

Indiscriminate logging going on in two dists

By Staff Correspondent

Brick field owners of Sirajganj and Panchagarh districts are indiscriminately logging trees to use in kilns causing extensive damage to the ecosystem.

Our Sirajganj correspondent says: Unplanned and mushroom growth of brick fields have been threatening the environment.

Unabated use of timber instead of coal is contributing to ecological imbalance. With the start of brick cutting season thousands of maunds of timber are being stocked in brick fields.

Excepting bamboo branches, use of any other timber is prohibited in brick fields. A violator of this rule is supposed to be punished with imprisonment or fined Tk 50 thousand or both.

However, none seems to be careful in using timbers. Brick field owners are collecting timbers from different fruit bearing trees by paying price in advance from the rural areas. If this trend is continued ecological balance is feared to be in disarray in near future.

Brick field owners are using timber instead of coal before the very nose of the authorities concerned. Administration and law-enforcing agencies remain silent due to reasons best known to them. There is a clear directive from the Environment Department that brick field can be set up only on the banks of river or canal or beside any large water body. Earth should be used in the field which may be collected from that river canal or water body. Besides, to release smoke there should be a 120 feet high chimney. But almost all the chimneys used in the brick fields in Sirajganj are found to be 40-50 feet high.

People of Sirajganj, Belkuchi, Raiganj, Tarash, Kazipur, Ullapara, Shazadpur, and Kamarkhand where most of the fields are situated are the direct sufferers of brick manufacturing hazards.

Carbon mixed smokes are emitting through the short smoke releasers of those fields which cause illness among the children in these areas. Many fruit bearing trees, nowadays, do not bear fruit.

Virtually government officials are encouraging unplanned and illegal setting up of brick fields by approving site, providing bank loan and conducting on-the-spot inspection. In this way they are regularising the irregularities.

In such a situation some unscrupulous brick traders are damaging the environment unchecked and unhindered. None seems to have any headache about the matter. Not only the carbon mixed smoke, but waste of brick field is another threat to environment. Where a brick field is set up, the land loses its fertility for cultivation. Brick field owners make money, land owners and contractors erect building, government officials make money taking bribes by allowing to continue the bad practice, but they are spoiling the health of the next generation. But who cares?

UNB from Panchagarh reports: Caught up in their own business, brick field owners seem to have forgotten about the environment.

A failure by the concerned department to check the widespread felling of trees for brick fields could set back the ongoing campaign to protect the environment," said an NGO official.

He said hundreds of tons of timber are being burnt in 50 brick fields here everyday and most of the brick fields have been set up without permission from the authorities concerned.

Although 22 of the brick fields have permission from the Deputy

Commissioner, they did not take approval from the Environment Department.

Official sources said 28 brick field owners, who applied for permission to the Deputy Commissioner, have already started their business before getting the approval.

As per the Brick Burning Control Act 1992, one is supposed to suffer maximum 10 years' imprisonment or be fined Tk 50,000 or be punished by both for carrying out activities contrary to the law. "The country has laws to bring the offenders to book but those are not practiced," the NGO official observed.

Locals said brick field owners buy trees from poor villagers and fell those indiscriminately in connivance with a section of dishonest government officials although there is a taskforce to oversee such activities.

They said winter is the season when poor people sell their trees to the brick field owners at throwaway prices.

According to the Brick Burning Control Act, maximum 1.5 acres of land could be used for a brick field, but in practice many field owners use 3 to 5 acres of land for a brick field.

It's also mandatory, according to the law, to install a minimum 50-feet high chimney with filter in every kiln for emission of smokes, but the owners care little about it.

Using of lower chimneys in kilns sends vaporous waste, dust, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, fluorine, lead and black smoke into the air, polluting the environment and exposing the people to various diseases.

Production in croplands around the brick fields is also falling sharply due to adverse impacts of the brick fields, frustrating the poor farmers.

While visiting some brick fields in Boda and Debiganj upazilas, villagers told that farm output in their areas declined substantially and many people got inflicted with various diseases after setting up of the brick fields.

They said the law permits to burn 4 lakh bricks a year in a one-chimney field, but unscrupulous owners burn 20 lakh bricks every year in collaboration with local authorities.

Apart from the allegation of damaging the environment, there are also allegations against the brick field owners of evading VAT, income tax and commercial land tax every year depriving the government of huge revenues.

A circular from Land Ministry in 1990 said DCs could only allow unfertile and fallow land for setting up of brick fields. But in most cases the ministry's order was overruled.

The government circular also says a brick field owner must collect certificates relating to environment and location of brick field from the departments concerned for getting a license. "But these rules are frequently violated in the district," said an official.

He said one who breaks environment-law is supposed to be jailed for five years or be fined Tk 1 lakh. "But we never saw anyone to have been punished under this law. We can save the environment to a large extent by properly enforcing these laws," he added.

Eight skeletons recovered from mass grave of '71 at Nizami's village

From Akhteruzzaman Bablu

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 8: Eight skeletons of martyrs were recovered following excavation of a mass grave of the liberation war on Thursday at the village home of Moulana Moltur Rahman Nizami, new central Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami at Mega Thakur house under Kormoja village of Santhia upazila in Pabna district.

The excavation work was started at 12 noon on Thursday in presence of State Minister for Information Prof Abu Sayeed, Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Pabna, political leaders, freedom fighters and thousands of people.

On May 8 in 1971 the Occupation Pakistan Army in collaboration with the local collaborators (Rajakars and Al-badars) raided the village and caught many villagers. Afterwards they forced them stand in a line and shot them to death. Then the Occupation Pak Army dumped them in a grave.

The following persons became martyrs at that time. They are Fakir Mahmud, Habibur Rahman, Ghoshti Halkder, Kartik Halder, Suresh Halder, surendra Nath Bhattacharya, Santi Halder, Adu Halder, Djendra Nath Bhattacharya, Karu Bhattacharya, Surail Sale and Somir Uddin.

After recovery of skeletons of the martyrs, the State Minister and others present there burst into tears creating a heart-rendering scene.

Netrakona was freed on Dec 9

From Jahangir Alam

NETRAKONA, Dec 8: December 9, 1971 is a red-letter day for the people of Netrakona as they were liberated on the day 29 years back from the Pakistani occupation after months of fighting.

On the day occupation soldiers were forced to flee the town following a fierce fighting with the freedom fighters. Abu Siddik Ahmed commanded the freedom fighters. In the fighting, three freedom fighters sacrificed their lives for the cause of national independence. The martyred freedom fighters are Abu Khan, Abdul Aziz and Abdur Rashid.

The Pakistani army entered Netrakona through Mymensingh road on April 21, 1971. On the first day of their invasion they killed, among others, Sidhartha Sen, a student leader, Shankar Sen, Dr Mihir Sen and Kharuna Saha. And soon after the killings, students, common people and members of Ansar posted in the then subdivision forged strong unity to wrest the independence from the clutches of the Pakistanis.

Having received training youths started encountering the occupation soldiers. For the first time they encountered the soldiers in Baro Mani area under Kalmakanda upazila in July 1971.

Another important face-to-face encounter took place at Bijoypur under Durgapur upazila on August 14. In this battle, three enemy soldiers were killed. After this fighting, General Niazi rushed to Netrakona town and held a public meeting at local Muktar Para field on August 22, 1971. Niazi tried to mobilise public support in favour of Pakistan, but all went in vain.

In the war many freedom fighters sacrificed their lives. Of them, the names of valiant freedom fighters Badiuzzaman Mukta and Dabir Uddin are worth mentioning. While gathering secret information Badiuzzaman Mukta was arrested with grenade by the occupation Pakistani army. Mukta shouted 'We must be independent, Joy Bangla, Joy Bangla' before he was gunned down by the Pakistani army.

Mitali Sangha, a social organisation, has constructed a memorial paying tribute to Badiuzzaman Mukta. Valiant freedom fighter Dabir Uddin was also arrested by the occupation forces with grenade. Subsequently he was shot dead in Chalissha Bridge area under Sadar upazila.

Netrakona was finally liberated after a fierce fighting in Krishi Farma area at about 4 am on December 9. After this fighting the freedom fighters entered the town, much to the happiness and relief of the people.

2,565 mts of wheat for 484 uplift schemes in Hobiganj

HOBIGANJ, Dec 8: Government has allocated 2,565 mts of wheat for implementing 484 uplift schemes in eight upazilas and four municipalities under Food for Works and TR programmes, reports UNB.

The District Relief and Rehabilitation Department said of the total, 237 mts have been allocated for 30 schemes in Sadar, 309 mts for 26 schemes in Nabiganj, 304 mts for 33 schemes in Baniachang, 112 mts for 11 schemes in Azmiriganj upazilas under the Food for Works programme.

Moreover, 142 mts of wheat have been allocated for 18 schemes in Laghai, 316 mts for 34 schemes in Madhabpur, 301 mts for 40 schemes in Chunarughat and 176 mts for 15 schemes in Bahubal under the same programme.

The schemes include construction and renovation of dam and roads and excavation and re-excavation of ponds.

Besides, under the TR programme a total of 668 mts of wheat have been allocated in seven upazilas and for municipalities.

Of the wheat, 91 mts have been sanctioned for 35 schemes in

Sadar, 108 mts for 44 schemes in Nabiganj, 107 mts for 41 schemes in Baniachang, 61 mts for 29 schemes in Azmiriganj, 68 mts for 27 schemes in Laghai, 110 mts for 48 schemes in Madhabpur and 106 mts for 46 schemes in Chunarughat upazilas.

Besides, 11 mts of wheat have been allocated for implementing four schemes in Hobiganj Municipality while two mts for one scheme in each municipality of Nabiganj, Madhabpur and Shayestaganj.

The schemes include construction of roads and dam, school, madrasah, mosque, temple, pipe culvert, bridge and tree plantation.

Seed scarcity to hit IRRI-Boro cultivation

MANIKGANJ, Dec 8: IRRI-Boro cultivation there may face a setback due to acute shortage of seeds, reports UNB.

The farmers said that short supply of high yielding seeds prevented many of them from preparing the seedbeds within the sowing month of 'Kartik', which is now past.

Finding no other alternatives, they are preparing their lands for other crops.

Meanwhile, Agriculture Extension Department has taken up a scheme to bring 40,200 hectares of land here under HYV paddy cultivation with an output target of 40 kgs per decimal.

News snaps

Erosion threatens highway

GOPALGANJ, Dec 8: Erosion by the River Madhumoti has taken a serious turn threatening one km part of Dhaka-Mawa-Khulna Highway in Kalna-Bhatlapara area, reports UNB.

Locals feared that a large portion of the road in the area might be eroded away anytime, as the river is now only 15-20 feet away from the road. Road communication between Dhaka and the southern districts, including Khulna, Jessore and Narail, will be snapped if the road is damaged by erosion.

Uplift activities hampered

COMILLA, Dec 8: Arrear holding tax in local municipality rose to 1.96 crore hampering its development activities, reports UNB.

Official sources said the amount of the unpaid holding tax heaped up as 5,000 owners refrained from paying their dues since June 1999. Of the outstanding amount, private house or shop owners owe Tk 1.17. The authorities have already issued final notices to the owners to pay their overdue taxes or face the legal action. Political leaders, businessmen, owner of residential hotels and private clinics and lawyers were among the defaulters.

Loan for creating job opportunity

NARSINGDI, Dec 8: The Bangladesh Rural Development Board (BRDB) has earmarked loan of Taka 1 crore 14 lakh for distribution here in six upazilas here for the current fiscal year, reports BSS.

BRDB already disbursed Taka 27 lakh among 392 poor men and women in six upazilas during the last five months of the current fiscal year, official sources said. The loan was disbursed for creating employment opportunity and socio-economic development of the marginal farmers and poor people. Meanwhile, BRDB has launched a new project, Rural Livelihood Project, financed by Asian Development Bank, in five upazilas from October this year. The overall objective of this project is to support the government's poverty alleviation efforts through creation of sustainable farm and non-farm employment opportunities among the poor people of the community.

Loan for distressed women

MANIKGANJ, Dec 8: Jatio Mohila Sangstha has distributed a total of Taka seven lakh, as loan, among 26 distressed women under 'Women Entrepreneur Development Project' recently, reports BSS.

The loan was distributed by Sheikh Mozahar Uddin, Deputy Commissioner of Manikganj. The loan to be re-paid by 24 monthly installments with a minimum interest, has been distributed among the distressed women for buying sewing machine, rice-crushing machine, knitting machine and running small business, to help them attain self employment. The financial help of the loan has been given by UNDP.

Work on rural roads begins

PANCHAGARH, Dec 8: Under the Project of Rural Roads Development on Priority Basis, work for four rural roads has been started, reports BSS.

LGED Panchagarh is supervising the work. An amount of Taka 40 lakhs has been sanctioned for this purpose. Under the programme, Boda-Menagram Road, Shakoa-Nayadighi Road, Maidandighi-Zhaloi Shalshiri Road and Maidain Dighi-Tepukhuria Road will be made pucca.

Founding anniversary

COMILLA, Dec 8: The 11th founding anniversary of Vivekananda Parishad was observed at Ramkrishna Ashram on December 1, reports BSS.

A discussion meeting, prize distribution and cultural function was held on this occasion. Chairman of Comilla Education Board Prof Arun Kumar Bhattacharya was present as the chief guest. Prof Shanti Ranjan Bhowmik, President of Vivekananda Parishad presided over the meeting. Prof Narayan Chandra Advocate, Kalyan Kumar Saha, Swapan Kumar Dey, Prahlad Deb Nath, Tapan Kumar Pal, Shakun Chandra Saha spoke on the occasion. Chief guest Prof Arun Kumar Bhattacharya distributed prizes among the winners of cultural competition.

Disabled Day observed

MANIKGANJ, Dec 8: The International Disabled Day was observed here under the joint auspices of the District Administration, Social Welfare Department, Bangladesh Pratibandhi Kalyan Society (BPKS), ADAB and Social Development Project on Sunday, reports BSS.

A rally paraded the main roads of the town on this occasion. A discussion was held at Captain Halim Chowdhury Auditorium. The meeting was presided over by Iqbal-Uz-Zaman, Deputy Director of Social Welfare Department. Abul Kalam Azad Chaklader Additional Deputy Commissioner, Manikganj was present in the meeting as the chief guest. The meeting was addressed, among others, by Australian Representative Kery Wills, Vice-President of ADAB Laxmi Chatarjee, Chairman Jatyo Mohila Sangstha Abdul Khaleque.

Construction work progressing

PANCHAGARH, Dec 8: Under the Construction Project for Bridges and Culverts Damaged by Floods, the construction of two bridges is progressing, reports BSS.

The Roads and Highways Department, Panchagarh is supervising the work.



A big tree was uprooted inside the premises of Mymensingh Women's Teachers Training College by a nor'wester in April this year. But the college authorities still did not remove the uprooted tree from the wall adjacent to a busy road in the district town. When contacted with principal of the college Dr Fazul Haque, he expressed his ignorance saying the tree being property of the government would be removed in due time under legal process. —Star photo

Mother kills son, daughter

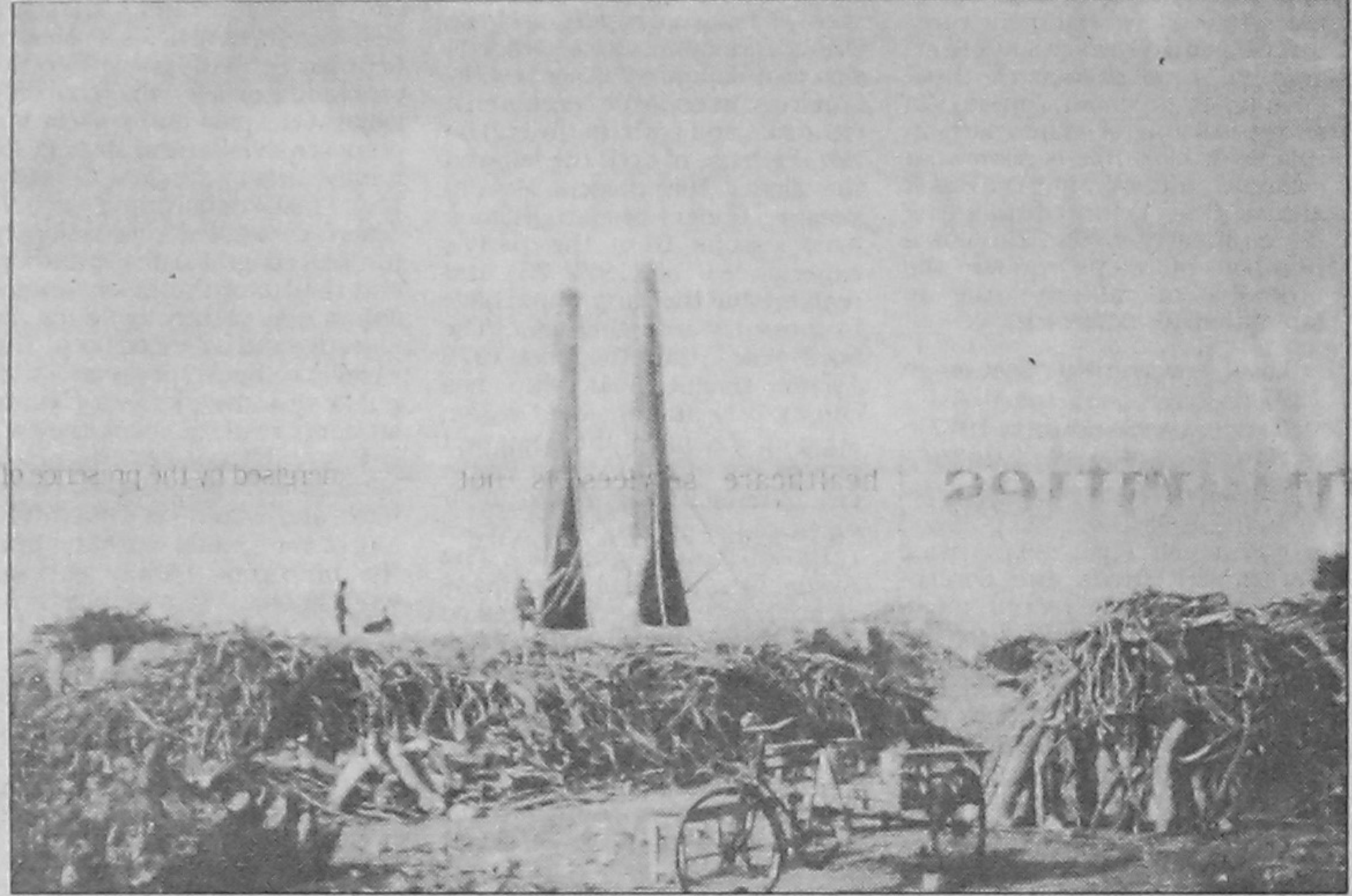
From Our Correspondent

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 8: A woman of an indigenous community has slaughtered her two children apparently to 'appease' goddess Kali.

The Santal mother at Bostul village under Tarash upazila here recently 'sacrificed' Binash Chandra Uran, 5, and Swapna Rani, 7. According to police, Shiban Rani, 35, wife of Mallik Chandra Uran, slaughtered the boy and the girl after what she said the Hindu goddess appeared in her dream and ordered her to do so.

Father of the children was not at home during the occurrence.

After slaughtering the children, who were sleeping, the woman ran to Kali temple at neighbouring Gulta village and started ringing the temple bell.



Smokes of a brick field near Gazaria village under Sadar upazila in Sirajganj district polluting the environment of the surrounding area. But the authorities concerned do not take note of such an alarming situation for reasons best known to them. —Star photo

Tender Notice

Name of work: Construction of new chain link fencing removing the old barbed wire fencing of Sadardj 33/11 KV sub-station of Bhanga Electric Supply under Distribution Division, PDB, Faridpur. Eligibility of contractor: Power Development Board's ABC & D class contractors having VAT registration certificate & past experience of the said work. Price of tender: Tk 100/= (one hundred) only per set to be submitted in the form of Bank Draft/Pay Order in favour of Deputy Director (Accounts), ZAO, PDB, Faridpur. Place & date of having tender: Tender can be purchased from the office of the Chief Engineer, Distribution, West Zone, PDB, Khulna/ Superintending Engineer's Office, Operation & Maintenance Circle, PDB, Faridpur/Agrani Bank, Faridpur-ranch, Faridpur up to 20-12-2000. Date of receiving & opening tender: At the above mentioned offices (except bank) & the office of the undersigned upto 12-30 pm in presence (if any) of the attending tenderers. Other terms & conditions and all rules & regulations of tender described in the schedule should be complied with properly. Estimated cost: Tk 1,03,206/51 only.

Executive Engineer
Distribution Division
PDB, Faridpur
Biddut/Jana-990(3)/2000-2001
DFP-28967-29/11
G-2139

Auction Notice

Name of work: Sale of old and condemned air filter box in auction. Eligibility of contractors: 'Gha' class contractor of Power Development Board/any interested individual. Quantity of air filter to be sold: 2070 (two thousand seventy). Estimated expenditure: 1,34,922/60 (one lakh thirty-four thousand nine hundred twenty-two taka and sixty paise only). Cost of tender: 200/- taka (two hundred taka) (non-refundable). It will have to be deposited in the forms of BD/CD in favour of Deputy Director (Accounts), Regional Accounts Office, PDB, Rangpur. Place of availability of tender and date: With the prior permission from Chief Engineer (Generation), PDB, WAPDA Bhaban, Matijheel, Dhaka/Executive Engineer Rangpur 20 MW Gas Turbine Power Station, PDB, Rangpur tender can be purchased from Janata Bank, Lalbagh Market Branch, Rangpur till 01.01.2001. Dates of receiving and opening tender: In the offices mentioned (except bank) in the office of the undersigned on 02.01.2001 at 12.00 Noon and tenders will be opened the same day at 12-30 pm before the tenderers present (if anyone remains present). Other terms and conditions regarding auction as mentioned in the schedule and all rules and regulations will have to be followed properly.

Executive Engineer
20 MW Gas Turbine
Power Station
PDB, Rangpur
Biddut/Jan.-1020(4)/2000-2001
DFP-29240/30/11
G-2135

Bara Pukuria Mine Coal extraction may begin by December next year

DINAJPUR, Dec 8: Bara Pukuria Coal Mine is expected to be ready for commercial extraction by December 2001, reports UNB.

About 3,000 metric tons of coal per day may be extracted from the mine initially. Works is in full swing on the project and so far 60 per cent of the work has been completed. Underground work is expected to be over by the end of this month.

There is high quality graphite in Bara Pukuria Coal Mine, which is not available anywhere in Asia, experts said.

After launching production, the mine project would help government reduce coal import and save crores of taka in foreign exchange.

Around 75 per cent of the coal would be used for thermal plants while rest 25 per cent in industries, brickfields, cooking and other necessary works.

In 1994, the government of Bangladesh took initiative to lift coal from the mine and signed an agreement with a Chinese company.

Petrobangla acquired 43 acres of land and accomplished preliminary works within three months.

The Chinese company started underground work, which had to be suspended for two years following a short circuit causing water logging. The work resumed in March this year.

Another fatwa victim seeks justice

NAOGAON, Dec 8: Being the victim of a fatwa (edict), Shahida Banu, a 16-year-old housewife, is now going from door to door seeking justice.

Not yet physically matured to bear child, Shahida Banu of village Aittha in Sadar upazila was married off with a 22-year-old man barely two years back and became pregnant.

Her plight began when a group of fatwabaz came to know that Shahida's husband Saiful Islam wanted to divorce her following a family feud last year.

One of Saiful's relatives, Jamaluddin, has coloured incident and said Saiful divorced his wife and it took effect from the day when Saiful uttered the word 'talak'.

Jamaluddin, said to be a madrasah teacher in Chittagong, declared Saiful-Shahida's living together illegal and advised them to go for hila (interim marriage for reunification with the first husband) and wait for a certain period for remarriage.

As Saiful's family turned down his proposal, Jamaluddin called the village headmen for arbitration on November 16 where they declared Shahida as divorcee. They also forcibly married off Shahida to one of her brother-in-laws in absence of Saiful.

"They did not stop there...they forced me to live with the man for three days who divorced me three days later at their dictate," Shahida said with tears rolling down her pale face.

Finding no other alternative, Shahida went to the house of her previous in-laws house but they declined to accept her, giving the fatwabaz another

opportunity to drive her out of the village.

The village headmen and the local UP chairman also assaulted Shahida's parents as they could not show the document of their (parents) marriage.

In another edict on September 9, they declared the conjugal life of Shahida's parents illegal and shaved the heads of the couple, splashed lime and soot on their faces, forced them to wear strings of shoes before compelling them to walk around the village.

The tragic story of Shahida came to limelight when she filed a case with Sadar thana, triggering widespread protest in the area.

In the face of continued protest, police arrested fatwabaz Moulana Azizul Islam and his son Masudun Nabi Rubel at the directive of the Deputy Commissioner and took the victims Shahida, her first husband Saiful Islam, father-in-law and second husband Shamsul into safe custody on December 3.

But the accused were released on bail on December 4.

The villagers alleged that an influential quarter is now trying to divert the incident and forcing Shahida's husband and father-in-law to settle the matter outside court.

Meanwhile, various human rights organisations expressed grave concern over the Shahida's incident and demanded punishment of those involved in it.

—UNB Feature

BCIC Tender Notice

Sealed quotation are invited by the Managing Director, Lira Industrial Enterprise Ltd, 82, Tongi Industrial Area, Gazipur for the following:

Sl No	Tender No	Description	Price of tender document Non-refundable	Terms of delivery	Due date of opening	Earnest money	Source of finance
1.	Lira/Por-F-4 2000-2001	PVC Resin (pipe grade)	600/-	C&F(C) Ctg	3-1-2001	1%	SEM/WES any suitable source.

Tender will be received up to 2:30 PM on the date mentioned above and will be opened in presence of the tenderers, if any. Tender document with detailed specifications will be available on all working days from BCIC Accounts Division, 30-31, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka, Accounts Section of Lira Industrial Enterprise Ltd, 82, Tongi Industrial Area, Gazipur and BCIC Branch Office, 6, Agrabad, Chittagong. No tender schedule will be sold on the opening day.

Management reserves the right to accept or reject any/all offers.
BCIC-1089.30/11/2000
DFP-29435-4/12

G-2147