

# 100 acre govt lands grabbed in a decade in Rangamati town

SHANTIMOY CHAKMA, *Rangamati*

At least 100 acres of government land were gobbled up in Rangamati town in last 10 years. Most of the grabbing took place during BNP-Jamaat rule.

Illegal structures including about 100 slums have sprung up on the grabbed lands including

ment office. A survey is needed to find out the exact areas of grabbed lands, he said.

One-third land of Rangamati General Hospital has been grabbed, where a slum has been set up. Talking to his correspondent, doctors and other hospital staff said the area always remains polluted and dirty as the

After declaration of emergency, different government department have sent applications to the district administration for steps for recovery of the grabbed lands.

Sources in the Deputy Commissioner's office said they have received at least 23 applications for land recovery.

(DC) office, one decimal of district Bazaar Fund office, 3.50 acres of the department of public health and engineering, 1.50 acres of civil surgeon's office, 3 acres of Rangamati Sadar Hospital, 0.037 acres of Red Crescent Society, 1.50 acres of Sadar Upazila Nirbahi office, 3 decimals of New Rangamati Primary School, 5

stopped in Chittagong Hill Tracts since 1989, many BNP leaders legalised their grabbed land through the district Bazaar Fund allegedly in exchange of bribe, sources said.

Arun Alo Chakma, executive engineer of Road & Highways Department said whenever we go to demolish illegal structures grabbers show documents given by the district Bazaar Fund office. So, we can not take action against grabbers, he said.

Leaders of different political parties create slums on government lands for vote. Poor people from plain lands are settled there.

There was no slum in Rangamati town a decade ago. Now slums are seen everywhere in the town, local people said.

It is alleged that an influential Awami League leader in the town was behind creation of many slums on government lands during AL rule.

Md. Shahjahan Majumder, administrative officer of civil surgeon office, said they informed the DC office and joint forces in writing to recover the grabbed land of the office.

DAE Project Officer Romoni Kanti Chakma said about 1.5 acres of its land were grabbed during BNP-Jamaat rule. About 70 families now live in the land grabbed by BNP leaders.

Md. Unus Ali, divisional forest officer of CHT North Forest Department, said 25 decimal land was grabbed by district Jamaat leader and his followers in the name of expansion of a play ground of a school near the district forest office. A case was filed with court, he said.

Sources at DC's office said only 6,243 acres of government land worth about Tk 3.5 crore have so far been recovered from grabbers. Fifteen cases have been settled and more 23 are yet to be disposed of by the civil court.

Contacted, Rangamati Deputy Commissioner Md Nurul Amin said the process to recover the grabbed lands is on. Decisions on land recovery are taken at law and order committee meetings, he said.

Rangamati Hill District Council Chairman Jagat Jyoti Chakma said many government lands were grabbed. Now is the time to recover the lands.

PHOTO: STAR

An illegally built slum on the compound of Rangamati Sadar Hospital is one of many encroachments in the tourist town.

the banks of picturesque Rangamati Lake and other tourist spots.

A section political leaders are behind setting up the slums, which serve them two purposes: from dwellers and vote in election, sources said.

Land grabbing is increasing as grabbers are seldom punished, said settlement officer Sujan Chakma at district land settle-

ment dwellers dump waste near the hospital.

The panoramic beauty of Rangamati is being destroyed day by day as all open spaces are being grabbed and illegal structures built there. If steps are not taken now, it will soon lose its reputation as a tourist town and become a concrete jungle, some members of the elite said while talking to this correspondent.

According to AC office sources, the grabbed lands include 25 bighas of CHT development board, 12.50 acres of Bangladesh Cottage and Small Industries Corporation, 5.51 acres of road and highways department, 1.50 acres of the department of agriculture extension, 1.50 acres of south forest department, 2 acres and 5 decimals of deputy commissioner's

decimals of BIWTA (Bangladesh Island Transport Authority), 2 acres of Public Works Department (PWD).

The sources said land grabbing in the district town started during the rule of Awami League government. A feast on government land started as the BNP-Jamaat government came to power in 2001, they said.

Though land settlement is

on, the project director had done the act as he was actively involved in the current movement of workers for realising their legitimate rights of arrear wages and other dues.

Police raided his house twice on Saturday midnight, he said, adding that the project director is cooking up stories to throw him behind bars.

Project Director Abu Taher, on the other hand, said the termination of CBA leader Mohammad Hossain was part of the reform measures now being implemented in different state-owned jute mills.

Crescent Jute Mills no longer requires his service like that of 22 workers terminated recently and 1277 others who were offloaded for retrenchment on different occasions, he added.

Over 200 workers joined the sit-in but security forces later dispersed them.

The sacked CBA leader said

## 8 more deptts in Nazrul university

Our Correspondent, Mymensingh

Eight more departments will be opened at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam Biswabidhalya at Darirampur in Trishal here from the 2007-2008 session, university sources said.

The departments are: Management, Accounting and Information System under Business Studies Faculty, Economics, Public Administration and Governance Studies and Anthropology under Social Science Faculty, Fine Arts, Nazrul and Persian Studies under the Arts Faculty and Electronics and Communication Engineering under Science Faculty.

This was recognized at the first council meeting held at the university on September 6. Prof Dr Shamsur Rahman, vice-chancellor of the university was in the chair. Deans, Registrar, Assistant Controller and heads of all the departments attended the meeting.

Works on two dormitories, one for male students and the other for female students and a cafeteria have already been completed in the university. Students will be accommodated in the halls after Ramadan vacation, said Dr Ataur Rahman, assistant controller and public relations officer (PRO).

As many as 180 students have

been enrolled for admission in the first batch through an admission test on March 12 this year. On an average, 50 students will be admitted in Bengali literature, English literature and Music departments under the Arts Faculty and rest 30 students would be enrolled in Computer Science.

## Arms recovered in Khagrachhara

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhara

The army-led joint forces recovered one country-made gun, one foreign revolver, and 10 bullets from Rashiknagar Bairapa village under Dighinala upazila in the hilly district early yesterday.

Acting on a tip, the joint force team raided the remote Rashiknagar Bairapa house of Ranjit Chakma at 4:30am and recovered arms and ammunition, police said.

Sensing the presence of the security forces, Ranjit Chakma fled the scene.

## 2 sons of ex-JP MP Gaffar Biswas held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested two sons of detained Jatiya Party (JP) leader former lawmaker Abdul Gaffar Biswas on Saturday and Friday.

They are Mahfuzur Rahman alias Shibil Biswas, 32, and Sohel Biswas, 29.

Shibil Biswas, eldest son of the JP leader, was arrested at 9:30pm on Saturday near Rupsha bridge as he was riding his Pajero jeep to Khulna city from Dhaka while his younger brother Sohel was held in the early morning of Friday from Noornagar under Sonadanga upazila of Khulna.

DB police said there are many allegations against the two brothers, mostly made by women and traders.

The joint forces arrested JP leader Abdul Gaffar Biswas in last July. His son-in-law ward commissioner Anis Biswas was also arrested in the same month.

## JCD leader arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kishoreganj

Detective Branch (DB) police yesterday arrested district Jatiyatobadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) President Saiful Islam Sumon at Haybot Nagar of the town.

Sumon was also the vice president of Gurudayal Government University College.

During primary interrogation, Sumon said there were three cases against him with Karimganj and Kishoreganj Sadar police stations, said DB Sub-Inspector Mosharaf who arrested the JCD leader.



PHOTO: STAR

Indigenous women harvesting paddy from zoom lands on hills along the picturesque Kaptai Lake.

## Voters decline by 25pc in Raozan in fresh listing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chittagong

A total of 62,083 voters were registered in Sitakunda and Raozan upazila headquarters as work on preparing voter list with photographs was completed there on Friday.

In the fresh list prepared under supervision of joint forces, the number of voters declined by 25 per cent in Raozan Pourashabha. It was almost the same in Sitakunda, officials sources said yesterday.

The present list is correct and has been done properly as large number of fake voters enlisted in previous years were not registered this year, said the pourashabha chairman.

The work on the pilot project began in 14 unions in Raozan upazila on Friday as the field-level data collectors started door-to-door visit in the villages.

Meanwhile, the second phase of voter registration at union level in both the upazilas began on Friday with field level data collection.

A total of 37,483 people registered as voters in Raozan upazila headquarters this year while the number was 38,700 in 2001, sources in district election office said.

District Election Officer Md Dulal Talukder said over 2500 people went abroad and a large number of people who were enlisted in the previous voter list is absconding since declaration of emergency.

Major MA Kamran is supervising the work.

The work began in nine unions in Raozan upazila on Friday. A total of 639 data collectors and 134 supervisors are involved in the work.

## Patuakhali Jubo Dal leader held in Dhaka

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday morning arrested Patuakhali district Jubo Dal secretary Bakhtiar Uddin Murad from his Dhaka residence.

Murad was on the run since promulgation of the state of emergency across the country on January 11.

He was a close associate of former minister and BNP leader Altaf Hossain Chowdhury.

## Widow takes life failing to repay NGO loan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A widow committed suicide in the early hours of yesterday for failure to repay the loan she took from various NGOs.

Mafuza Begum, 48, wife of late Nazar Ali committed suicide by hanging herself with a branch of a tree at her house at Basantapur village in Kaliganj upazila at about 4:30 am.

Quoting local people police said following death of her husband she took loan from NGOs to run a small business to maintain his family. As the NGO men pressed her repeatedly to pay the loans, she took her life by committing suicide, said Kaliganj police station officer-in-charge (OC) Nur Islam.



PHOTO: STAR

## Summer tomato can be a moneymaker for many

JAHANGIR ALAM, Netrakona

A new value-added crop has opened the scope for fifty gains for farmers. Summer variety tomato evolved by Bangladesh Agriculture Research Institute (BARI) has attracted farmers' attention in Netrakona as it is highly profitable.

With the help of BARI and local agriculture officials, Manzurul Haque and Aminul Islam of Bursikura village in Netrakona Sadar upazila cultivated summer tomato on small land holdings. They are now selling tomato in markets in Netrakona town at Tk 70 to 80 per kilogram.

This correspondent during a recent visit to the village saw Aminul Islam plucking ripe tomato from his three decimal land. Manzurul Haque was working in his field nearby.

They said they cultivated summer tomato on advice of Rahima Khatun, Assistant Agriculture Officer in Netrakona Sadar upazila.

With the help of Rahima Khatun, they joined a day-long training on cultivation of summer tomato, provided by BARI at Gazipur four months back.

BARI also gave them Tk 6,000 each to make sheds to protect the crop from rain. They were given BARI-3 and BARI-4 tomato seeds.

They prepared the seed bed in mid-April and planted tomato seedlings in their fields in mid-May. They used TSP, Urea and Murate of Potash fertiliser as per advice of Rahima Khatun.

As the plants bore flowers in middle of June, they sprayed a hormone provided by BARI.

Harvest began in the middle of July, which still continues, the farmers said.

Rahima Khatun told this correspondent that the tomato plants will bear fruit till October and the yield will be around three kilograms per plant.

She said both the farmers will earn at least Tk 50,000 from the crop which will cost not more than Tk 6,000.

Aminul and Manzurul said they cultivated summer tomato last year also. Their success has attracted a large number of farmers in the who are planning to cultivate summer tomato next year, they said.



PHOTO: STAR

Nikly upazila is cut off from rest of Netrakona district as floodwater washed away concrete blocks on the Nikly-Kishoreganj road at Pudda. About 1.5 lakh people of the upazila are virtually marooned for about two months as the R&H department has not yet taken any move to restore the road link.