

Jhum cultivation inviting environmental hazards

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

Jhumiya people have continued to cultivate jhum crops on the slopes of hills, leading to environmental disasters in Khagrachhari.

The local farmers, who cultivate jhum for hefty gains, are mostly indigenous people.

The unplanned and random cultivation on the hill slopes are causing manifold environmental disasters in the hill district like massive soil erosion, fast disappearance of forest and extinction of wildlife.

Officials at the department of forest and agriculture extension said they are trying to create awareness among the farmers about environmental hazards, but they pay no heed to them.

They, however, said indigenous farmers cultivate jhum as they are yet to be provided with any alternative work.

Jhum farming on hill slopes is increasing rapidly as those are flood-free and profitable for farmers, particularly in the rainy season, the officials added.

They said most of the

Jhumiya people have no right to land and legal documents for land as they shift their habitats from one place to another every year. As a result, they have no permanent residence or right to land and always depend on cultivation on the hill slopes for their livelihood. They don't care about environment as they have no idea about it.

Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) offices said the farmers have brought 5411.77 acres of hill slopes under jhum cultivation this year in the district due to favourable weather.

Pranab Barua, sub-assistant agriculture officer, said 753.35 acres of hill slopes have been brought under jhum cultivation at Khagrachhari upazila while 839.8 acres at Panchhari upazila, 864.5 acres at Dighinala upazila, 1111.5 acres at Mohalechhari upazila, 494 acres at Matiranga upazila, 271.7 acres at Ramghar upazila, 172.9 acres at Manikchhari upazila and 889.2 acres at Laxmichhari upazila.

Jhumiya farmers are expected to get 2,839 metric tons (MT) of

crops and vegetables this season in the district, he added.

DAE sources said more than one lakh farmers are involved in jhum cultivation in Khagrachhari and around 90 percent of them are from indigenous communities.

Citing bad impacts of jhum cultivation, Matiranga Upazila Agriculture Officer Mohammad Tofael Ahmed told The Daily Star that such 'aggressive' and 'unplanned' cultivation usually washes away the upper level micronutrients of soil, causing massive soil erosion, adding that cultivation of jhum crop or vegetable on the same hill becomes impossible in the following year.

The farmers expressed their ignorance about soil erosion and disappearance of forest, extinction of birds or animals due to jhum cultivation on hill slopes.

Abu Daud, member secretary of Paribesh Suraksha Andolon, said jhum cultivation is profitable for the Jhumiya farmers but it is largely responsible for the extinction of wildlife and environmental disasters.

"They need scientific and planned cultivation. The government should find out alternative crops for jhum farmers to avoid such disasters," he added.

Divisional Forest Officer Mohammad Ali Kabir said most of the unclassified forests are being wiped out due to jhum cultivation. It is also threatening natural habitat for birds and animals.

TM Manjurul Islam, deputy director of Khagrachhari DAE, said they are trying to evolve alternative work for farmers to protect the hill slopes from soil erosion and other environmental hazards.



A vegetables garden at Gachchabil in Manikchhari.

Drivers flout traffic rules

Resume drive to discipline unruly autorickshaws, buses to ensure safe, hassle-free journey

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

The CNG-run autorickshaws and city service buses have continued to violate traffic rules in the port city after the traffic department suspended its drive against reckless driving and illegal parking for Eid-ul-Fitr.

Commuters urged the law enforcers to resume the drive as many of the drivers flout traffic rules, posing risk of accidents.

With a view to ensuring safe and hassle-free journey, the traffic department of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) started the drive against the vehicles on September 14 that improved the traffic system in the port city.

It conducted the drives to ensure installation of meters in the CNG-run autorickshaws, fares according to meters and movement of city service buses based on counters, to stop realising fare inside the buses and charging extra fare and overloading in the tempos.

Sources said during the drives until September 28, the authorities filed over 1600 cases against CNG-run autorickshaws and seized 571 ones for not installing meters.

It also filed 675 cases against city service buses and tempos for violating traffic rules. They also seized 104 buses and tempos.

The regular passengers hailed such an initiative by the traffic department.

Rajesh Mutsuddi, an official of Samuda Chemical Complex, said most of the CNG-run autorickshaws used meters during the drive which they generally avoid and charge extra fare and lock into altercation with the passengers over use of meters.

The much wanted counter



A traffic sergeant inspects a CNG-run autorickshaw during a drive against the three-wheelers without meters.

service for the city buses on ten routes has also been implemented during the drive, said the sources.

Moreover, traffic department has increased the amount of fine from Tk 450 to Tk 700 against CNG-run three-wheelers which were seized during the drive, sources said.

It, however, has reduced the fine against city service buses for selling tickets through counters from Tk 3200 to Tk 1200 as most of them follow the rules, sources said.

Prosecution-in-Charge Sergeant Najmul Islam said if they get any complaints of misbehaviour with passengers by the bus staffs, they fine them Tk 3200.

During the Eid, autorickshaws did not use meters and charged extra fare from the passengers in the name of Eid 'bakhshish' (tips) and the bus counters have disappeared from the city streets.

The situation has become now intolerable.

Rahman was seen arguing with a CNG driver over fare at

Dewanhat intersection on Monday. He said, "I usually pay Tk 30 to go to my residence at Didar Market at Sirajdoulah Road from Dewanhat while the driver now demands Tk 50."

Deputy Commissioner (Traffic) Md Mahmudur Rahman said they would resume the drives within a very short time and looking for alternative ways besides such drives.

Referring to the indifferent attitude of a section of passengers, he emphasised on creating public awareness about the traffic rules.

Many passengers do not want to pay according to the meters of CNG-run autorickshaws while many are seen waiting on the roads far away from the counters for the city buses causing congestion, he added.

He further said they would take more effective measures for streamlining traffic in the port city at the next meeting of Road Transport Committee (RTC) scheduled to be held soon.

theweekthatwas

Call to set up second medical college

The leaders of Progressive Democratic Party (PDP) has sought intervention of the chief adviser and the health adviser to set up the second medical college at Chittagong General Hospital in the port city.

They in a joint press statement here on Sunday said despite being situated at the city centre of Andarkilla the century-old Chittagong General Hospital had been neglected and lying almost in an abandoned state since long.

They, however, said it can be turned into a 250-bed hospital responding to the demand of the Chittagong people.

It is a long cherished demand of the Chittagong people to set up the second medical college at the hospital, which is possible if the sincerity and goodwill are there, they said.

They called upon the caretaker government for immediate steps to materialise the demand of Chittagong people.

The signatories included PDP National Standing Committee Member and Greater Chittagong Convener Prof Shayesta Khan,

Chittagong City Unit Joint Convener Emdadul Haq Chowdhury, South District Unit Convener Sirajul Islam Chowdhury and North District Unit Convener SM Abdus Salam.

Reception to successful students

Mirersarai Students Association, Chittagong University unit accorded reception to successful students, who passed this year's HSC and Alim exams and noted teachers of the university at an Eid reunion on Friday.

The function was held at the TDC Hall in Mirersarai upazila with Association Adviser Dr Nesarul Karim in the chair. Prof Kamaluddin Chowdhury was present as the chief guest and deputy director of Bangladesh Standard Testing Institution (BSTI) Magistrate Rokon-Ud-Dowla was the special guest.

The teachers who were accorded reception are Prof Dr Abdul Mannan Chowdhury of Economics Department of Chittagong University (CU), Founder Chairman of International Islamic

University of Chittagong (IUC) Maulana Shamsuddin, former principal of Chittagong Govt Mohsin College Prof Kazi Nurul Hoque, and former principal of Fajerdhat Cadet College (FCC) Lt Col (Retd) Dr Mahmud Ul Alam.

Prof Dev Prasad Paul, Prof AJM Faruque, UMB News Editor Mahfuzur Rahman and Personal Services Manager of Unilever Md Shahab Uddin also spoke at the function.

Later, the chief and special guests handed crests and prizes to the teachers and students.

Medhas Ashram to be developed

Medhas Ashram, a shelter and venue for holding Durga Puja, will be developed as a national place of pilgrimage and tourist spot.

Commerce and Education Adviser Hossain Zillur Rahman said this when the leaders of Chittagong Zila Puja Ujjapan Parishad called on him at his city residence on October 1.

The adviser gave directive to Chittagong district administration in this regard and assured all out cooperation for upgrading Medhas Asram that sits amid the panoramic beauty of Karaldenga Hill under Boalkhali upazila in the district.

The adviser for housing and public works has also been informed of the matter and he will visit the spot soon, said the commerce adviser.

Earlier, the Parishad leaders as well as Chittagong Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ashraf Shamim underscored the need for developing the traditional venue for holding Durga Puja and its potential as a tourist spot.

Medhas Ashram is believed to be the first venue of Durga Puja in this sub-continent, they said.

Development of the site would help attract a huge number to Hindu pilgrims from neighbouring countries and tourists from different countries as well, they said.

Channel i observes founding anniversary

The 10th founding anniversary of Channel i was observed in the port city amidst different colourful programmes including rally, procession and cultural night.

Amar Channel i Darshak Forum and



Principal Swami Shaktinathanandaji Maharaj of Chittagong Ramakrishna Sebashram inaugurates the Durga Puja festival of Chattal Mahashakti Sammilani at Dewanji Pukur Par on October 4. Anti-British movement veteran Binod Bihari Chowdhury, Acting Mayor of Chittagong City Corporation M Manjur Alam and writer Mushtari Shafi were present on the occasion. This year marks the 75th anniversary of the festival organised by Chattal Sammilani.

Channel i Chittagong office jointly organised the daylong programme on Thursday. In the morning, a brief rally was held at Chittagong Press Club (CPC) with Chowdhury Farid, Chittagong correspondent of Channel-i in the chair.

Acting City Mayor M Manzur Alam, Chittagong city BNP Convener Syed Wahidul Alam, Bangladesh Shippers' Council Chairman Mahub Ali, Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) President Mostak Ahmad, CPC General Secretary Ejaj Yusooqi, City Jatiya Party President Solaiman Seth and Chittagong Shop Owners' Association President Salamat Ali spoke as guests.

The rally was followed by a colourful procession with banner and festoons that paraded the city roads. At night, a cultural function was held at a community centre where local artists rendered some popular numbers.

Ctg BHRC executives

The annual meeting of Bangladesh Human Rights Commission (BHRC), Chittagong district was held at a local restaurant on Friday.

Prof Md Zakir Hossain, dean of the law faculty of Chittagong University (CU), was present as the chief guest at the meeting with BHRC Chittagong President Setara Guffer in the chair. BHRC Secretary General Dr Saiful Islam Dilder was the main speaker while former general secretary of Chittagong District Bar Association Shiekh Iftekhar Saimul Chowdhury, Lion Governor SM Ishaque and Bepza Director Ataul Hoque were the special guests.

BHRC, Chittagong General Secretary

Advocate Md Faizur Rahman Chowdhury, City President Ahmed Rahim Chowdhury, journalists Saifuddin Khaled and Sirajul Karim Manik also spoke.

Setara Guffer and Advocate Md Faizur Rahman Chowdhury were re-elected president and general secretary of Chittagong BHRC for three years.

Other office-bearers are vice president: Advocate DK Benarjee, Advocate Kazi Nazrul Islam and Prof Abul Kashem, Joint Secretary: Advocate Akterun Nessa and Md Iftekhar, Treasurer: Meher Ali Chowdhury, Organising Secretary: Abdullah Al Kader and Publicity and Publication Secretary: Md Nurul Alam.

Executive committee members are Dr Nurul Karim Khan, Ghulam Shamsul Kibria, Md Surut Jamal, Md Fakhruddin, Md Ahsan, Ekramul Hoque, Saima Hoque, Badiul Alam Basu and Shah Alam.



Channel i Viewers' Forum takes out a colourful procession in the city on Sept 30 to mark the 10th anniversary of the private satellite TV channel.