

Hill cutting rampant again in Khagrachhari

Environmentalists warn movement against perpetrators

JASIM MAJUMDER, Khagrachhari

Hill cutting in eight upazilas in Khagrachhari hill district continues in the name of development work...

After remaining stopped for the first several months of last year due to the strict restriction imposed by district administration and DoE, hill cutting has resumed recently...

The unscrupulous act adds to the threat of devastating hill slides for people who built their houses, business centres and other structures cutting the natural hills and without any environment-friendly plan, sources said.

Divisional Forest Office and District Agriculture Extension Office sources said, despite a government ban, illegal hill cutting started again in different parts of Khagrachhari district...

Taking illegal help from government officials, groups of influential people including a section of dishonest traders are involved in illegal hill cutting, sources said.

Local environment activists and journalists filed several general diaries with different police stations in Khagrachhari hill district in regard to hill cutting but no major initiative by the administration is yet to be observed to save the depleting hills.

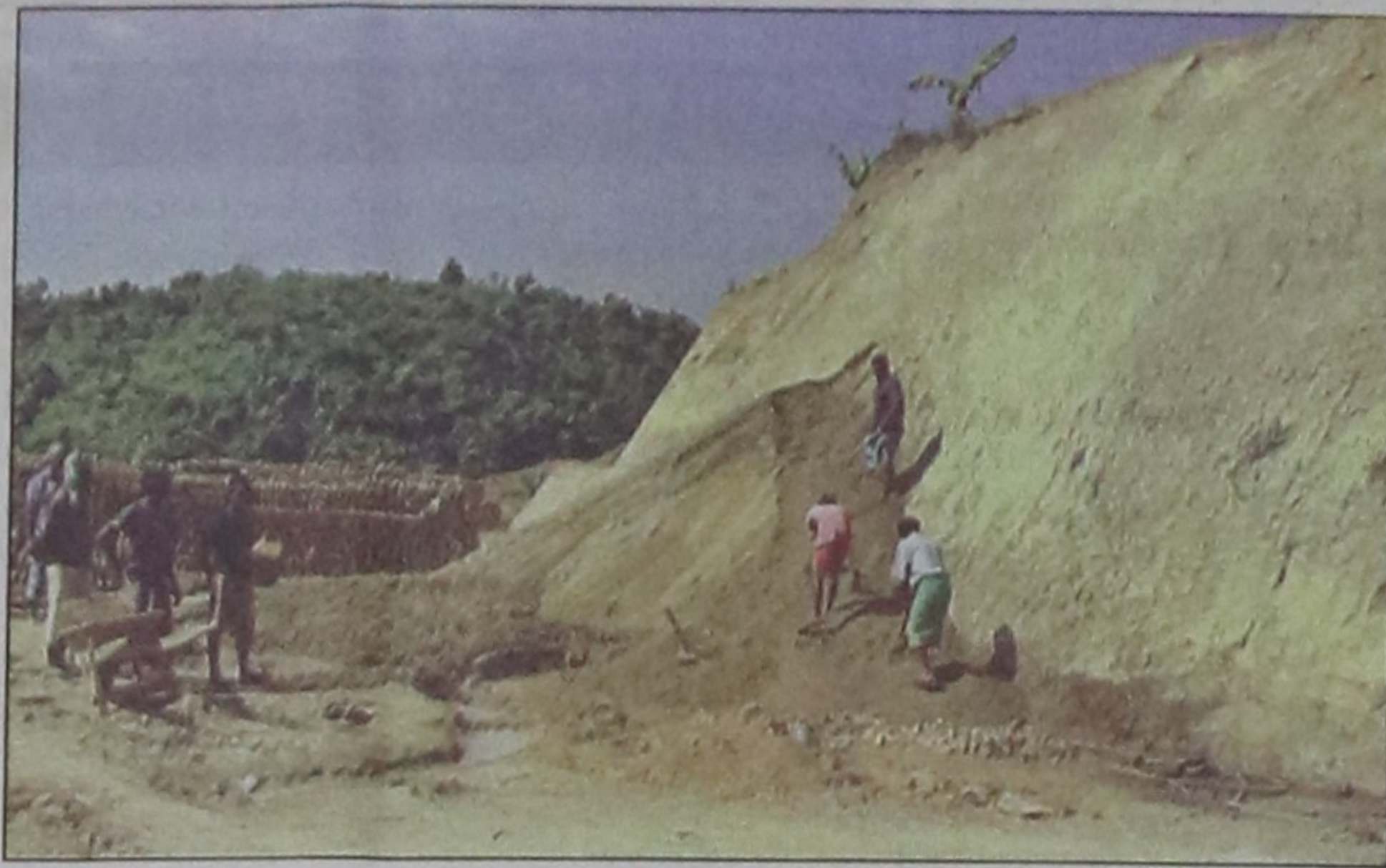


PHOTO: STAR

Defying environmental laws, an influential person continues cutting a hill at Washu in Matiranga in Khagrachhari district to construct a road to his brickfield.

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Khagrachhari creates bad impact on the environment, said Pradeep Chowdhury, convener of local environmental organization Paribesh Surokkha Andolon.

Filling up of rivers and canals and consequent flash flood, damage to property and lives are the results of hill cutting, he said.

Asif Ahammed, vice president of local Paribesh Andolon Forum, said Chhengi, Mainee and Feni rivers in the district have become filthy due to hill cutting and soil erosion.

Unscrupulous traders supply hilly soil to fill up canals and low lands for constructing houses and markets in the district, said Mohammad Khalilur Rahman, secretary of Paribesh Andolon Forum.

Many hills are facing danger. Sudden accident due to landslide may cause harm to people and properties any time. An integrated approach is necessary to save environment of the natural hilly areas,

Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) Masud Ahmed said. When contacted, Deputy Commissioner AKM Khairul Alam said, "I have already taken initiatives to save the hills. I ordered Matiranga upazila nirbahi officer to take action against hill cutting."

BSF returns Bangladeshi's body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chawabganj

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) returned the body of a Bangladeshi youth after a company commander-level flag meeting with Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Thursday evening.

Operation Officer of 39 Rifles Battalion, Maj. Syed Abu Hasan said the meeting was held on the zero line on Chouka border near pillar No 77.

The victim was identified as Hablu Mia, 21, son of Md. Moju Mia of Chhoto Aramari village in Shibganj upazila in the district.

He was gunned down by BSF members of Sukdepur camp on Chouka border Tuesday night. Two others injured in the BSF firing - Babul Mia, 28, and Yousuf Ali, 30 are undergoing treatment at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

After receiving the body, BDR men then handed it over to Shibganj police who later handed it over the body to the victim's family.

3 Satkhira MPs vow to fight corruption

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Three lawmakers, elected in the December 29 elections from Satkhira district as Awami League (AL) led grand alliance candidates, yesterday vowed to root out corruption from the society for the development of the country.

At a discussion during a reception accorded to them by the leaders and activists of local grand alliance at Satkhira pourasava auditorium, they also vowed to take steps to solve the perennial water-logging problem in Tala, Kalaroa and Sadar upazilas.

Water-logging problem has aggravated over the years due to declining flow of the Padma, deposit of silt in Kabodak, Betna and Marichchap rivers, unplanned coastal embankments and shrimp cultivation.

They also agreed to continue trial of corrupt suspects irrespective of party affiliation.

"I shall work for welfare of mass people who were deprived of their basic rights during the misrule of the past BNP-Jamaat-led four-party alliance government," said district AL President Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, elected from Satkhira-1 (Tala-Kalaroa) constituency.

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, also a freedom fighter, thanked Sector Commanders Forum and freedom fighters for creating mass awareness against war criminals, which influenced voters, mainly young people.

Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) leader MA Jabbar, who was elected from Satkhira-2 (Sadar) constituency defeating Jamaat candidate, pledged that he would undertake development projects including expansion of Bhomra land port, dilapidated

Bhomra-Satkhira road for the development of 'neglected' Satkhira district.

JP leader HM Golam Reza, elected from Satkhira-4 (Shyamnagar and eight unions in Kaliganj upazila), said he would take measures to save the Sundarbans from destruction and set up a tourism centre at Munshiganj adjacent to the Sundarbans.

District grand alliance convenor Md Nazrul Islam, also the general secretary of district AL, presided over the meeting while district Jatiya Party (JP-Ershad) leader Ashrafuzzaman Ashu conducted the reception ceremony.

Another elected lawmaker from the district, AL leader Dr AFM Ruhul Haque, who has been inducted as health minister in the new cabinet, could not attend the reception as he was busy with state functions.

SYLHET SHRINE BLAST

Police give final report after 5 years

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

Investigators have submitted final report on the bomb attack on the premises of the shrine of the shrine of Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) in Sylhet as they failed to find any clue to the tragic incident in five years.

The attack made during the annual Urs of Hajrat Shahjalal (RA) on the night of January 12 in 2004 left five persons killed and 50 injured.

Investigation officer (IO) of the case, CID Inspector Gopal Chakravarty told the Daily Star yesterday that he submitted the final report last week to the Chief Judicial Magistrate's court of Sylhet.

"I was given the task months ago. Before me, six investigators tried to find out any clue to the incident but failed.

"It's too hard to get find any clue after five years".

In last five years, investigation officials were changed seven times. Gopal Chakravarty of CID was the last investigator.

No evidence against any of the arrested persons could be established, he added. He however said investigation will resume whenever any clue is found.

Moulana Abu Sayeed, an activist of Harkat ul Jihad (Huji), an Islamist militant organization, now in jail was included as an accused in the case months ago. Sayeed was arrested from Uttara in Dhaka city in 2007.

Thirteen out of the 14 persons arrested in connection with the case are on bail, Gopal said.

At about 8 pm on January 12, 2004, when thousands of devotees from all over the country were attending the annual Urs at the shrine and around, several bombs went off on the northern premises of the shrine.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

With the authorities turning a blind eye, tree felling goes on unabated in the reserve forest under Padua Range in Chittagong (South) Forest Division. The photo was taken on Thursday.

SYLHET Candidates use party identity in upazila polls

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Although the upazila elections are to be held non-partisan, candidates are using their political identity during the campaign in almost all the upazilas of the district.

A number of candidates from the four-party alliance have already withdrawn from the race, but there are still more than one candidate for the posts of chairman and vice-chairman in all the upazilas. Awami League is also facing similar situation.

Amid widespread speculations that results of the recently held parliament elections would influence the local body polls candidates from the Awami League camp are feeling somewhat better than those from the ones from their rival BNP.

Sylhet district BNP convening committee member Ashique Chwdhury and Kanaighat pourashava unit BNP chief Izalur Rahman are contesting for the post of upazila chairman of Kanaighat.

In Sylhet Sadar upazila, BNP leaders Abul Kaher Shamim and UP chairman Shah Jamal Nurul Huda are contesting for the upazila chairman post.

Upazila BNP President Mozahid Uddin and Jamaat leader Mohammad Hashmat Ullah withdrew their nominations in Biswanath upazila. However, Biswanath upazila BNP Vice-chairman Sohel Ahmed Chowdhury, General Secretary Firoze Khan Ponki and a district committee member are still on the race for the upazila chairmanship. Similar is the situation in

the AL camp. In Sadar upazila, district AL's Joint Secretary Ashfaq Ahmed, district Srakim League President Eajul Haque Eaj and former UP chairman Azizur Rahman Manik are in the campaign with AL identity. However, Sadar upazila AL at a meeting endorsed Ashfaq as their candidate for the polls.

In Zakiganj upazila, former upazila chairman AL leader Mashuk Uddin, Jatiya Party's France chapter chief Shabbir Ahmed and Sirajul Haque, and freedom fighter Farid Uddin are in the race.

In Companiganj, former upazila chairman M Taiyebur Rahman and Md Jahangir Alam, both AL men, and in Gowainghat, USA AL leader Faruque Ahmed and local AL leader Luthfur Rahman Lebu are in the upazila polls race.

In Golaganj, Iqbal Ahmed Chowdhury and former chairman Abul Boshor are in the race. Both of them are using AL identity.

However, district AL Joint Secretary Abdul Khaliq Mayon is the only candidate with AL identity in Beanbazar upazila while in Dakshin Surma upazila former UP chairman Mainul Islam is the lone candidate with AL identity.

Freedom fighter's body recovered in Magura

UNB, Magura

The body of a freedom fighter was recovered from a latrine tank at Basho village in Mohammadpur upazila Thursday afternoon.

Freedom fighter Jafar Biswas, 60, was missing for three days, family sources said.

Jafar had a long-standing dispute with his rival in the village, police said adding that he might have been killed following the rivalry.

However, none was arrested in this connection.

43 women runners against 52 men in 9 Khulna upazilas

'Woman for woman' is the main poll slogan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

'Woman for woman' is the main slogan of women candidates to draw sympathy of women voters in the upcoming upazila election in Khulna.

Forty-three women are contesting for the posts of vice-chairman in nine upazilas in the district. Against them, 52 male candidates are in the race.

The women candidates are visiting houses of voters from dawn to dusk to seek votes, making lofty promises. They are mainly banking on women voters.

Most of them have an added advantage. They are using extra services of their husbands and adult children in the hectic polls campaign.

They are assuring poor women voters that if elected, they will get bank loan for cottage industry and purchasing sewing machines to earn more for better living.

Talking to this correspondent, Bulu Roy Ganguly con-

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Director

IBA Creating Horizons

Mother, son in UZ polls race in Kurigram

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kurigram

Presence of a mother and her son in the election race has created much enthusiasm among local voters in Ulupur upazila (UZ).

The mother is Shahana Sarder, wife of late Abdur Rab Sarder, a former upazila chairman of Ulupur during Ershad's regime. She is the lone female candidate in all nine upazilas of the district. Her election symbol is 'rickshaw'.

Her son is Rakibul Hasan Sarder whose election symbol is 'wheel'. Both of them are vying for chairmanship of the upazila.

When contacted, Shahana said that she would work for alleviation of poverty by creating jobs for poor people. Her late husband is an inspiration for her, she said.

Her contestant son Rakibul Hasan said he would uphold the prestige of her father by serving people in the upazila.

Four other candidates are also contesting for the post of chairman.

ইলেকট্রিসিটি জেনারেশন কোম্পানী অব বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড (গোলাপশাহ বিদ্যুৎ উন্নয়ন বোর্ডের একটি অঙ্গ প্রতিষ্ঠান) বাবাহ্বাপক (তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী) সংরক্ষণ এর কার্যালয় সিদ্ধিরগঞ্জ ২১০ মেট্রোপলিটান বিদ্যুৎ কেন্দ্র, সিদ্ধিরগঞ্জ, নারায়ণগঞ্জ-১৪০৩