Shankor Majumdar. They all are cousins and live side by side. While visiting the village S h a l k u p a u n d e r Kotchandpur upazila of the district this correspondent found a huge number of bats, stumps and other materials stacked in the houses and sheds. Some are busy painting, some are busy refining and some are busy processing the timber. These sports materials make way to different districts of the country. Rawshan Ali, a trader of Gulistan Dhaka, carry the produce to the capital.

Proshad Kumar, who first introduced the concept of producing cricket bats in the village, told this correspondent that while playing cricket with his play mates in the village playground the bat broke down. He was not in a position to buy another bat with which he could play. He collected timber from Jibon tree and tried to make a bat. He succeeded, although the finished product was missing a refined look. Later on,



PHOTO: STAR

Shankor Majumdar displaying cricket bats produced at his house in Jhenidah.

ever a bat got cracked he made another one. This is how he started to make bats. He started producing them for his friends in exchange for little wages. As its demand increased, he set up different bat making equipment in his house in 2003.

Proshad added that he buys per piece of timber at Tk 50. A single bat costs Tk 10 while he sells per piece at Tk 150. A factory can make 50 bats everyday while nine factories provide at around 300 bats. Nowadays, the price of timber is very high. They have no big capital to expand their business. A local NGO RHECO has been helpful in extending financial help on monthly installments. Ashraf Uddin, Director of RHECO informed that they sanction loans for facilitating these businesses as it is profitable and an uncommon trade in this region.

Another bat maker, Shankor Majumdar told that he had been making bats and stumps for 8 years. They collect Shishu Kat

(timber) to make stumps. Each stump costs Tk 25 while it is sold at Tk 35 per piece. They get Tk 300/400 profit by selling bats and stumps. Now, unemployed young men from neighboring villages throng his factory and take training to become self-dependent. In making bats and stamp, the only ingredients needed are glue, nails, and stickers, along with Jibon and Shishu Kat. According to Neamot Ali of Kushtia, a wholesale trader, they buy hundreds of bats and stumps from Shalkupa village and provide it to different shops of the town. The bats of Shalkupa are in great demand because its quality is good.

Safdarpur union panel chairman Wahed Ali said that the families of Shalkupa village who make bats and stumps earn a good amount by providing it to different districts of the country. They could expand their trade if they are given loans on easy terms.



PHOTO: STAR

Poor women and schoolgirls pluck flowers on daily wages basis from a garden at Baliadanga village in Jhenidah, inset, growers busy transporting flowers to Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet and other parts of the country.



Flowers aren't just flowers

They are bread earning job for the poor, gifts for many

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

While flowers are deemed as the best gift for near and dear ones during special days like Pahela Falgun, Valentine Day and Pahela Boishakh, plucking the item and making wreaths bring modest earning for poor girls and women in the district famous for flower cultivation.

As thousands of jhopa (wreath) make way to Chittagong, Sylhet, Dhaka ahead of these days, flower growers, traders as well as workers remain busy all day long.

women or girls, get Tk 12/15 each by making a jhopa with 800 flowers plucked from the growers' plots.

The job brings one around Tk 150 a day and the earning rises to Tk 250/300 per day during special occasions.

"My father is a poor farmer. It is difficult for him to bear my educational expenses. So I make wreaths during holidays and manage my study cost with the earning," said Nazma Khatun, a Class VIII student of Baliadanga High School in Kaliganj upazila.

Nurjahan, Swarshati and Ayesha of Boroghighati

village under Kaliganj upazila also add to their family income by plucking flowers all the year round.

The flower business brings high profit ahead of sepapal occasions like Pahela Falgun, Valentine Day and Borsho Boron (welcoming the new year) celebrations, said Fazlur Rahman, secretary of flower cultivation association in the district.

Around 200 hectares of land in Jhenidah district have been brought under flower cultivation this year, said Joynal Abedin, deputy director of the Department of Agriculture Extension.

BRUR body to probe Monday's violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR) authorities yesterday formed a seven-member body to investigate the incidents of attack and vandalism at the administrative building on Monday afternoon.

They took the decision at an emergency meeting presided by Professor Vice-Chancellor AKM Nur-un-Nabi.

The probe body has been directed to submit their investigation report within two weeks.

Earlier, on Monday afternoon, some unruly students, allegedly belonging to Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), brought out a procession on the campus. Led by BCL unit president Mehedy Hasan Shishir, they demanded immediate opening of the 'Bangabandhu Student Hall'.

At one stage they entered the administrative building and vandalised doors, windows, tables, chairs and other furniture of five rooms and damaged two computers and left the place.

Contacted, Moinul Azad, Registrar of the university said construction work of the 'Bangabandhu Student Hall' had already been completed.

Now the work for electricity connection at the hall is going on and it would be finished within 10-15 days, he added.

So, violence by the students demanding immediate opening of the hall was nothing but a senseless act, he said.

Refuting the allegation, Mehedy Hasan Shishir said that none of BCL activists were involved in the violence.

"Agitated general students might have vented

TWO INCIDENTS IN KUSHTIA, RANGPUR

'Missing' college boy found dead, abducted youths rescued

STAR COUNTRY DESK

Police yesterday recovered the body of a college student, 18 hours after he went missing in Sadar upazila of Kushtia, reports our correspondent.

Khondokar Laboni Akter, Assistant Police Superintendent (ASP) of Kushtia told this correspondent that Asadur Rahman, 24, son of late Amzad Hossain of Baradi village went out of home on Monday afternoon and since remained missing. Asadur was a third year student of Kushtia Islamia College.

Local people found Asadur's body at a field at Baradi at about 10:00am and informed the police.

Police is investigating the

matter, ASP Laboni said.

In Rangpur, police rescued two youths on Sunday night from Shalbon area in the city, reports our correspondent.

Identified as Liton Chandra Roy, 28, son of Damudar Chandra Roy of Punkar village and Md. Shahajahan Ali, 30, son of Md. Abdul Hamid of Chandamari village of Kurigram, they were abducted from Bakultala village in Rajarhat upazila of their district.

Police said, 5-6 people came on a microbus and abducted the youths from Bokultala village on February 14 night when they were pasting posters of Md. Enamul Haque, a

chairman candidate of Rajarhat upazila and took them to an unknown place.

Later the abductors demanded Tk 2 lakh as ransom from the family members of the victims through mobile phone.

The family members sent them Tk 20,000 as ransom through 'Bkash' on Saturday.

On Sunday evening, Md. Abdul Hamid, father of victim Shahajahan Ali, lodged a case in this connection with Rajarhat police station.

As per the plan of police, on Sunday night, the family members again sent Tk 60,000 through 'Bkash' account.

Abdul Quader Jilani,

officer in-charge of Rangpur Kotwali police station, said tracking the mobile phone number of the abductors, Rajarhat and Rangpur Kotwali police took position at Jahaj Company intersection in Rangpur city at around 11:00pm and arrested two abductors when they went to a 'Bkash' agent there for collecting the money.

The arrestees are Moinul Hasan, 28, son of Hafez Mian and Md. Mortuza Ali, son of Md. Hasan of Kamalkachhna area in Rangpur city.

Later, on the basis of information by the abductors, police rescued Liton and Shahajahan from a rented house in Shalbon area of the city.



PHOTO: STAR

Raw bricks at a brick field in Kanchanghaat area under Biral upazila of Dinajpur got damaged due to incessant rain for three days from Friday to Sunday. The brick field owners in the district incurred a huge loss for untimely rainfall.