

Rampant hill cutting poses threat to CHT environment

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from Khagrachhari

Despite a government ban, illegal hill cutting continues unabated in different parts of Khagrachhari, posing serious threat to natural environment and biodiversity of the hill district.

A group of influential people including some dishonest businessmen are involved in illegal hill cutting, sources said.

This syndicate employs a number of daylabourers in hill cutting at different areas in the district paying Tk 100 to 120 per day as wages.

The unscrupulous businessmen supply hilly soil to fill up canals and low lands for con-

structing houses and markets in Chittagong city and its adjacent areas.

"Soil supply has become a profitable business among the hill cutters as they need only a little investment for a huge profit. A truck of hilly soil is sold at Tk 500," sources said.

Hill cutting causes landslides in rainy season in Khagrachhari decreasing soil fertility and damaging life and property in the district, environmentalists alleged.

The hill cutting is a common sight at Shalban, Comilla Tila, T&T building area, Sabujbag, New Police Line area, Panchmire area, D C Hills, Jail Hills, Roads and Highway Rest House Hills, Dalia Bridge area on Chittagong-Khagrachhari

Road, Boalkhali in Dighinala upazila, Tetultala and No-1 Kadamtali area.

Besides, hill cutting is going on in full swing in all the eight upazilas of the district.

Sources said some government establishments are now dangerously exposed to collapsing during rainy season due to hill cutting.

By cutting hill, the public works department also had constructed a dormitory building for Textiles Vocational Institute at Shalban area while an influential person developed a commercial plot at Hospital Road in the town.

Local environmental activists and journalists filed several general diaries with police stations in regard to hill cutting. But

the administration is yet to take any effective steps to protect the hills from depletion.

Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) issued on February 27 a legal notice to secretaries of three ministries for taking immediate actions against the plunderers of hills. The ministries were environment and forest, land and public works.

Bela also issued notice to divisional commissioner of Chittagong, deputy commissioner of Khagrachhari, environment departments in Dhaka and Chittagong, SP of Khagrachhari and UNO of Dighinala upazilla in this regard.



Despite an official ban, illegal hill cutting continues unabated in Khagrachhari.

BRUTALITY CAUGHT IN FRAMES



STAR PHOTO

Visitors look at photographs displaying police atrocities on photojournalists at the Chittagong divisional stadium on April 16. Students of journalism department of Chittagong University organised the exhibition on the Chittagong Press Club

CDA takes initiative to set up two garment villages

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) has taken an initiative to set up two garment villages in the port city to cater for the needs of garment sector, the largest revenue earner of the country.

Under the initiative, CDA plans to develop the garment villages on some 114 acres of its land at Mansurabad in Agrabad and at Mohora in Chandgaon.

Responding to the long cherished desire and proposal made by the leaders of Bangladesh Garments Manufacturers' and Exporters' Association (BGMEA), CDA Chairman already held a preliminary discussion with Housing and Public Works Minister Mirza Abbas.

The minister also reportedly gave an assurance that his ministry will extend all-out help and cooperation and invited the BGMEA leaders to discuss the project involving over Tk 50 lakh, sources said.

The BGMEA leaders wanted to meet the minister on April 19. But the meeting did not take place on the day because of the sit-in programme of the 14-party opposition combine in Dhaka.

"We now intend to meet the minister by the end of this week or next week," said BGMEA First Vice-President SM Abu Tayyab while talking to this correspondent on Monday.

"The minister responded positively to the proposal," he added.

CDA sources said that if the development authority gets the

ministry's nod, it would start the process of setting up the garment villages on some 64 acres of land at Mansurabad and on some 50 acres of land at Mohora by this year.

The planned sites were likely to offer the best communication and other facilities to make the proposed villages very lucrative ones, attracting huge investment in this sector, BGMEA leaders said.

At present, the port city has over 650 garment units producing some 40 per cent of the total garment products in the country and thus contributing a lot to the national economy, according to sources.

The necessity of garment villages was strongly felt when the garment sector started facing new challenges of the post-MFA

era and the buyers also started putting pressure to develop standard and safety compliance in order to ensure the quality of products and rights of the workers.

The demand for separate garments was raised once again after the country's worst-ever factory fire incident left more than 60 KTS garments workers dead on February 23 and put a dent on the sector.

It prompted the BGMEA leaders in Chittagong to pursue the proposal made by the Chittagong City Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury back in 1999 to set up garment village in Fateyabad area.

But the Chittagong City Corporation reportedly disappointed the BGMEA leaders in this regard.

In the wake of the KTS garments fire, CDA also launched a drive against the garment units set up in residential or commercial buildings and asked the 59 garments owners to shift their factories to industrial buildings.

The BGMEA leaders then met CDA Chairman Shah Mohammad Akhter Uddin and proposed setting up garment villages in Chittagong.

Following the meeting held early this month, the CDA chairman forwarded the proposal to Housing Minister Mirza Abbas.

And positive response from the minister encouraged the BGMEA leaders to go ahead with proposal, sources said.

The BGMEA leaders hoped that the ministry would give its nod soon for starting the process of setting up garment villages.

theweekthatwas

Land allocated to Ma-O-Shishu Hospital

The government has allocated a plot of land to Chittagong Ma-O-Shishu Hospital, which will be upgraded to a general hospital.

The hospital leased out the land on a long term at a nominal charge of Tk one lakh and one thousand to help the hospital implement several other projects, including a medical collage.

The hospital authority had long been trying to take up a lease on the land and finally got the approval from the prime minister after six ministries okayed the lease.

Directors of the hospital disclosed this at a press briefing on Saturday.

Hospital President Prof Dr Fazlul Karim read out a written statement at the press briefing where Vice-President SM Abu Taher, Fauzul Ali Khan, General Secretary Dr Anjuman Ara Islam, Prof Dr Nurun Nabi, Dr MA Mannan, Alhaj Noor Mohammad and Morshed Hossain were present.

Youth Revolt Day observed

Speakers at a discussion urged all to

forge a massive movement against 'vulgar culture' of Western media that are leading the young generation astray.

The discussion was organised by Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal (BSD), Chittagong unit, to mark the 'Chattagram Jubo Bidroha Dibash' (Youth Revolt Day) on Wednesday.

The discussants also called on the young generation to learn from the history and glorious past of the nation and develop their latent talent.

BSD central Convenor Khalequzzaman was present as chief guest at the meeting while BSD Chittagong Coordinator Razequzzaman Ratan presided.

Later, members of Charon Sangskritik Kendra performed in a musical session.

Concern over T&T call charge hike

Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCCI) President Saifuzzaman Chowdhury has expressed concern over the decision to raise call charge of state-run land phone.

In a statement on Wednesday, he observed that the increase in the charge for calls from Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTB) land phone to other mobile operators would have a negative impact on business.

Thus it would affect the country's economy as well as socio-economic system, he added.

"There is no logical reason for increasing call charge when the call charges in other countries are decreasing day by day," Saifuzzaman observed.

He urged the government to cancel the decision for the sake of the commercial and economic activities and to take steps to reduce mobile phone call charges.

Seminar on money laundering

Speakers at a seminar on Saturday urged all to come forward alongside the banks to help curb money laundering that is hampering the development of the country.

The seminar titled 'Money Laundering and its Cure' was organised by International Islamic University, Chittagong (IIUC) at the Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) conference room.

IIUC Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr AKM Azharul Islam was present as the chief guest while Science Faculty Dean Prof Dr Syed Mohammed Atahar presided.

Mohammed Harunur Rashid, general manager of Bangladesh Bank, Chittagong, presented the keynote paper.

The IIUC VC said every conscious person should be alert and come

forward to help the banks to check the menace.

Associate Professor Abdul Jalil Chowdhury of BIBM and Farid Ahmad Chowdhury of IIUC also spoke.

Bishwa Sahitya Kendra festival



STAR PHOTO

Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed gives away prizes to a winner of book reading programme of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra at Municipal Model High School in Chittagong on April 21.

Eminent educationist Prof Abdullah Abu Sayeed called on the guardians and parents to encourage their children to read books more and more to help them widen their mental and intellectual horizon.

He was speaking as chief guest at the festival of Bishwa Sahitya Kendra, Chittagong unit held on the ground of

Municipal Model High School on Friday.

Chairman of Chittagong Education Board Prof AJM Shahidullah, eminent columnist Anisul Hoque, TV personality Dr Abdun Noor Tusher, Chittagong City Corporation Chief Education Officer Prof Roushan Akhter Hanif also spoke at the ceremony chaired by Alex Alim, organiser of Bishwa Sahitya

Kendra, Chittagong unit.

Later, prizes were distributed among the winners of a book reading programme organised by the Bishwa Sahitya Kendra.

Tk 12 lakh disbursed among farmers

Fisheries and Livestock Minister Abdullah Al Noman has called for imparting training and providing easy loan for poultry, fisheries and livestock farming to help boost rural development.

The minister was speaking as the chief guest at a loan disbursement programme of Department of Livestock, Chittagong district, at Chittagong Veterinary University auditorium on Saturday.

The minister observed that the economic and overall development of the country depends on the development of villages that make up around 90 per cent of the total land area.

At the ceremony, 235 farmers of 13 upazilas of the districts received cheques for Tk 11.85 lakh in small loans under a poverty alleviation scheme.

The loan disbursement was aimed at encouraging poultry, goat and fish farming. The farmers will also be trained in this regard.

Presided over by Deputy Commissioner Dr Syed Nesar Ahmed Rumi, the ceremony was addressed

by Chittagong Veterinary University Principal Nitish Chandra Debnath, Regional Director Mohammad Abdul Hye of Poultry Farm Department, Divisional Livestock Department Deputy Director Abdul Latif and District Livestock Officer Fazlul Haq Khan.

CWCCI executives

Chittagong Women Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CWCCI) launched its operation in the port city on Monday, aiming to protect women's economic rights.

They also announced a 24-member committee of the chamber at a press conference at Chittagong Club Limited. Chamber Vice-President Umme Fatema read out a written statement.

The members of the committee are president - Monwara Hakim Ali, senior vice-president - Khaleda A Awal and vice-president - Umme Fatema.

And the directors are Kamrun Malek, Selina Ahmed, Bilkis Dada, Gulshan Ali, Sabera Sarwar Nina, Bilkis Rashed, Ruseli Rahman Mahmud, Amena Kaiser Ali, Fabiana Mohsin, Angela Baishakhi Mendis, Sharmin Hossain, Shahina Ziad, Kohinur Kamal, Sunanda Dey, Zinat Ara Nipun, Tanzima Ali, Rokhsana Akhter Chowdhury, Akhter Banu, Nafisa Sultana Tareq, Yasmin Khan and Jasmine Akhter.