

# Stone plunderers active again in Garo hills

Illegal quarries mushrooming under the nose of administration in two upazilas of Sherpur

**JAHANGIR ALAM**, back from *Sherpur*

Netrakona: Illegal stone extraction by organised syndicates has started again in Garo hills in Jinaigati and Nalitabari upazilas in Sherpur district, threatening ecological balance and depriving the government of huge revenue.

It remained stopped for about two years following vigilance by the local administration and law enforcers.

Stone are being collected now by digging earth in the hills, which will also cause massive landslides in the areas, local people said.

There are at least 35 such illegal quarries in the two upazilas.

This correspondent visited one such quarry at Rangtia village in Jinaigati upazila recently.

Local people said the stone

collectors get Tk 25 to Tk.30 for extracting one cubic feet of stone. Accumulated stones were seen on yards of almost every house.

It was gathered from the villagers that stone collectors and traders do not face any obstruction from the administration in extracting and transporting those.

Earlier, stones were collected by some designated contractors on orders from government departments for their use in construction of roads and protection of embankments of hill river in the area.

As stone collection is profitable, some powerful syndicates began the trade with blessings from certain people in the administration and in the Forest Department, local people alleged.

Aminul Islam a sub-contractor at

Rangtia village told this correspondent that traders enjoying blessings allegedly from some local ruling party leaders pay them regularly before collecting stones. There are 12 to 14 businessmen who buy stones from sub-contractors.

Aminul Islam said the big quarries in the areas are at Rangtia, Godagari, Lamapara in Jinaigati upazila and Baromary and Laochaprain Nalitabari.

Nurnnabi, a stone collector at Lamapara village in Jinaigati upazila said they collect stone by digging deep into the earth. To collect good quality stones, they have to dig up to 20 to 30 feet.

Nurunnabi said sub-contractors always press them to extract good stones by digging deep into the earth.

Some local people said, they complained to the administration and Forest Department officials, but the illegal stone collection has not been stopped.

When contacted, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) in Mymensingh Forest Division Akbar Hossen said they will take steps to stop the illegal stone collection. Hill cutting is strictly prohibited, so stone collection from hills is illegal, he said.

He admitted that the illegal extraction is threatening the ecological balance, which may trigger massive landslides in the coming monsoon.

Stone extraction also affects flow of water underneath the soil, which may ultimately turn the hills barren, he said.



## Hilsha export to India may stop again

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**, *Khulna*

Export of Hilsha fish from Bangladesh to India through Benapole land port may again be suspended any time.

According to customs sources, 15 truckloads of Hilsha fish were exported from June 8 to June 11. The export resumed after withdrawal of month-long suspension by Indian government.

Exporters said they are incurring loss as they are allegedly being 'victimised' by a section of officials of the Indian Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries. As a result, exports do not reach Kolkata markets in time, they alleged.

The Indian government had banned Hilsha import on May 16 this year. The ban was withdrawn following intervention by West Bengal Chief Minister Buddh Dev Bhattacharyya.

Earlier on June 1, the Fish Importers Association of West Bengal observed a daylong strike demanding withdrawal of the ban.

## One killed, 60 hurt in B'baria clashes

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**, *B'baria*

One person was killed and 60 people were injured in separate clashes in two villages in Brahmanbaria yesterday and the day before.

One Noorjahan Begum, 50, was killed and 10 people were injured in a clash at Talshahar Dakkinpara in Ashugonj upazila yesterday.

Police said the clash involving villagers ensued from a quarrel between two children.

Noor Jahan was admitted to the Sadar Hospital, where she succumbed to her head injuries. Autopsy of her body was done at the hospital, police said.

On Monday, about 50 people including two women were injured in a clash at Bagdar village under Nabinagar upazila. The clash took place between supporters of Awal and Latif, both local Union Parishad leaders and rivals for long.

Eighteen of the injured have been admitted to Nabinagar Upazila Health complex.

Eight of them were shifted to hospitals in Dhaka later.

After the clash, police recovered sharp weapons from the spot. Police said any case is yet to be filed.

# Complaint of corruption stops VGD programme

Allegation of selling wheat, detecting fake cards in Nilphamari Sadar

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**, *Nilphamari*

Distribution of food grains under Vulnerable Group Development (VGD) programme is suspended in Nilphamari the Sadar upazila following a complaint of corruption lodged by a World Food Programme (WFP) official.

Nilphamari District Relief Officer (DRO) Abdul Majid told this correspondent that WFP Assistant Field Officer (Rangpur region) Salma Begum in a written complaint to its Dhaka office in March said she found 100 bags of VGD wheat sold in the black market and stored in a godown of a trader in Ananda Babur Pool area in Nilphamari town.

She also complained that there were 'a number of fake VGD cards' in each union. The distribution is suspended since then.

At the directive of Nilphamari

Deputy Commissioner, a three-member team headed by the District Relief Officer probed the matter. The local UNO and the Women's Affairs Officer were other members of the team.

The DRO in his report said he did not find any irregularity as stated by the WFP official.

After that, another five-member committee was formed at the directive of food ministry to probe the matter. The committee headed by the Deputy Director (DD) of VGD section of Relief Directorate included the DD of Women's Affairs Directorate, WFP head in Rajshahi division and the District Relief Officer. The committee made a thorough investigation but its report is yet to be available to officials in Nilphamari.

A source in the District Women's Affairs Office claimed that there are

380 VGD cardholders in the 15 unions in Sadar Upazila and most of them are distressed women.

Asked by this correspondent, many VGD card holders alleged that they got food grains under VGD cards only once in the last five months since January. The VGD doles for the month of January was given in March.

They said they got a packet of 25 kilograms of flour though they were supposed to get 30 kgs against each VGD card.

Sources said the flour was distributed through an NGO, which received the wheat, crushed and supplied it to cardholders naming it 'Pushiti Atta'.

There is a committee in each union headed by the Union Parishad for distribution of the food grains.

# 'Most wanted' criminal joins KCC general meeting

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**, *Khulna*

'Most wanted' criminal Mohammad Hossain Mukta was given chance to attend the tenth special general meeting of Khulna City Corporation on Sunday as commissioner-elected from ward no. 31.

All facilities were provided to him to retain the post of ward commissioner as he could not attend two previous meetings, fearing arrest by police or Rab.

As per rule, a ward commissioner loses his post if he does not attend three consecutive general meetings of the City Corporation. Mukta did not attend two previous general meetings of KCC.

The listed most wanted criminal entered the conference room at 12-35 pm on Sunday and left the corporation soon after putting his signature on the attendance register in presence of Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman and all other ward commissioners.

The 10th special general meeting was called by the Mayor to get the Tk 284.55 crore KCC annual budget approved by ward commissioners.

When asked, Mayor Shaikh Tayebur Rahman told this correspondent that it was not his responsibility to arrest Ward Commissioner Mohammad Hossain Mukta.

"I was presiding over an open meeting on KCC budget and not a secret meeting of any party. All ward commissioners, no matter he is Mukta or any other else, are entitled to attend the general meeting", the Mayor said.

Ward Commissioner Mohammad Hossain Mukta is an unknown man to my law enforces deployed in the corporation to provide security to the Mayor.

Police men on duty there said they did not know that Mukta is a listed criminal, said Akbar Ali, DC

(Hq) of Khulna Metropolitan Police.

The wanted criminal managed to escape before we could know about his presence in the city corporation office, Akbar Ali said.

Six ward commissioners belonging to BNP and Awami League said they were also surprised to see Mukta in the general meeting. More surprising was how he could enter the corporation right under the nose of policemen and man of intelligence agencies, they said.

Mohammad Hossain Mukta, elected commissioner three times from ward no. 31 went into hiding in the face of operation by Rab. Both Rab and police have so far failed to arrest him despite searches.

Known to be the 'lord' of the Sundarbans, Mukta is still heading an organised gang of armed criminals, involved in piracy and plunder of forest resources.



Illegally extracted stones from Garo hills piled up at Rangtia village in Jinaigati upazila in Sherpur district.

PHOTO: STAR

## Houses of Hindu families attacked in Dinajpur

**A CORRESPONDENT**, *Dinajpur*

Two members of a Hindu family were injured when some miscreants attacked them and ransacked their house in the town Monday bight.

The injured are Pankaj Kumar Das and wife Krishna Rani. Krishna is being treated at Dinajpur Medical Collage Hospital for stab injuries, doctors there said.

Pankaj filed a complainant with Dinajpur Sadar police, accusing four unidentified miscreants. In the complaint, he said the miscreants also swooped on some other houses nearby and looted valuables.

Police visited the area yesterday morning. None has been arrested in this connection.

# PSTU students boycott classes demanding more teachers

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**, *Patuakhali*

Over 200 students of Computer Science and Engineering Faculty and BBA Faculty at Patuakhali Science and Technology Unniversity (PSTU) began an indefinite class boycott on Monday to press their demands including recruitment of adequate teachers.

The students earlier submitted a memorandum to the Vice-chancellor on June 8 to fulfil their demands.

Yesterday, they brought out a procession and held a rally on the

campus to press their demands.

It was addressed by among others Mehedi Hassan, Maruf Ahmed, Saifur Rahman, Rabiul Alam, Imran Hasan Babul and Kumar Payik.

At the rally they said there are only five teachers against 31 posts in the two faculties. So classes are not held regularly.

They also alleged that PSTU authorities are collecting various fees from students, which are at least three times higher than in Hazi Danesh Science and Technology University (HDSTU)

The HDSTU realises Tk 75 as credit fee, which is Tk 250 at PSTU. Likewise, Tk 300 is realised as students' sangsad fee against Tk 100 in HDSTU, they claimed.

There is no well-equipped laboratory and internet connection in the computer science faculty, they added.

When contacted, PSTU Vice-chancellor Prof. Dr. Wahid-uz-zaman said he is trying to solve the problems and meet students' demands.

# ACID ATTACK ON SATKHIRA WOMAN Warrant to arrest the accused

**OUR CORRESPONDENT**, *Satkhira*

A court here yesterday accepted a 'naraji' petition and issued arrest warrant against all the FIR- named accused who were earlier relieved of charge as the Investigation Officer (IO) had submitted final report in the sensational Belful Bibi acid throwing case.

Judge AKM Ahmed of the Special Tribunal for Women and Children Repression Prevention after a long hearing passed the order.

Belful Bibi, 45, of Sreeula village in Assassuni upazila was seriously injured when a gang of miscreants allegedly led by Azharul Islam and

Kamrul Islam of the same village swooped on her house, tied her with a rope and poured acid on her on January 2.

She was taken to Assassuni Hospital and later shifted to Satkhira Hospital.

Later, the Acid Survivors Foundation, an NGO, took her to Dhaka for better treatment.

The victim's son Shariful Islam went to Assassuni thana on January 3 to file a case but police there declined to record it. Later he filed a case with a First Class Magistrate court in Satkhira, accusing Zakir, Kamrul Islam, Azharul Islam and Fahima Parvin.

The court after a long hearing ordered the Officer-in-charge of Assassuni thana to record the case. Assassuni thana on January 27 recorded a case under Section 5(B) and 7 of the Acid Offence Preventive Act of 2002.

Sub Inspector Enamul Haq, IO of the case, allegedly in collaboration with the accused submitted a final report to the court on the plea that the complainant of the case failed to prove charge brought against the accused.

Later the victim's son filed a naraji petition with the special tribunal.

7x3

7x2

6x3