

Landless evicted to rehabilitate landless!

A CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

About 300 people of 65 families, most of them belonging to Hindu and indigenous communities, have been evicted from a 10- acre government land in Mostafapur union in Parbatipur upazila for a rehabilitation project for the landless.

The eviction at Baradal village took place on Wednesday.

This correspondent along with a group of newsmen visited the area yesterday and on Thursday and talked to some of the victims,

now under the open sky in nearby areas. All the evicted people are poor and landless.

They said they had been living in the government land for about 40 years. On Wednesday, about 150 people led by Mostafapur Union Parishad chairman and BNP leader Samsuddin Mondal swooped on their houses. They also looted some of houses and forcibly evicted them from the area, saying that a rehabilitation project for landless people will be built there.

They also claimed that a Magistrate and some policemen were present when the eviction took place.

They alleged that they were not given any prior notice to leave the area. But some musclemen of the UP chairman threatened them earlier to vacate the lands, they alleged.

The evicted families include those of Bara Harish, Nikhil, Mrinal, Shubash, Dhalu, Dut Kumar, Shotosh, Khargo, Dhannajoy, Parash, Debendra,

Dizen, Manik, Butha, Kali Pada Abinash, Choita, Ratan Singh, Atul, Bablu, Dulal, Jithu Murmu, Raban Kisku, Balu Maddi, Shufal Maddi and Sulza Maddi.

When contact, UP chairman Samsuddin Modal told this correspondent that every thing was done as per an order from the Deputy Commissioner's office. The government lands will be used for an Abashan Prokolpa (rehabilitation project) where about 150 homeless families will rehabilitate.

When contacted, Dinajpur

Deputy Commissioner Shurut Jaman said he has asked Parbotipur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Sharifuddin Ahmed to visit the spot. He said there is a plan for a rehabilitation project on the land.

Parbotipur UNO Sharifuddin Ahmed, when contacted, said he visited the spot and talked to the evicted people. He said he will take steps to arrange a shelter for them.

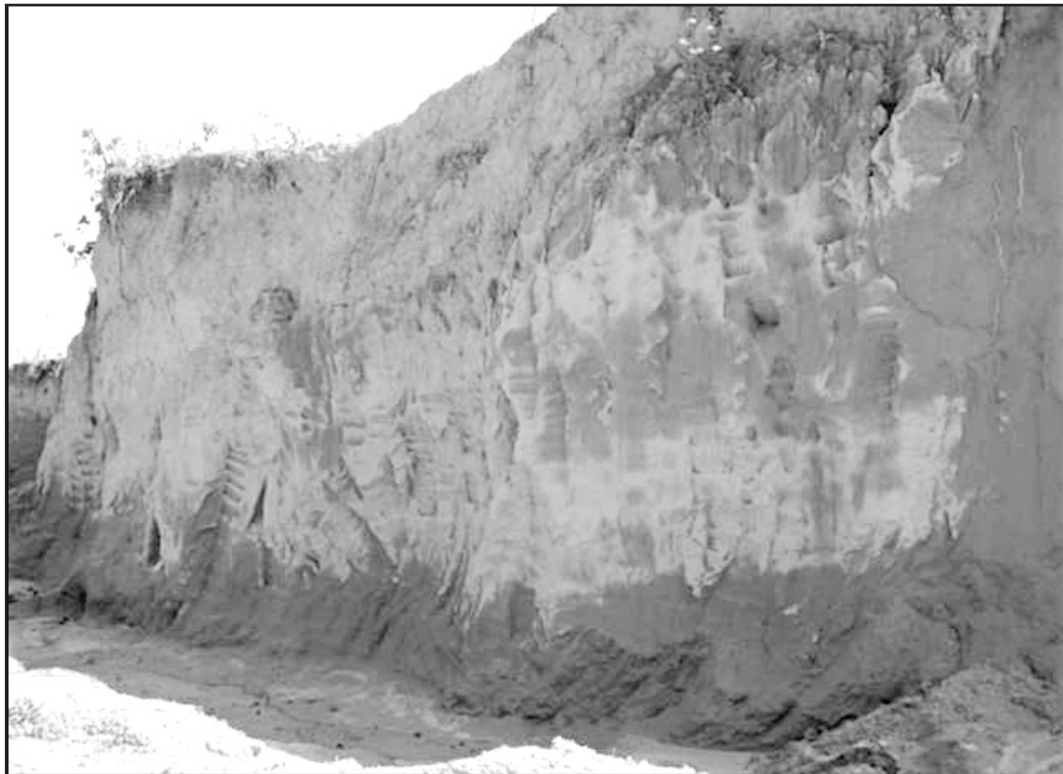


PHOTO: STAR

A ravaged hill on the Srimangal-Shayestaganj roadside at Shatgaon in Moulvibazar district after earth-cutting.

Hill cutting threatens environment, forests

Road block from landslide feared in Moulvibazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Moulvibazar*

Indiscriminate hill cutting in different areas of Moulvibazar district, particularly in tea garden areas and reserve forests is destroying forest resources and the ecology.

With the onset of monsoon, this will accentuate landslides, which will block roads. Landslides often claim lives.

But it is going on unabated despite protests by environmentalists and local people in many areas.

Sources said some organised syndicates are involved in the business. They sell earth used for filling up low lying areas and marshy lands.

As per law, hill cutting is prohibited. But the unscrupulous people

'manage' some people in the administration and continue the illegal act.

Though hill cutting is illegal, trucks or tractors carrying earth from hills to different areas is now a common sight in Moulvibazar. The administration plays a role of a silent spectator, sources concerned said while talking to this correspondent.

There are more than 100 tea gardens in Sadar, Rajnagar, Kulaura, Juri, Baralekha, Kamalganj and Srimangal upazilas of the district. Most of the garden areas are very rich in forest resources. But these are being destroyed only due to indiscriminate hill cutting. Landslides often block roads in the areas.

Moulvibazar-Shayestaganj road, Moulvibazar-Kulaura road,

Moulvibazar Rajnagar-Fenchuganj road and Srimangal-Kamalaganj road pass through hills. In every rainy season, road block on these due to landslide is a common phenomenon.

This correspondent during a recent visit talked to local people in Srimangal, Kamalganj, Rajnagar, Kulaura, Juri and Baralekha upazilas. Most of them said they were not aware that hill cutting is illegal. Neither the administration nor the forest department launched any campaign against hill cutting in the areas, they said.

Contractors come to an area and engage their men in cutting earth from hills, saying they have bought the earth and have taken permission from the authorities, the local people said.

Backyard orchards planned in CHT

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bandarban*

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) Affairs Ministry has taken up a project to help people raise 'backyard orchards and forestry' in the three hill districts.

Sources in the ministry said the decision was taken to create self-employment and preserve the biodiversity in hills, affected by repeated Jhum cultivation.

The project will encourage hill people to go for orchards and vegetable cultivation in same lands instead of destroying forests every year for Jhum cultivation, a tradi-

tional practice with the indigenous people.

Implementation of the project will begin in the coming financial year, the sources said but could not specify funds for the project.

The project will be implemented in 46 unions in Rangamati, 35 in Khagrachari and 29 unions in Bandarban.

Initially, 25 Jhumia families in each union will be brought under the project, they said.

Agriculture experts say repeated Jhum cultivation causes deforestation and destroy sanctuaries for animals.

Eviction drive on DND dam stops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Narayanganj*

An eviction drive to remove illegal structures from Dhaka-Narayanganj-Demra (DND) embankment and surrounding areas has been stopped after three days of its launching following alleged resistance by about 50 land grabbers.

They have established unauthorised industries on the land, local people alleged.

The drive was initiated by Sadar upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) Faiz Ahmed on June 15 in a bid to remove water-logging from the area.

About 150 small shops and houses of poor people built illegally on the land were demolished in three days.

However, many illegal factories built on the Post Office Road and in

Kutubail, Shastapur, Pitalipul and Haziganj areas of Fatullah still remained intact. People fear to talk about the owners of textile mills, garments and dying factories, re-rolling steel mills who grabbed land of the lake illegally. A state minister's brother is also involved in land grabbing, locals alleged.

About 10 lakh people of the 32-kilometre DND dam suffered a lot for two months due to water-logging last year.

However, Narayanganj deputy commissioner (DC) SM Harunar Rashid denied the allegation of haltage of eviction saying it a continuous process. None will be spared, he added.



Tk 1 cr touchstone statue recovered

A CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

A touchstone statue weighing 20 kilogram worth about Tk one crore was recovered by Dinajpur DB police Wednesday night.

Tipped-off, DB police raided the house of one Jamal Uddin in Shighazani village in Birgonj upaila and recovered the statue. Jamal Uddin was not present at his home.

Police later said the statue was kept there for smuggling. Jamal Uddin could be a member of a statue smugglers' gang.

A case also filed with Birgonj police station accusing Jalmal Uddin.

WEDNESDAY'S ATTACK BY JANAJUDDHO

Another BNP leader dies in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushthia*

Another Chuadanga BNP leader, Zillur Rahman, 32, injured in Wednesday's attack died at Chuadanga Sadar Hospital on Thursday.

Earlier, Noor Ali, vice-president of Chuadanga district BNP and general secretary of Chuadanga Union Parishad Association (UPA), died from injuries in the same attack. He was also chairman of Sangkarchandra Union Parishad in Chuadanga Sadar upazila.

Janajuddho faction of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) claimed responsibility for the killings.

In protest against the killings,

signed by its 'regional leader' Dipok Roy, faxed to local daily Mathabhanga office claimed responsibility for the murders. It said they have been murdered to "avenge the killings of their party men in so-called 'crossfire' launched by the four party alliance government".

The outlawed party said Noor Ali was a 'social enemy' and threatened of more such killings in the southwestern region of the country.

A case was filed with the Sadar police station in connection with the murdered.

When contacted, Assistant Police Superintendent (ASP) of Chuadanga circle Jotindranath Poddar said they are trying to nab

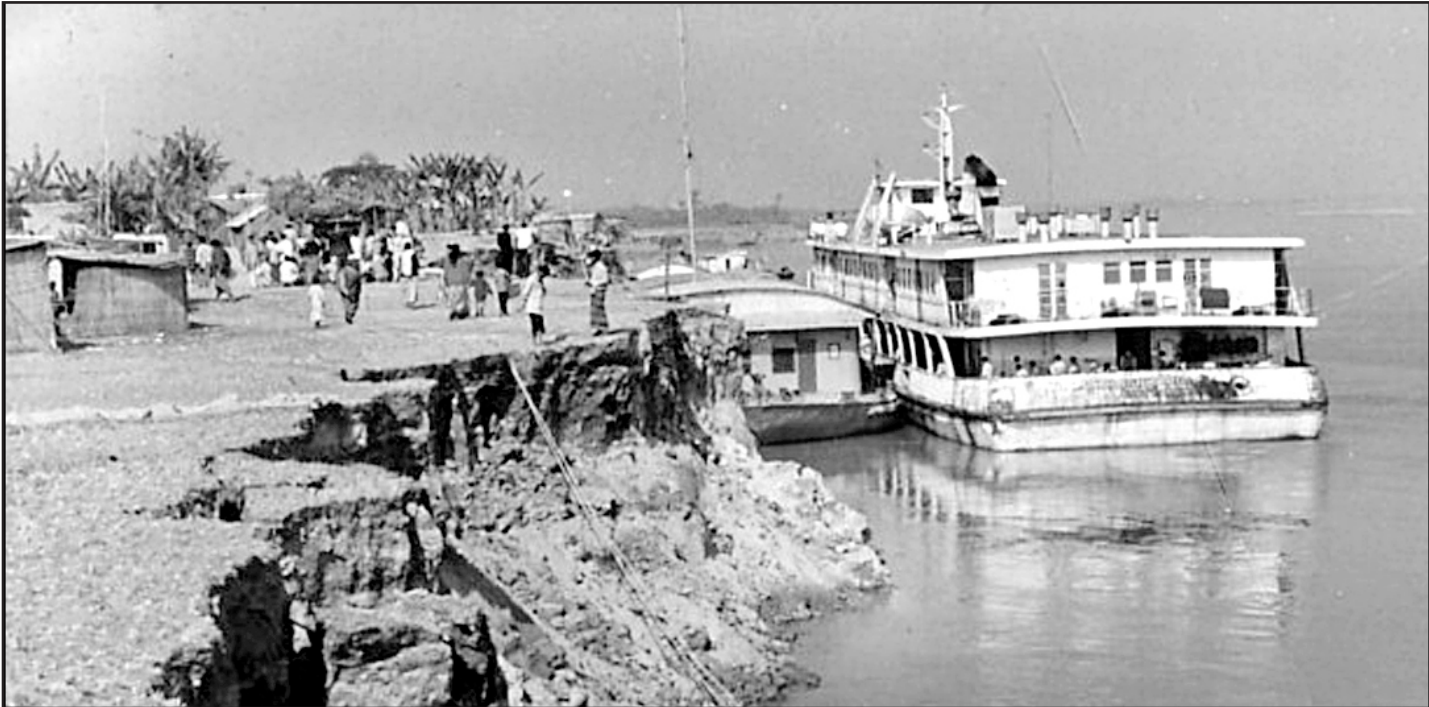
the killers.

In another incident, Janajuddho cadres shot dead their 'rival' at Changamari village in Gangni upazila in Meherpur district Wednesday night.

The dead was identified as Maniruzzaman alias Lalul, 38. Janajuddho, in another statement faxed to local newspapers, claimed responsibility for the killing and said Lalul was a police informer.

Police said Janajuddho men stormed into the house of Lalul at about 9.30 pm and called him out. They took Lalul on a road and shot him, killing him on the spot.

Police said Lalul was also a cadre of Janajuddho and accused in several criminal cases.



STAR FILE PHOTO

The railway ferry boat seen in the picture at Teestamuk Ghat will no more be in service from today.

Century old railway ferry closes today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gaibandha*

Railway ferryboats will no more ply between Teestamuk Ghat and Bahadurabad Ghat.

The ferry service used by of people for about 100 years will be closed from today because the railway authorities think it "expensive and losing". They have ordered closure of ticket

booking.

Local people staged demonstrations demanding continuation of the ferry services as this was the prime means for the people of northern and eastern districts to cross the mighty Brahmaputra.

Prior to opening of Jamuna Bridge, ferry services between Bahadurabad Ghat and Teestamuk Ghat played a key

role in rail communication between northern districts and the capital.

After opening of Jamuna Bridge, the three trains from northern districts to Dhaka do not have to avail the ferry services.

The Railway is going to introduce another express train Drutajan-- between Dinajpur and Dhaka via Jamuna Bridge from Saturday.

The train will cover the 490-kilometer distance in nine hours.

A committee has been formed in Gaibandha to press continuation of the ferry service. It has submitted a memorandum to the Gaibandha Deputy Commissioner and plans tougher agitation.

The ferry services was introduced during the British rule.

AL rally attacked: 5 hurt in Manikganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Manikganj*

Five Awami League (AL) activists were injured by the ruling party activists in an attack on a party rally held here on Thursday.

The rally was organised to mark the 56th founding anniversary of the party.

The injured persons are Ratu, Kalu, Khokon, Zia and Rahman.

Party sources said they were injured when they were coming to attend the rally held at Sabis Auditorium in the town.

AL leaders condemned the attack and urged the party leaders and activists to oust the BNP-Jamaat coalition government.

Former district unit president of the party Moslem Uddin Khan (Habu Mia) presided over the rally. Among others, party's youth and sports affairs secretary Dewan Shafiq Arefin Tulul, district senior leaders Gazi Kamrul Huda Selim, Meer Anwar Hossain Ratan, Abdul Mazid Photo and Dipak Ghosh addressed the rally.

More 26,000 digital phones in Sylhet division by December

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI, *Moulvibazar*

More 26,000 digital telephone connections will be given in Sylhet city and in 31 upazilas in Sylhet division by December.

Construction of telephone exchange buildings and installation of lines are going on in 21 upazilas and will be completed by this time, sources in Bangladesh Telephone and Telegraph Board (BTTB) in Sylhet told this correspondent recently.

They said 2000 digital telephone connections will be given soon from Alampur telephone exchange in South Surma upazila and another 1000 from Tajpur exchange in Balagonj upazila.

Installation of 4500 digital lines under Taltola exchange in Sylhet city is expected to be completed by next month, they said.

More 25,00 lines will be given from Shibgonj exchange in Sylhet city and the work is going on in full swing.

Lands have been acquired for construction of a 1000-line

exchange at Muglabazar in Sylhet district.

Analogue telephone exchanges in Joyantiapur, Zakigonj and Companyganj have been turned into digital exchanges, with 216 connections each. More 200 lines will be added to the Zakigonj exchange.

They said the Biswanath exchange with 200 analogue lines will be turned into a digital exchange with 1000 lines. Kanaighat exchange with 80 analogue lines will be upgraded to a 500-line digital exchange under the plan. Analogue exchanges in Beanibazar, Fenchuganj and Balagonj will be upgraded to digital exchanges with more connections.

The BTTB sources said construction work for new telephone exchanges can not be done in Bhadeswar, Tamabil and Gacchbari as lands are yet to be acquired. They said these exchanges will have 500, 250 and 500 digital lines respectively. Equipment for the three new digital telephone exchanges have reached Sylhet.

Ten digital telephone exchanges were set up in 10 upazilas in greater

Sylhet till 2000.

With installation of the new digital telephone lines, the total number of digital telephone in greater Sylhet will rise to 42,000, they said.

Tk 21 cr RHDC budget

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangamati*

The Rangamati Hill District Council (RHDC) has announced a Tk 21 crore budget for fiscal 2005-2006.

The RHDC will arrange Tk one crore from its own sources. The rest will be mobilised from government allocation, RHDC Chairman Maniklal Dewan said while announcing the budget at its office.

RHDC members U Sha Hla Roaza, Sujit Dewan and Musa Choudhury, its Chief Executive Officer Golamur Rahman, Rangamati Police Superintendent Sheikh Md Maruf Hassan and Additional Deputy Commissioner (general) Farid Uddin Bhuiyan were present there, among others.