

Illegal hill rock extraction threatening ecology

2.5 lakh cft rocks removed a year from different spots in 8 upazilas of Khagrachhari

JASIM MAJUMDER,
Khagrachhari

Illegal collection and sale of rocks from hills, waterfalls and canals in eight upazilas in the district is going on unabated posing serious threat to environment and ecology.

Rock extraction causes erosion of hill cliffs often leading to catastrophic landslides. This also contributes to developing silts in nearby rivers -- a major reason for untimely flooding in Khagrachhari and filling up of Chhara, Zeeree (local name of water sources), environmentalists observed.

According to rock lifters, over 2.5 lakh cubic feet (cft) hill rocks are removed annually from the spots in eight upazilas of the district. Each cft of rocks is sold at Tk 120 to Tk 150. This illegal business is going on under the very nose of security men and officials of forest department, sources said.

Divisional Forest Office sources said the department is responsible for issuing transit passes and collecting revenue.

Primary buyers of the illegal rocks are contractors of various government projects under the municipality, LGED (Local Government and Engineering Department), Public Works Department (PWD), Chittagong Hill Tracts Development Board (CHTDB) and Roads and Highways Department (RHD).

To legitimise the illegal construction materials, the contractors pay a hefty amount of bribe to the high officials of these departments, sources informed.

According to a government circular issued by a senior assistant secretary of the Environment and Forest Ministry on June 29, 2002, the government is supposed to collect revenue at a rate of Tk. 58 per cft.

In that case the amount of revenue from rocks in Khagrachhari would stand at least at Tk 1 crore annually.

This correspondent witnessed huge stockpiles of hill rocks at Nunchhari, Gagrachhari, Gamaridala, Champaghat and



Extracted rock stockpiled at Nanchhari in Khagrachhari district where unscrupulous traders have continued illegal collection and selling of rocks, posing threat to environment and depriving the government of huge revenue.

Mohalchhara under Sadar upazila, Akhbhari, Dharmopur and Ramsira under Matiranga upazila, Baradam, Babuchhara and Araimail under Dighinala, Kongchairipara and Simanapara under Panchhari, Sindukchhara and Karbaripara under Mohalchhara upazila, Jouthakhamar and Headmanpara under Ramgar upazila, and various other places in Laxmichhari and Manikchhari.

Chailaprie Marma, 45, a local rock collector from Gagrachhari said he was neither aware of any adverse effect of rock lifting nor he knew if he had to pay for it to the government.

Mongcrow Marma, another collector told this correspondent that although they are getting hard cash but it is causing crisis of water in winter season.

A first class contractor in Khagrachhari refuted the allegation of buying hill rocks

illegally for construction work. He, however, admitted that hill rocks are sometimes used to prevent erosion of river banks.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) urged the authorities to take stern action against the culprits. "If this continues unabated water crisis would become a major cause of concern as more than 60 percent indigenous people depend on natural sources like Chhara and Zeeree", said Abu Daud, network member of BELA.

Sub Divisional Engineer of Public Works Department (PWD) Prodip Kumar Bose citing abrasion test results said, the natural rocks of hill areas are not suitable for construction works.

Assistant Commissioner (Land) Kawser Hossain told The Daily Star that Deputy Commissioner Khairul Alam recently seized three rock-laden trucks from Gurgujachhari under Sadar

upazila and handed over to police. They had transit pass issued for Selim & Brothers by the Divisional Forest Officer.

Divisional Forest Officer Ali Kabir denied the allegation and said he is not aware about it. He said, some local people collect hill rocks in a small scale for household purposes. Terming it illegal, he said the department can not check it because of shortage of manpower.

Assistant Superintendent of Police Mohammad Tareq Ahmed informed that a case has been filed against Selim & Brothers and added police seized the three trucks with rocks.

Deputy Commissioner Khairul Alam said he had directed all upazila nirbahi officers (UNOs) to take necessary action so that none can collect hill rocks illegally. A special inspection team has been formed in this regard, he added.

RU Sangskritik Jote, Shibir face off on Ekushey programme

RU CORRESPONDENT

A tense situation is prevailing on the Rajshahi University campus over holding Ekushey programme as Sammilito Sangskritik Jote (SSJ) RU unit and Shibir-backed Bikalpa Sahitya Sangsad (BSS) announced to hold their programmes at the university Central Shaheed Minar at the same time.

Campus sources said Shibir men staged a demonstration on the campus after Juma prayers yesterday.

SSJ activists also took position near Shaheed Minar Mukto Mancho yesterday noon and announced that they would hold their scheduled programme at the Central Shaheed Minar at any cost.

They said BSS has no right to hold programme at the Central Shaheed Minar as they are anti-liberation forces.

"We won't allow Shibir to hold programme at the shaheed minar as their politics is against the spirit of Ekushey," said Shaheen Reza, acting president of SSJ RU unit.

SSJ activist met Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) RU unit, Chhatra Union, Jshad Chhatra League, Progressive Students Alliance and different cultural organisations on the campus yesterday morning and sought their cooperation in holding Ekushey programme at the shaheed minar.

A large number of police have been deployed in and around the Central Shaheed Minar to avert any untoward incident.

College student strangled in Chuadanga

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Kushtia

Unidentified criminals strangled a college student at Kulchura village under Sadar upazila of Chuadanga on Thursday night.

Police said Mahadi Hasan Babu, 18, son of Afzalur Rahim Baki, went to a pharmacy on a bicycle to buy medicine for his mother at about 8.30pm.

Locals found Babu's body at a roadside ditch at the village yesterday morning and informed the police.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

The killers took away Babu's bicycle.

Family members said Babu was an HSC candidate from Chauadanga Government College. He got GPA-5 in the SSC examinations.

KIRTANKHOLA LAUNCH TRAGEDY

Orphaned, they still wait for sibling's return

RAFIQUL ISLAM, Barisal

Rahima and Zohora, who lost their parents in Thursday's launch capsizing in the Kirtankhola, are still waiting on the riverbank for their missing brother.

Rahima also came to the spot to take bodies of her parents Mintu Dhal and Rashia Begum and her only brother Hanifa.

Eight-year-old Rahima only gave a blank look when asked, "Where are your parents?"

"Five of our family -- parents, brother Hanifa and sister Rahima -- started for Patarhat under Mehediganj upazila at out village home on Thursday morning. After sometime my father jumped into the river with Rahima and me. He took us to the riverbank and then went back to the launch to rescue my mother and brother but did not come back," said Rahima's elder



PHOTO: STAR

Inconsolable Zohora wails death of parents in Thursday's launch capsizing in the Kirtankhola.

sister eleven-year-old Zohora.

Later bodies of her parents were recovered from the river but her brother along with over a dozen people remained missing as of filing

this report yesterday evening.

Twenty-seven bodies including 26 from inside the salvaged launch ML Fahmida Happy Express have been recovered.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

National AIDS/STD Programme
Directorate General of Health Services
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare

RE-INVIATION FOR BIDS

Date: 21st February, 2009

Contract Identification No: MSA/04/2009

Financier: IDA Credit No. 4052-BD and Multi-Donor TF56510.

Program Name: Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Program.

1. The Government of The People's Republic of Bangladesh has received Credits/Grants from the International Development Association (and other Pooling Development Partners) towards the cost of Health, Nutrition and Population Sector Program and intends to apply part of the funds to cover eligible payments under the Contract for HIV/AIDS Targeted Interventions. Bidding is open to all Private Health Organizations (NGOs and CBOs from eligible source countries as defined in the Guidelines: Procurement under IBRD Loans and IDA Credit.

2. Line Director, National AIDS-STD and Safe Blood Transfusion Program (NASP), Ministry of Health and Family Welfare Re-invites sealed Bids from eligible Bidders for carrying out the services/ interventions for the high risk behaviour group in different locations of Bangladesh for contracting out as shown below:

Package Number	Name of the Targeted Intervention Group	Locations
P-15/1	Harm Reduction Programme	Specified in the Geographical Locations in the Bidding documents (Part-II).
P-15/2	Harm Reduction Programme	

Bidders must have at least five years of experience on the above interventions and proven technical capacity to deliver the desired outputs in relation to the targeted intervention packages of HIV/AIDS by working with IDUs & HSH.

3. Bidders can bid for one or more than one packages (Separate Bid for each Package) and in case of multiple awards to the same bidder they will have to meet the cumulative requirements of all those contracts and may also offer a discount.

4. Bid security of BDT 675,000.00 & BDT 450,000.00 for 15/1 and 15/2 respectively or its equivalent amount in convertible currency

5. Bidding document may be purchased at the office of the Management Support Agency (MSA), MOHFW, Flat No. 502, House # 15, Road # 128, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212 for a non-refundable fee of Tk. 600/= per set including a CD from the date of publication of this notice.

Bid documents shall not be sold on the day of Bid opening.

Further information may be obtained from: A. Line Director, NASP, House # 62, Road # 03, Block-B, Niketon, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212. Phone: +88-02-8853378/8853263, Fax: +88-02-8829720, E-mail: stdaids2008@gmail.com

B. Mohammad Ali, Procurement Specialist, Management Support Agency (MSA), Apartment 502, House # 15, Road # 128, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212, Phone: +88-02-8818369, Fax: +88-02-8818369. E-mail: engrskmdali@msabd.org

6. Bids shall be valid for a period of 120 days after their opening.

7. Submission of Bids: Bids will be received at MSA office up to 12-00 noon of 17th March, 2009 and opened at the same location at 12.15 pm, in presence of the bidders who wish to attend.

8. Bid should be addressed to The Line Director, NASP and any correspondence should be addressed to him. Sealed covers of the Bids must have a mark of Package Number.

9. A Pre-bid conference will be held on 1st March 2009 at 3-00 PM at Hotel Washington, 56 Gulshan Avenue, R # 132, Gulshan-1, Dhaka-1212. Bidder or his/her representative (one per bidder) is welcome to attend.

10. The NASP reserves the right to reject any or all Bids and annul the Bidding process without assigning any reason whatsoever.

(Dr. Md. Ishaque Khan)
Line Director, NASP

Defying physical challenge

Razia writes SSC answer scripts with toes

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Thakurgaon

Defying physical challenge, Razia Begum is attending the running SSC examinations writing with her left leg at Baliadangi Samiruddin College Centre.

The girl, who has continued her schooling through sheer will force, is the daughter of Faizul Haque, a farmer of Mistrupara village under Baliadangi upazila of the district.

"After her birth, Razia's two hands started getting thinner and gradually they became inactive. Despite various treatments, she could not be cured," Faizul said.

As she showed keen interest to learn I admitted her to Baliadangi Government Primary School. She is appearing in the SSC examinations

under humanities group from Baliadangi Pilot High School. She is good at study but I could not arrange any private tutor at home due to poverty," he said.

Md Tajimuddin, headmaster of Baliadangi Pilot High School, said Razia was always attentive to study and did good result in the test examinations.

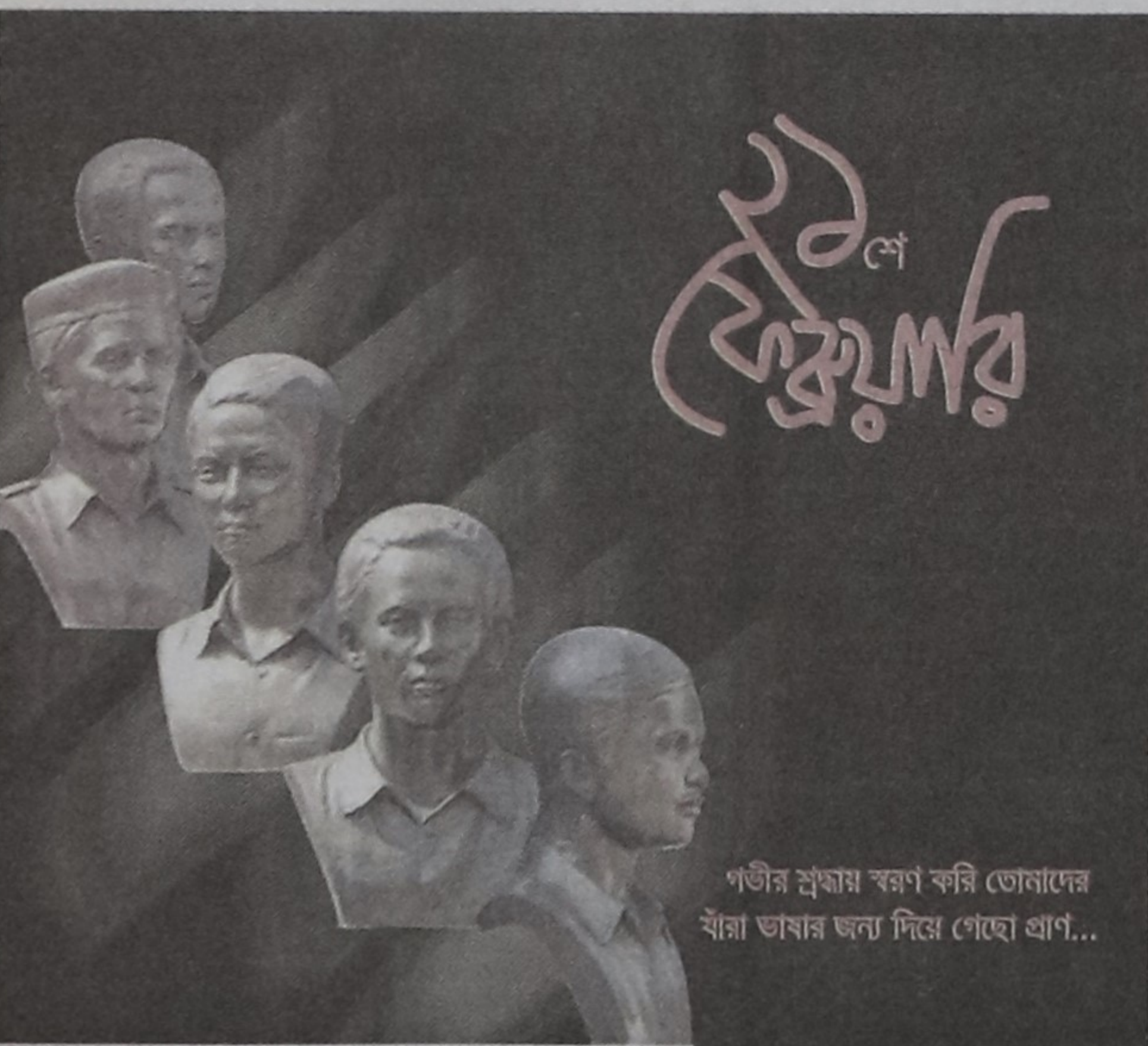
"My school teachers gave all out support for continuation of my education. Despite my physical barriers, I want to study in a university. But I am thinking about managing the education expenditure after the SSC," Razia told this correspondent at her house on Thursday.

Replying to a question, she said she gets an allowance for the disabled from the social welfare office but it is not enough for running education smoothly.



PHOTO: STAR

SSC examinee Razia writing answer scripts with left leg toes at Baliadangi Samiruddin College centre in Thakurgaon on Thursday.



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