

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 sprang 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 Bazar 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 exchanged 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 Jaamat 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

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, official sources said yesterday.

Scrutiny of a few registration forms was going on yesterday at both the upazila headquarters, they said.

Distribution of voter and national ID cards (NICs) will begin in the two pourasabhas soon, they said.

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, the 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.

Those who are to enlist their names would be able to register any time, he said.

Chairman of the Raozan pourashabha Shafiqul Islam Chowdhury said he himself attested passports of around 2700 people who went to different Middle Eastern countries in last two years.

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 pourasabha chairman.

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.

A total of 800 data collectors and 154 supervisors who completed a three-day training on September 13 are involved in the work.

In Sitakunda, 24,537 people registered their names as voters in nine wards of the pourashabha while the number was 24064 in the previous list that was cancelled earlier.

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.

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

PHOTO: STAR

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 - rent from dwellers and vote in election, sources said.

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

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

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

CRESCENT JUTE MILLS Tension mounts as CBA leader sacked

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Termination of a CBA leader gave rise to tension among retrenched workers of Crescent Jute Mills who observed sit-in programme in front of the project director's office from 8:00am to 10:00am yesterday.

Mohammad Abu Taher, project director of Crescent Jute Mills, terminated assistant general secretary of the workers union Mohammad Hossain on Saturday afternoon on grounds of 'misconduct' and 'inciting workers to hamper production'. The CBA leader received his termination notice at 9:00pm the same day.

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

The sacked CBA leader said

the project director had done the act as he was actively involved in the current movement of workers for realising their legitimate rights of arrears 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.

8 more deptts in Nazrul university

Our Correspondent, Mymensingh

Eight more departments will be opened at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam Biswabidhalaya at Darinrampur 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.

Four hundred more students will get opportunity to study in the eight subjects under four faculties of the university from the next session.

Academic activities of the first batch of the university started on June 3 this year.

Eminent folklore researcher Dr Ashraf Siddiquee inaugurated the academic session as chief guest with vice-chancellor of the university in the chair.

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 Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

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 Shibli Biswas, 32, and Sohail Biswas, 29.

Shibli 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 Sohail 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 Jatiyatabadi 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

Farmer Aminul Islam with summer tomato in his field in Burshikura village in Netrakona Sadar upazila.

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 Barshikura 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 Tomaton 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.