



Moanoghar News Bulletin

(July - September 2020)

(Founders: Ven. Shaddamaditya Jnanasree Mahathero, Ven. Bimal Tissya Mahathero, Ven. Prajnananda Mahathero, Ven. Sraddha Lanker Mahathero)

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Cashew Nut Plantation on Moanoghar land

Life in the Middle of Covid-19 Pandemic

The economic and psycho-social impacts of the ongoing Covid pandemic continue unabated in Bangladesh. The scars from the pandemic are visible at every level of the society and economic life of the people in the country.

The official number of Covid 19 affected in Bangladesh is still relatively low: about 400,000. However, the figure is believed to be widely underestimated and real number could be many times higher. One good news is the low fatality rate: about 1 percent. The Covid figure in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, officially, is about 2,500 which is, in all likelihood, is a severe underestimation. There is no figure about the number of deaths, but is believed to be negligible.

It is however, the economic and social impacts that is most devastating, in particular in all the three Hill Districts of the greater Chittagong Hill Tracts regions. There are no survey figures of economic loss in the region. But the government reported that on average, households in Bangladesh, will earn 20 percent less this year and next years. In Chittagong Hill Tracts, with its mostly subsistence-based economy, remoteness and lack of communication access mean that this percentage should be higher.

On social aspects, the impacts are clearly visible including by Moanoghar itself. From late August, many parents started contacting Moanoghar when the lockdown rules were relaxed and peoples' mobility started to increase. The contacts were desperate calls for the education of the children with the parents and guardians confronting a bleak future; appealing to Moanoghar to support education of their children (*see next page also*).

Activity Plan of Moanoghar and Moanoghar School for 2020-21

Moanoghar carried out a phone survey of the student about the status of study while confined to their home/villages during the months of lockdown and subsequent school closure. In total about 70 percent of the students could be contacted. With the remaining 30 percent, it was not possible to establish contact there was no mobile phone network where they live.

- Of those contacted, about 35 percent are able to attend the online classes. However, about 60 percent are continuing with local coaching with tutor from the village.
- Moanoghar has planned to travel around the region to meet with the children and their parents/guardians in the week 28 October – 3 November. In total 5 groups have been formed, each responsible to cover a part of the 3 Hill Districts. The plan is to meet with as many children/parents/guardians as possible, particularly those living in remote areas without mobile internet and who could not be contacted so far. *The objective is to share with the parents about the preparation/plan for next year – 2021 – and how to ensure continued education of the children despite the economic hardships due to Covid-19.*
- From late August till now, many parents/guardians started to contact Moanoghar asking whether the children could return to the hostels. As of now (15 October), *152 children have returned and many more are asking to return.* Considering the current Covid 19 situation which may deteriorate further during the colder months of November – January, Moanoghar has asked the children not to come for the moment. In the meantime, Moanoghar is consulting the Health Department/Office of the Civil surgeon about the precautionary measures to mitigate the potential spread of Covid in case more students come to the hostels. *For most of the children and their parents/guardians, the return to Moanoghar is for continuing their studies but it is also due to the economic hardships of the parents/guardians at home.*
- The students at present are divided in 6 hostels with social distancing rules. An extra hostel is kept empty in case anyone falls sick: Covid or non Covid – to quarantine.
- The government extended the closure of schools/educational establishments till 31 October. There is likelihood that this is further extended till the end of 2020 and even beyond.



Vegetable gardening on Moanoghar land

Kumar Nandit Roy Memorial Scholarship (under HELP) Launched

Moanoghar gratefully acknowledges the setting up of Kumar Nandit Roy Memorial Scholarship under the Higher Education Loan Programme (HELP). The Scholarship is set up by Ms. Jharna Roy, wife of late Roy along with their children: Vaskar Roy and Lumbini Roy and their respective spouses.

The late Kumar Nandit Roy is renowned across the Chittagong Hill Tracts and beyond. Born to the Chakma Raj family, he had an equally illustrious career with the United Nations in Bangladesh. He was also a poet and singer, and penned and composed music to some of the most popular tunes in Chakma language.

Above all, he was a dedicated social worker, and a long-time benefactor to Moanoghar. He served in the board for several years during a particularly critical period of Moanoghar. Moanoghar deeply cherishes his memory and through the scholarship and its work shall strive to uphold his examples of community service for the future generations in the CHT region.



*Handover of Cheque by Ms. Jharna Chakma, wife of late: Kumar Nandit Roy
The photo of Nandit Roy is visible in the background*

Miscellaneous News

- Moanoghar gratefully acknowledges support from the following: Peoples des Collines; AJHA – France; Comgest Foundation along with Emil Wolter and his friends; Les Enfants du Montala; Mr. Douglas Polunin and DA Campbell Foundation to overcome the ongoing Covid 19 crisis.
- Moanoghar has launched a training programme for its staff and teachers. The first 2 training sessions have already been held on: Annual Work Plan including Academic Preparation and Financial Management. The programme will continue with a session in each month throughout 2021 and beyond.

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