

## FOREST NOTES AND OBSERVATION

### (I)

#### OBSERVATION ON *PHOENIX SYLVESTRIS* PLANTATION

*Phoenix sylvestris* is one of the prominent species found growing in rural landscape of alluvial region of West Bengal. This species yields poor quality date palm plant unlike *Phoenix dactylifera* which is famous for its fruits and extensively cultivated in North Africa, Middle East, USA (California).

But the species in West Bengal is widely tapped for its juice which is used as syrup or todi but largely converted as date palm gur/juggary which is the sweetener for famous Bengali sweets like Sandesh and Rosogolla. The especiality of the gur is its aroma. But with urbanization and intensification of cultivation as well as use of wood of the tree for fuel etc., date palm tree population has decreased considerably. But the tree has multipurpose value starting from the leaves used for making brooms, baskets, mats, etc. and sap for gur making besides juice and toddy, wood used as fuel, posts, etc. It is an ideal tree of common land for the poor and marginal population who can make a living.

During the period of social forestry project of the state, seeds of date palm and babul (*Acacia nilotica*) were sown in the first row of road side plantation in some areas. The seedling of other species like *Acacia auriculiformis*, *Terminalia arjuna* seedlings were planted in middle rows.

Recently about fifteen year plantation raised



on such model mentioned above were studied and found that most of the species planted earlier have been removed in course of time as per schedule but the entire area have been taken over by date palm in SuriBolepur (Santiniketan) Road along Sumupia Theghria mouza. The photo of the strip is shown above.

Presently the villagers are using the leaves for mat; basket and broom making. Within another few years with formation of stem, these plants will be suitable for tapping. As per local knowledge, such tree will yield at least one liter of juice which may yield about 200-250gm of gur. The market rate of gur varies from ₹ 80-100 per kilo in Suri market.

A.K.Lahiri, IFS (Retd.)  
Ex- Mangrove Community Dev. Expert,  
N-364, B.P. Township, Sravantika  
Kolkatta - 700094 (West Bengal)