Tobacco Companies’ Aggression and Ill Tactics to Boom Tobacco Cultivation in Bangladesh
Introduction

Having no policy to regulate tobacco cultivation in Bangladesh, the minor office orders such as decision to stop loan facilities in tobacco farming by Bangladesh Bank, ban on using subsidized fertiliser in tobacco farming by the Agricultural Ministry and some other disjointed initiatives by the Department of Agriculture Expansion (DAE) etc. are almost of no use. Weak monitoring system and strong interferences by the tobacco companies is increasing tobacco farming shockingly in Bangladesh. On the other side, the anti-tobacco advocates and mass media have long been demanding overall policies discouraging tobacco farming by pointing out the damages caused by it. However, the respective authority appears to turn deaf ear to the claims. Although a section has been added on the amended tobacco control law that was passed in April 2013 to discourage tobacco farming, the Section cannot be implied for the want of necessary guidelines. It is notable that the Section 12 of the amended tobacco control law says, “The government shall make necessary guidelines to promote for discouragement of producing and using tobacco products, and discouragement to set up industry of tobacco and tobacco related products, discouragement of producing tobacco related produces and farming”. Since there is no tobacco cultivation regulating guidelines available, the tobacco companies have expanded tobacco plantations aggressively. The DAE has also been inactive with the stance that they have nothing to do in this case. Consequently, farming of the lethal crop has shockingly been expanded across
the country. The entire economy, especially food security, public health, forest resources, ecology, environment, land fertility etc. is rapidly deteriorating.

**Recent Trends of Tobacco Cultivation**

Although the history of household level tobacco cultivation in Bangladesh is very old, but commercial tobacco farming with the inspiration of the tobacco companies is a recent phenomenon. Commercial production of tobacco products began gradually with the mechanizations of the tobacco industry. Basically tobacco expansion started from the 60s with direct and indirect motivations of the tobacco companies. It reaches to the current level due to the continuous aggression of the companies during the last couple of decades.

Following the DAE, in the current season (2014) tobacco has been grown on 108,000 hectares of lands, whereas it was 70,000 hectares in the last season (2013). It indicates that extra 38,000 hectares of lands have been used in the current tobacco farming season. However, the statistics is incomplete and been formed after the lands only used in the hotspots (Kushtia 40,000 hectares, Bandarban 26,000 hectares, Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat 30,000 hectares and 10,000 hectares in Rangour district). Moreover, there are some doubts about the amount of lands used in tobacco farming as the land quantity has been falsified in most of the places. On the other hand, Manikganj, Tangail, Faridpur, Natore (Chalanbil), Narail, Jessore and some parts of the Hill Tracts have also been used for tobacco farming but are excluded in the list. So, it appears that if all the tobacco farming lands across the country are accumulated, undoubtedly it will exceed 108,000 hectares. As there is no exact public or private statistics on tobacco farming, it is almost impossible to illustrate any clear picture about the exact figure and increment rate of tobacco cultivation. The available media reports update that always there are initiatives to show the least lands used for tobacco cultivation as the tobacco companies have some “understanding” with the local DAE officials. But despite the hide and seek, it is proved according to the existing information that tobacco farming is increasing indiscriminately. As per Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) information, in the year 2006-07, 30,699.45 hectares of lands were used for tobacco cultivation and the produced stood 39,180 metric ton, and in 2010-11 that stood to 48,867.41 hectares and 79,234 metric ton respectively. The statistics clearly indicates that tobacco producing...
lands and production both has doubled in four years. Comparing the year 2010-11 (48,867.41 hectares, BBS) to 2014 (108,000 hectare, DAE) it is seen that by the difference of three years, tobacco farming has been doubled as well. Besides, the export tendency of tobacco products also confirms the countrywide expansion of tobacco farming. Following the Export Promotion Bureau, tobacco export earned $7 million as revenue in 2005-06 fiscal. However, the revenue has increased seven times more to $407 million in seven months of 2013-14 fiscal. Only the export statistics is solely enough to indicate the alarming rate of tobacco farming of the country.

How Tobacco Cultivation Increases

Domestic and multinational tobacco companies are continuing their aggression and evil tactics to spread out tobacco farming in the country increasingly. However, the nature of aggression and tactics are not similar across the country. The tobacco companies believe in ‘Comparative Advantage Theory’. Having kindling facility in the Hill tracts, they are doing aggression by cutting trees to fuel tobacco furnaces in this area. At the same time, they are mockingly planting trees and grabbing awards to prove their patriotism. On the other side, as there is no forest in the Northern parts of the country, they dry tobacco leaves under sun and store the dried leaves. But environment pollution is still found although they do not burn woods. The tobacco companies use hay and other locally available materials as fuel to dry the leaves in locally produced furnaces. They are mainly attracted to the fertile arable lands in these districts and tactfully channeling all the benefits from the DAE (like subsidized irrigation, fertiliser and electricity) to farmers for growing more tobacco and wish to turn the food croplands of Northern part into tobacco field. Regarding location selection, they usually prefer poverty stricken areas. They issue few cards to some rich and solvent farmers who are influential and have more arable lands in the areas. Then the companies buy the produced at higher price and also offer them (rich farmers) different incentives to allure the poor farmers to start tobacco farming. The marginal farmers use the facilities of the government (irrigation and fertiliser), but the tobacco companies finally reap the benefits from them. Locals of the Northern parts said that the tobacco companies gain huge profit every year by exporting the sun-dried leaves.

To expand tobacco cultivation, the companies have adopted different initiatives like providing hard cash support to the farmers, agro-inputs (such as fertiliser,
Hard Cash and Inputs as Loan

Tobacco companies induce farmers across the country by offering them different inputs like fertilizer, seeds, insecticides, and hard cash as loans. They also provide polythene and other materials to protect the tobacco seeds and seedbeds. It has been found that in the name of loan, tobacco companies have entrapped farmers into long-term debts. Therefore, knowing that tobacco farming is unprofitable, the farmers cannot get out of the loan traps. In some of the areas, they have assisted farmers to get loans from the scheduled Banks illegally.
Marketing Assurance and Quality Control through Field Level Monitoring

Tobacco company agents monitor fields to control tobacco leaves quality and also provide different advices to the farmers. Usually, in the beginning of a year, the companies assure the farmers to buy a certain amount of tobacco leaves from them. After harvesting, the farmers send the leaves to the company storehouse by the pre-fixed price. Deducting the loan and price of the other materials, the company pays the remaining part of the price to the farmers. It has been alleged that the companies exploit farmers in the name of grading (pricing higher grade leaves as lower grade) and in some areas, the companies did not buy the assured amount of leaves from the farmers that caused loss for them.

Training on Improved Tobacco Cultivation through Tobacco Farmers IPM Club Higher

Tobacco Companies are providing training to the farmers on improved tobacco cultivation by setting “Tobacco Farmers Integrated Pest Management Club” across the country. A newspaper report reads that around 200,000 trained farmers are engaged into tobacco farming. Such clubs are run by giant tobacco companies in the country. To control over the tobacco farmers, they execute different inspirational activities as well through the clubs. Beside, the farmers listed with the clubs also promote the tobacco companies in different ways.

Manipulating Local DAE to Expand Tobacco Farming

To expand and inspire tobacco farming in districts, tobacco companies use the district level agricultural officials. According to the newspaper reports,
DAE officials are reluctant to provide any advice against tobacco farming. At times they are found participating at tobacco company events also. They also inspire the farmers by describing the usefulness of tobacco cultivation.

**Tobacco Farming Expansion through CSR**

Tobacco companies provide different facilities to the listed farmers in different districts like solar energy or drinking water supply. These activities aim only to allure them into tobacco farming. Different newspaper reports have disclosed that British American Tobacco Bangladesh (BATB) has provided solar power to 576 tobacco farmers of four villages in Bandarban and Khagrachhari district under its ‘Dipto’ project. Besides, they also try to influence the local administration and other quarters by installing drinking water facility.

**Subsidized Fertilizer and Irrigation for Tobacco Cultivation**

In different areas, subsidized fertilizers and irrigation is being used for tobacco cultivation. Mass media reports unveil that tobacco is being cultivated with the water from deep tube-well of Varendra Multipurpose Development Authority (VMDA) that was supposed to be used for paddy cultivation. A few of the tobacco producing companies are helping the farmers to get the facility. The government distributes fertilizers for tobacco cultivation in
different parts of the country through dealers. Use of those fertilizers is banned in tobacco cultivation. Violating the government ban, the fertilizers are being used in tobacco cultivation in Northern and other regions.

These are some of the common techniques of the tobacco companies that have been gathered from different sources. They also use different techniques. Those need to be addressed by proper researches.

How Tobacco Cultivation Damages

Tobacco farming has different types of negative impacts including socio-economical, environmental, climatic, health, educational etc. Some of the damages are instantly identified and some need times. Currently, Bangladesh is experiencing fertility lose of lands, food insecurity, deforestation, health hazards, child labour, educational breaks etc. The damages are described in brief.

Deforestation as Woods Fuel Tobacco Ovens

Thousands of mounds of woods are being used each year to bake tobacco leaves in tobacco furnaces. Countrywide deforestation is being occurred to serve the furnaces. A study says that tobacco cultivation is 30% responsible behind the entire deforestation. Over 6,000 tobacco furnaces have been built in Bandarban district in the current season, says a report on the daily Jugantor on April 12, 2014.
Food Security

Gradually, the food croplands in the country are turning to tobacco lands. Tobacco production raised two and a half times more in the past six years from 40,240 tons to 1,03,650 tons which is a great threat for the country, says another report from the Daily New Age on March 17, 2014.

Losing Lands Fertility

Tobacco farming causes damages of the lands more than the food crops as it needs three times more Urea and insecticides. A land cannot be used more than twice or thrice for tobacco cultivation. Then the land neither produces a fine quality tobacco nor grows food crops in plenty. Productivity and fertility of the land reduces for using more and more fertilizers and insecticides.

Health Hazards

As payment in tobacco processing is better, tobacco growers engage their family members including their wives and children. Consequently, thousands of such workers are under serious health hazards. Smoke emerged from burning of raw tobacco leaves to rectify is highly harmful for farmers' health. For their longer involvement with tobacco farming and processing they are affected with cancer, abdominal problems, chest and neck pain, reproductive problems and other health hazards. Besides, the children are also affected with Green Tobacco Syndrome for their involvement in tobacco processing.

Child Labour and Educational Problems

Children in tobacco farming areas are engaged into different tasks like seed collection, seedbed
nurturing, weeding, planting, insecticides spraying, leaves baking or drying and even marketing of the leaves. Therefore, they cannot go to school and the guardians are to employ their kids as they cannot buy external labours.

Other damages and impacts

Tobacco aggression is being continued in some of the river banks and fallow lands as well. A report on March 1, 2014 on the Daily Banik Barta reads that at 50 kilometers of the banks of Bankkhali, Matamuhuri, Gorjoi and Duchharhi – the four rivers in Cox’s Bazar district have been used for tobacco cultivation. Earlier, the farmers grew vegetables on the banks. Locals alleged that the number and varieties of fishes from the rivers is declining gradually. Besides, tobacco is also being farmed in the adjacent lands of schools in the area. A photo feature on March 2, 2014 on the Daily Prothom Alo shows that tobacco is being cultivated in a land next to a school in Dighinala under Khagrachhari district. During insecticide spray, the student rarely can sit inside the school and the teachers and students are being affected with different respiratory problems. Even some of the students cannot attend classes regularly. Moreover, tobacco furnaces have been built near to schools in different parts of the country. A report on the Daily Prothom Alo on April 7, 2014 says that 9 tobacco furnaces have been built from 5-15 feet distance of 2 educational institutions which is hampering the educational activities and posing health hazard for the students too.
Currently there is no exact statistics available over the quantity of lands being used for or turning into tobacco lands in the country. Simultaneously, there has been no standard researches conducted over the negative impacts of tobacco cultivation on food security, public health, forest resources, environment and ecology, land fertility and overall how it could have long and short-term negative impacts on the entire economy. Using the loopholes, the tobacco companies try to distract the policymakers in making policies against tobacco cultivation. They try to prove that tobacco production is essential for the economy by engaging some of their appointed researchers. Besides, they are also manipulating the DAE to hide the exact land units used for tobacco cultivation.

Although there is no solid information over tobacco cultivation and its damages, reports on newspapers and other media has made three issues clearer: 1. Tobacco farming is gradually increasing in the country, 2. Tobacco farming is damaging different areas with diverse scale and 3. Tobacco companies’ aggression and evil methods are prevailing in both of the cases.
Recent Tobacco Farming Trends in Lalmonirhat

To illustrate the overall situation of tobacco farming in Lalmonirhat district, Tobacco Industry Watch BD team analysed the existing information and conducted a qualitative field investigation. Accordingly, the quantity of total arable lands in the district is 98,875 hectares. In the last season (2013) around 25,000 hectares of lands have been used solely for tobacco cultivation which is 32% of all the tobacco farming lands of the country. The mass media reports say that the lands have been increased in the current season (2014) for tobacco cultivation. Following the DAE, in the current season about half of the arable lands have been used for tobacco cultivation. It indicates that about 50,000 hectares of lands have been used for tobacco cultivation which is double (25,000 hectares) comparing to the last season (2013) and 13 times more comparing to 2002 that produced tobacco on only 4,000 hectares of lands. It is clear from the government source that how aggressive the tobacco farming is in the district. But the scenario is more dreadful according to private sources. Finally, whatever the data or secondary information is, field observation is a must to comprehend the alarming expansion of tobacco cultivation.

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Hectares of land used in tobacco cultivation</th>
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<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>4000</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>10000</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>16000</td>
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<td>2013</td>
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wraps the villagers. Even donations are also allowed using tobacco leaves. The local retailers also accept tobacco leaves in exchange of commodities. Children are the worst sufferers. Tobacco is killing their childhood with the toxic air. Tobacco Industry Watch Team BD found the scenarios during farmers’ interviews at villages of Khuniagaach, Kalmati Bania Para, Sapti Bari and Aditmari upazillas under Lalmonirhat district.

The way tobacco farming is increasing in Lalmonirhat

It’s a trap not debt

The ruling strategies of the multinational tobacco companies are almost similar to the strategies of the Roman General Caesar or the French emperor Napoleon’s “divide and rule/conquer strategy”, latter the policy of the British during the colonial period. The tobacco companies provide cards or business gain to several influential farmers in the rural areas of Lalmonirhat who work for them as agents. They use the agents to grow necessary quantity of tobacco through the non-card holders. The Company’s strategy is to create discriminations among the local farmers by ‘providing cards to the fewer’ (rich farmers), and not providing cards to the larger’ (general poor farmers). They create documents that they buy tobacco leaves only from the card holding farmers to continue their aggression. They get their work done by hiding themselves. For instance, in the current season, ‘A’ number of card holding farmers on average have supplied ‘B’ metric tons of tobacco leaves to the company and company has gathered ‘A x B = C’ metric tons of tobacco. But in reality, the tobacco companies basically gather cent percent of tobacco leaves from the non-card holding farmers using the card-holders. By this way, they also create confusion about the quantity of lands used for tobacco cultivation. The tobacco leaf collection technique can be described in this way:
The tobacco companies buy the sole production of the card holding farmers and get the productions of the non-card holding farmers using the agent or card holding farmers. Observations have found that tobacco company officials provide assurance of agro-inputs only to the card holding farmers. But most of the leading farmers said that they are less interested in having such facilities as they are capable to buy those inputs. The locals said that the rich farmers are interested in tobacco trading, not farming. They buy tobacco leaves from the poor farmers and sell those to the companies at a higher rate. So, getting a card of the tobacco company is the apple of discord among the poor farmers. They try to attract the tobacco company officials and even engage into different sorts of lobbying with them including bribing. If they get a card, they will get all the advantages offered by tobacco companies like assurance of marketing facilities, and will make profit as an agent. But in reality, the tobacco companies create a competition among the farmer but they do not increase the card numbers likewise. Nevertheless, the farmers are not frustrated as tobacco farming is still financially a profitable business for them. They said that the present loss and profit is the key reality for them. So, they do not want to bother about any long run negative impact even any near future perils at all. In the discussions, almost all the farmers told that after farming Virginia tobacco on the lands, paddy cannot grow well. The roots of Virginia tobacco is taller and absorbs lands energy. But being Virginia financially profitable than other crops, they grow it on their lands.

Thousands of farmers in villages of Lalmonirhat district are engaged into tobacco farming. It is
Almost impossible and also expensive to monitor the farming by deploying company’s own staff across the district. So, they are raising skills of the card holding farmers so that they could also train the non-card holding farmers at free of cost. The rural farmers are also happy as they get any kind of advices related to tobacco farming when needed. The card holding agents distribute their knowledge among the poor farmers to increase their profit. They turn free advisor for the tobacco farmers in villages. The motto is to produce more quality tobacco, and make more profit.

According to the local farmers, the tobacco companies have distributed cards among 20% of the farmers and all of them are solvent. Some of them got cards on their social and political grounds as well. They alleged that the card holding farmers usually commit to farm tobacco on five or 10 acres of lands. But, they do not actually farm tobacco on the agreed lands. They usually grow tobacco on one or two acres of lands. Moreover, they sell the agro-inputs supplied by tobacco companies at a higher rate to the other farmers or use them in growing other crops. After the cultivation finishes, they buy tobacco from the non-card holder farmers to meet their quota and sell at a good price. In the last season, said the non-card holding farmers, they had to sell tobacco by Tk 2500 per mound to the card-holding farmers. However, the card-holding farmers sold that tobacco at a good profit, from Tk 3800 to 4000 per mound. It refers that they have profited Tk 1300-1500 on average per mound. This amount of profit is...
impossible by cultivating tobacco. On the other side, the tobacco companies are also gaining profit without having any responsibility rather than using some of the card-holding agents. The non-cardholders, the larger section tobacco growers, are using the subsidized facilities like fertilizers, electricity and in some cases they are also applying subsidized irrigation of the government to grow tobacco for Company. Briefly, they take all responsibilities from investment to marketing.

The Local people, journalists, card holder and non-card holder farmers have opined that the tobacco companies do not provide any facilities to majority of the farmers/ non-cardholders (about 80% of the farmers). They do not collect tobacco from those farmers directly. They buy tobacco through the card-holding farmers or agents. According to newspaper reports and information from other sources, the farmers of the Hill tract and some other areas are to sell tobacco leaves on the prices fixed by the tobacco companies. Since there is no specific marketplace for tobacco trading in most areas, the farmers are to supply the produced at tobacco company storehouses. But the scenario is different in case of Lalmonirhat district that shares around 40% produces of all the tobacco leaves of the country. The ill tactics of the tobacco companies is different here. Not only from domestic level, temporary marketplaces are created in the district through influential card-holding farmers and the tobacco companies collect necessary tobacco from there.
From April to June every year around 13 – 16 educational institution premises are used twice a week as marketplace for tobacco leaves in Lalmonirhat district. Card-holding farmers or agents buy tobacco from there for Tobacco Company. Besides, bidi companies are also prominent buyer of the markets to buy low grade tobacco. Although all of the traders are from Lalmonirhat district, buyers belong to different parts of the country including Dhaka, Khulna, Kushtia, and Chittagong. Usually, Motihar, Jati and Virginia tobaccos are found at the markets. Around 350 tobacco farmers/ sellers and about 60 tobacco company agents actively participate in such markets. A farmer sells five – 20 mounds of tobacco in every market day. Locals said that among the all tobacco leaves that arrive in the market, 60% of them belong to Mathar & Jati, and 40% of them belong to Virginia. They also said that about 60% of the Virginia tobacco is bought by British American Tobacco agents or rich farmers and the remaining is bought by Dhaka tobacco and other companies. To be noted that, a part of the Virginia tobacco is bought by the agents from villages. Information from newspapers and local tobacco farmer reveals that the illegal marketplaces are run by some local influential farmers or agents. They are associates of the multinational and domestic tobacco companies and commonly known as agents. Most of them are involved in tobacco farming and are card-holding farmers. The common farmers said that though they
are selling tobacco on marketplace, they do not have chances for bargaining with the price. It is a kind of monopoly and a trap for them. They term such marketplace as company Hats (markets of companies’). About eight to nine years ago, the marketplaces held in three or four school premises and now it is gradually increasing in the area and reached current condition. One of the card holding farmer said that if there is market for food crops, there should be also markets for tobacco leaves. The tobacco farmers have nowhere to go to sell their products. Tobacco Industry Watch BD could not satisfy them with answers of such queries. Someday the food crops market will turn tobacco trading hub by this way with association of the tobacco companies.

**Government and Farmers (card-less) Bears Cost, Companies Get the Cream**

Exploiting the government facilities in Lalmonirhat district like subsidized fertilizers, irrigation, and using the card holding farmers as agents, the tobacco companies are benefitting themselves in different ways. The scenario for using subsidized fertilizers (Urea and TSP) is terrible. According to the district agri-office, around 50,000 hectares of lands have been used for tobacco cultivation in the current season. To grow tobacco, per 33 decimals of lands need 60KG Urea and 100KG TSP on average. On that outline, in the current season, around 598,000,000 KG fertilizers (Urea 224,252,320 KG and TSP 373,753,000 KG) have been used for tobacco cultivation in the district. The government is currently subsidizing Tk 24 for per KG Urea and Tk 18 for per KG TSP. However, the tobacco companies provide fertilizer to the card-holding farmers only by their own initiative. The locals are on doubt that whether the fertilizers actually belong to the company or not. At times there were newspaper reports over the issue. Nonetheless, the government has subsidized over Tk 91 crore in the current season even if 25% of the subsidy is deducted considering 20% of the card-holding farmers use

The huge subsidy provided by the government is being used for tobacco cultivation that is harmful for public health. But this is the scenario for Lalmonirhat district only. The countrywide scenario is more terrible. In the country 1, 08, 000 hectares of lands have been used for tobacco cultivation and accordingly 129, 100, 000 KG fertilizers (Urea 48438502 KG and TSP 80730800 KG) have been used. The government has subsidized millions of TK for the fertilizers. Tobacco companies are grabbing their profits every year by these ways. It is leading the country to food shortage. However, the tobacco companies will not take any responsibility for providing capital and other agro-inputs as long they are exploiting such options.

How Tobacco Farming Damages

Due to tobacco farming, Lalmonirhat district is also experiencing different socio-economic, environmental, climatic, health and educational damages like the other areas. Apart from poisonous emissions of tobacco furnaces, tobacco leaves are found everywhere in the localities of the district and even yards, bedrooms, walls, cowsheds, kitchens, gardens, roads etc. are being used to dry tobacco leaves. There is hardly any place where you can breathe fresh air. Besides, the agents have prepared special rooms in government lands with the help of tobacco companies. They also use school fields and even the premises of religious establishments. Tobacco farming reduces lands fertility, threat for food security, poses health hazards, inspire child
Child Labour

The Locals and school teachers of Lalmonirhat district have opined that children are being used in all of the steps of tobacco farming including planting to marketing. Most of the children are to involve into tobacco processing as part of their familial business. Investigations in Saptibari under Aditmari upazilla and Khuniagachh under Lalmonirhat district have found that tobacco farming has taken an expanded shape in the areas. Each and every of the houses are filled with tobacco leaves and even the surrounding places are also loaded with tobacco bunches. Sharp stench hits suddenly after entering into the villages. The stench spreads everywhere after the sun turns hot. In this stinky environment, children are found collecting tobacco leaves, sorting and pinning them on sticks to be dried on sun. Teachers, according to a report on the Daily Star on April 02, 2014, said that those children who work with tobacco processing are different from the common children regarding their health and shape. There is no result in forbidding them for working in tobacco processing. The school goers are gradually getting involved with tobacco processing. They sort, bundle and place the leaves for drying under sun. Mostly they are seen working before and after their school and in the non-working days. They get a poor wage for their work, only Tk 30 – 40 for a day from the local tobacco traders. Tobacco Industry BD Watch Team, during its field investigation, has found that the students of religious institutions are taking tobacco leaves as donations. It indicates that the children are passing their childhood amid higher health and environmental risks. Tobacco aggression prevails from their home to educational institutions. Is there any future for them?
Damaging Lands Fertility and Hampering Food Security

Indiscriminate use of fertilizers and insecticides on Lalmonirhat lands is reducing fertility. Lands productivity is reducing gradually. Food shortage is a prominent issue now as the paddy growing lands are under tobacco clutch. Besides, tobacco farming needs three times more fertilizers than paddy which frequently creates fertilizer shortage in the district. Local farmers are aware of the negative impacts of tobacco on lands. They opined that paddy cultivation reduces on the lands if that was used for tobacco cultivation. But they also opined that growing Virginia for once a year is sufficient for them. It brings more profit for them than growing crops twice a year. In this way, our innocent farmers have been entrapping by the illusion of temporary profit offered by the tobacco companies. Lands fertility is being degraded.

Tobacco Oven Smoke Endangers Rural Environment

Though the tobacco companies do not use woods as fuel, they are making a kind of furnace using hay and other local materials as fuel to bake tobacco leaves. Locals said that smoke is created from the furnaces for around 30/40 minutes to bake tobacco leaves. Women and children of farmers’ families are mostly used for the baking process, said participants of the qualitative survey including farmers, local elites and mass media activists. The rural environment is being threatened for the smoke of such furnaces. In different villages of Lalmonirhat district around 200-250 furnaces have been built with the sponsorship of tobacco companies.

Health Hazards

The locals who are engaged with tobacco farming are suffering from different physical disorders. The people are getting affected with asthma, bronchitis, cancer and other fatal diseases for their close interaction with tobacco and tobacco leaves, opined local doctors. The children are the easy prey...
of such diseases being the most vulnerable part of the society. Besides, there are also numbers of damages for tobacco cultivation happens and needs to be addressed through proper researches. If the damage severity and level is unknown, prevention is not possible.

Few Recommendations and Cautions

Recommendations

Tobacco cultivation has been increasing indiscriminately. Any government body, organization, ministry or the ministries altogether cannot get rid of the problem overnight. So, to stop the ill tactics of the tobacco companies, all the sufferers of tobacco farming should work together. Policy formulation and implementation by Health and Law Ministry is barely enough to control tobacco farming. In line with the policies formulated by Health Ministry, some researches should also be conducted for enlisting the other damages caused by tobacco cultivation. Types of aggressions by the tobacco companies and the victims should be identified. Besides, it should also be considered that if the existing law is sufficient to prevent the aggressions and protect the sufferers. Regarding new law and policy formulation, such issues should carefully be considered, listed and implemented. Some recommendations over preventing tobacco aggression, damages of cultivation, potential authority and policies to prevent the aggression etc. are pointed out:
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<tr>
<th>Aggression/Damages</th>
<th>Authorities</th>
<th>Potential policy</th>
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<td>Deforestation and other related damages</td>
<td>Environment and Forest Ministry, Ministry for Chittagong and Hill Tracts Affairs, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief</td>
<td>Forest Ministry and Ministry for Hill Tracts could formulate law banning tobacco cultivation in Hill Tracts as tobacco farming destroys forest resources.</td>
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<td>Agriculture Ministry, Food Ministry, Finance Ministry, Ministry for Industries and Commerce Ministry</td>
<td>Gradually banning of tobacco farming in the Northern part, Jessore, Kushtia and other important spots after declaring them as Food Production Zone.</td>
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<td>Ministries for Industry and Commerce could ban fertilizer production, import and marketing for tobacco cultivation. BCIC could mark words on each fertilizer sacks like ‘Not for Tobacco Farming’ etc.</td>
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<td>Electricity connection could be cut if any public or private irrigation facilities used for tobacco farming. The farming could be banned on BADC irrigation projects.</td>
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<td>Export duties for tobacco products should be raised gradually to discourage on production.</td>
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<td>The Удьпванন, ঘোড়ার, সুতিরাশ, বাড়ির শাফতের ও অপনদর উচ্চতা উৎপাদন অঞ্চলকে খাদ্য উৎপাদন জোর দান করে এখন এলাকায় তামাকচাঁয় নিষিদ্ধ করা/নিষেধ করা যায়।</td>
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<td>The শিরী এবং বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় তামাকচাঁয়ের জন্য সারের উৎপাদন ও আদানপ্রদান এবং নিষিদ্ধ করতে পারে। বিবিভাগি একটি অঞ্চল শিরী দিয়ে নিষিদ্ধ করা যেতে পারে। তামাকচাঁয়ের জন্য নাহ ইতালি ও বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় তামাকচাঁয়ের জন্য সারের উৎপাদন ও আদানপ্রদান এবং নিষিদ্ধ করে পারে। বিবিভাগি একটি অঞ্চল নিষিদ্ধ করে পারে। তামাকচাঁয়ের জন্য নাহ ইতালি ও বাণিজ্য মন্ত্রণালয় তামাকচাঁয়ের জন্য সারের উৎপাদন ও আদানপ্রদান এবং নিষিদ্ধ করে পারে। বিবিভাগি একটি অঞ্চল নিষিদ্ধ করে পারে।</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aggression/Damages</td>
<td>Authorities</td>
<td>Potential policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lands fertility reduction, hills, river banks and fallow-lands used for tobacco cultivation</td>
<td>Land Ministry, Forest and Environment Ministry, Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock</td>
<td>Tobacco farming reduces lands fertility. So, to discourage tobacco farming, a set of short and long run polices could be formulated and implemented.</td>
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<td>Health hazards, particularly for women and children</td>
<td>Health and family Welfare Ministry, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs</td>
<td>Considering the backward, ignored and dependent population, respective Ministries may formulate and implement policies declaring their use in tobacco farming hazardous.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child labour and child education</td>
<td>Ministry for Education, Law Ministry, Ministry for Women and Children Affairs</td>
<td>Ban of child labour in tobacco farming. Cancellation of the GSP by declaring that child labour is prevailing in tobacco farming.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-tobacco propaganda and mass confusion (research, CSR and media)</td>
<td>Ministry for Information</td>
<td>All forms of advertisements, confusing research, CSR activities should be banned.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity of the above aggressions and damage levels (if any)</td>
<td>Should be identified through research</td>
<td>Decisions should be taken on the research results</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**But, only the government cannot formulate or implement the mentioned rules and policies alone. Anti-tobacco organizations, mass media, civil society, root level private organizations should also come forward to solve the problem. Anti-tobacco**
attitude should be created among the farmers through research, meetings, evidence based advocacy. They should also be inspired on alternative crop cultivation and marketing of their produces through proper policy formulation and implementation.

Weak and twisted information cannot be used for advocacy rather research based information should be used, such as:

- Frequently, confusing information is found that tobacco farming causes deforestation. For instance, one (01) metric ton tobacco leaves baking needs half (0.5) metric ton woods. In the current season, 100,000 metric ton tobacco leaves baking destroyed 50,000 metric ton of woods as fuel. Such simple calculation will certainly jeopardize the ongoing advocacies against tobacco farming because half of the produced tobacco in the country does not need any fuel woods to be baked. Those are mostly dried under sun or heat in a special type of room.

- Statements like ‘Violence on women has increased for tobacco cultivation’ should carefully be delivered. Barisal, Khulna and Sirajganj is the areas where violence on women take place more than any other district, according to information (2007) of Adhikar, a humanitarian organization. But in these areas, there is almost no tobacco cultivation found.

- The gradual extinction of domestic fish species demands a scientific study. If the domestic fish species of non tobacco producing area extinct, there are some other causes behind the happening.

- In the short run, tobacco farming is financially profitable and it is unnecessary to create an opposite scenario using the farmers. Rather they should be directed to alternative crop production and marketing, and the respective all including the donor agencies and the government should be convinced on executing the directives.

- The level and intensity of damage caused by tobacco cultivation is regionally different. So, advocacy cannot say to adopt the same action plans in general across the country.