

# Over 200 hills levelled in a decade in Khagrachhari

25 cases pending with court, 20 more being filed

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari  
Over 200 hills were levelled in Khagrachhari district in last 10 years, according to sources in the Department of Environment (DoE).

pleted within a short time and then we will submit a detailed report to higher authorities", an official of DoE said seeking anonymity. He said at least 25 cases were

Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) in 2006 issued legal notices on some government officials and those engaged in hill cutting in eight upazila of the district, but to no effect.



Site of a razed hill in Khagrachhari Sadar upazila.

Most of these were in the suburbs of the hill town, done for housing projects. Lands around the town have become pricey because of new settlements.

field by the district administration in Khagrachhari, which are pending with courts. "We are preparing to file 20 more cases".

When asked, Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Monindra Kishore Majumder said, "We have sent show-cause notices to some government offices including Roads & Highways, LGRD, CHTDV, Khagrachhari Municipality and KHDC to explain why they allowed government instruments for hill cutting.

Besides, an unspecified number of hills were cut in Manikchhari, Laxmichhari, Panchhari, Mohalchhari, Ramghor, Manikchhari and Dighinala upazila in the district. Most of the hills were cut for building homes both by locals and outsiders, the sources said.

Influential groups having political clout cut hills indiscriminately mainly because of inaction by officials concerned, the official alleged.

"Action will be taken if they fail to give satisfactory explanation", the ADM said.

Local influentials, mainly political party leaders, were directly or indirectly involved in the illegal hill cutting, allegedly done with the help of a section of government officials, the sources said.

Mohammad Ibrahim Khalil, secretary of Parivesh Andolon Forum, an environmental organisation, said some unscrupulous traders are involved with the local influentials in the illegal hill cutting as supplying soil is a profitable business now.

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mohammad Shahdat Hossen said the administration is determined to protect the environment. Action will be taken for hill cutting without approval of the government or the Department of Environment (DoE), he said.

The DoE, Chittagong recently started a survey on hill cutting in Khagrachhari.

Often, heavy tools of government offices were used in hill cutting, Pradip Chowdhury, district coordinator of Center for Sustainable Development (CFSD), claimed.

"We hope it would be com-

# Vessel with 650 MT fertiliser sinks in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A cargo vessel, hit by a triple-decker launch, sank in Kalabador river at Bhasan Char in Mehendiganj upazila of the district with 650 tonnes of fertilisers early morning yesterday.

MV Ratul-2 was going to Jessore from Chittagong with the fertilisers. Mehendiganj police said its master Delwar Hossain in a case said his vessel sank when hit by passenger launch Parabat-8 near Bhasan Char launch station. The cargo vessel was anchoring there for halt.

Five crew of the cargo vessel swam ashore but the fertilizers worth Tk.2.5 crores sank in the river, the masters said.

Md. Iqbal, Barisal station manager of Parabat Launch Company, said dense fog might have caused the accident.

But some passengers of the launch said there was no fog in the early morning. All of a sudden they woke up following a tremendous jolt.

Later, MV Parabat-9, another launch of the same company, toed Parabat-8 to Barisal port safely.

No effort was made to salvage the vessel or the fertilisers when the report was filed in the evening.

# Outlaw held in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police arrested a member of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddho) from Gilatala in Khulna city on Sunday night.

The arrestee, Ashraf Ali, 40, is an accused in an Explosive Substances Act case filed in September of 2005 with Khan Jahan Ali Police Station, police said, adding that the case is now under trial in Khulna Special Tribunal.

Law enforcers have intensified their patrol in the city and elsewhere in the district after PBCP (M-L) last week threatened to launch bomb and grenade attacks on joint forces, Rab and police.

There are intelligence reports that two factions of outlawed PBCP are trying to regroup in Khulna city for criminal activities, said a high official of Khulna Metropolitan Police.

# Fight graft for dignity among nations: ACC chief

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) Chairman Lt Gen (rd) Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury yesterday urged forming a massive social movement against corruption to reach a respectable position in the world.

Corruption-free society would be established if morality is reflected in social and political activities, the ACC chief said while addressing as the chief guest at a view exchange meeting at Asaduzzaman auditorium in the town, reports our Magura correspondent.

Emphasising the need of changing the mindset to remove corruption from different spheres, he said, "Degradation of morality results in corruption and many other vices. We have to

carry out campaign for morality alongside drive against corruption for the welfare of the country."

"Corruption will not be removed even if the salary of government officials increase. Officials enjoying higher salary are often found to take bribe."

"Different countries including Malaysia and Singapore have reached a respectable position in the world through combating corruption. We can also achieve the same, if corruption is removed," the ACC boss said.

ACC Director General Md Abu Taleb, Magura Deputy Commissioner Abdul Halim, Superintendent of Police Mohammad Muslim, Magura Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Momena Khatun and Principal Habibul Hasan spoke at the

meeting, among others.

Our Kushtia correspondent adds: The ACC chairman urged unity of all with a mind to fight against corruption and the corrupt people to get a corruption-free country.

Addressing as chief guest a meeting at Lalon Academy auditorium in Kushtia yesterday, Gen Mashhud said, "Corrupt people have already done much damage to the country's image and we should not allow them any more scope to do so."

In another view exchange meeting at Shilpakala Academy in Jhenidah town, the ACC chairman said a situation should be created through social movement so that nobody dares committing corruption, reports our Jhenidah correspondent.

# PROF TAHER MURDER Deposition of 3 more PWs recorded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A Rajshahi tribunal yesterday recorded deposition of four other prosecution witnesses (PW) in Rajshahi University teacher Prof Dr S Taher Ahmed murder case.

Rajshahi Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge ATM Mesbaudoula recorded depositions of RU geology and mining department chairman Sayed Shamsuddin Ahmed, M Manik, Mrs Bulbuli and Enamul Haque.

With the four, depositions of 35 PWs have so far been recorded. The tribunal is likely to record depositions of other PWs today.

Among six accused in the case, prime accused RU teacher Dr Mia Mohammad Mohiuddin and Azimuddin are now on bail.

The two, along with RU Islami Chhatra Shibir president Mahbul Alam Salehi and three killer suspects Jahangir, Salam and Nazmul-were produced before the tribunal during the hearing.

Dr Taher, a senior professor of geology and mining department, was killed on February 1, 2006 and his body was recovered from a sewer behind his campus residence on February 3.

# One injured in BSF firing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

A Bangladeshi cattle trader was injured yesterday when Indian Border Security Force (BSF) opened fire on him at Gharjala inside Indian territory opposite to Chanduria border in Kalaroa upazila.

Rafiqul Islam, 30, of Kadpur village managed to enter into the Bangladesh and was admitted to Sathkira Sadar hospital in a critical condition. He was later shifted to Khulna Medical College Hospital, sources said.

BSF opened when he was returning home with cattle bought at an Indian market.

On contact, Maj Kamrul Hasan of 41 Rifles Battalion confirmed the incident.

# Save south-western region from man-made disaster

Speakers tell Sathkira workshop on water management

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sathkira

Speakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday urged the government to re-excavate silted rivers in South-Western region of the country to restore the ecology and ensure livelihood of about 50, 00,000 people in the area.

They also urged the local people to launch a mass movement to dredge silted rivers Kabodak, Marichchap, Betna, Harihar and Bhadra, which will solve the water-logging problem and make vast lands in Sathkira, Jessore, Kushtia and Khulna cultivable again.

The meeting on "Water resource management in South-Western region: People's perspective and participation", jointly organised by Pani Committee (water committee), a local civic body, Uttarana a local NGO. Principal Safiqul Islam chaired the meeting held Mobarakpur in Talapuzila.

It was also addressed by Kenesly Yakohama of ADB, Neils Veeniyas of Netherlands embassy and Prof. Abu



Kenesly Yakohama of ADB addressing the workshop.

Ahmed. They said, over the years, encroachment by land grabbers and bamboo barriers erected by so-called fish farmers hastened death of the rivers.

This is a man made disaster, created by some influentials backed

by political parties, they said. Successive governments did not take any step to free the rivers from the illegal encroachment despite demands made on numerous occasions by people of all classes since 2001, they said.

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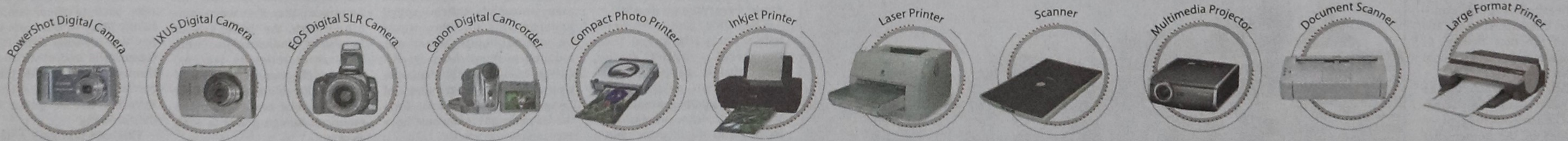
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