

Hill levelled to make plots in Matiranga

JASIM MAJUMDER,
Khagrachhari

Plots are being developed near Chharpara under Matiranga upazila in the hill district of Khagrachhari, defying the ban on hill cutting under the nose of the administration.

An influential quarter already has levelled over four acres of hilly land and built houses, business centres, madrasas and other structures without following any environment-friendly plan, sources said.

They are making over 25 plots and selling each plot at Tk 4 to 5 lakh and thus fetching hefty amount of money ignoring serious threat to lives, natural environment and biodiversity of the hill district.

Locals alleged that three people are involved in the crime with the help of a section of government officials as they hold important positions in some committees in the administration. The influential people include some dishonest businessmen, sources said.

The buyers of the plots said they paid more than Tk 5 lakh to both police and administration for developing the plots.

When asked Matiranga Upazila Community Police Secretary Mohammad Jasim Uddin said he bought the land two years ago and now building houses there.

He said he is not cutting any hill, rather former owners of the land did it.

Upazila Durniti



Plots are being developed near Chharpara under Matiranga upazila.

Pratirodh Committee Chairman Abdur Rahim denied the allegation of misusing administration, saying that the hill has been levelled during the construction of Matiranga bazar bridge.

He said they have not given any bribe to police or officials in this regard. But he refused to comment in this regard in front of the officials.

Businessman Julhash Uddin said local people always cut hill for construction. He said hill people need no permission from the Department of Environment (DoE) for construction as they live in the hill areas.

He said they manage the people concerned in the administration and there is nothing wrong with doing

so. "If you wish you can write against us. We would face it legally," he told this correspondent.

Former Matiranga upazila chairman Nasir Uddin Chowdhury said hill cutting goes on unabated in front of the officials. None is there to stop it as a section of officials are involved with it, he said.

Network member of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers' Association (BELA) Muhammad Abu Daud said local environmental activists and journalists filed several general diaries with local police stations in Khagrachhari in regard to hill cutting. But the administration is yet to take any effective steps to protect the hills from depletion.

NGO Global Village Executive Director Fazle-Elahi said plunderers always cut hill, causing threat to environment. He said due to unabated hill cutting properties are damaged and rivers and canals filled up, causing flash floods in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT). He urged the administration to take stern action against the perpetrators of hill cutting.

Matiranga Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mohammad Mustafizur Rahman said he has joined the upazila administration few months ago and he is not aware of such an incident.

When asked about the involvement of a section of officials, he denied the allegation.

Move to increase food grain storage capacity

Govt to return Haliashahar CSD to food department and set up 39 new godowns

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

The government has taken initiative to return Haliashahar Central Storage Depot (CSD) to the department of food from Karnaphuli Export Processing Zone to increase food grain storage capacity in Chittagong.

Besides, the government will set up 39 more modern godowns with capacity of 35,000 metric tons of food grains in Chittagong division. Haliashahar CSD comprising 94 godowns with storage capacity of 84,750 metric tons of food grains was handed over to Karnaphuli EPZ authorities on February 15, 2006, sources said.

But the country's largest CSD have been lying almost unutilised since then though the Karnaphuli EPZ planned to develop its second unit on 28 acres of land of the CSD.

On the other hand, handing over of the CSD created a serious crisis of space required for storage of emergency food stock, said the sources.

It prompted the government to take initiative to return CSD to department of food.

Joint Secretary Md Zahirul Haq of Food Ministry and Director General of Department of Food DS Costa visited the CSD at Haliashahar along with Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority (BEPZA) and Karnaphuli EPZ officials on April 15.

Karnaphuli EPZ allocated space to 13 firms for setting up industrial units and some of them also started developing infrastructures, said the sources at Bepza and Karnaphuli EPZ.

Sources in the office of Chittagong Regional Controller of Food said fate of the allocated land for industrial units would be decided after the CDS is handed over to the department of food.

The department of food would take decision after an inquiry on the present state of the CSD, they said.

Process is also on to construct 17 godowns with capacity of 15,000

metric tons of food grains at the CSD at Dewanhat, sources added.

Besides, Public Works Department is conducting survey to identify sites for these new godowns, they said.

Apart from Dewanhat CSD, construction of godowns with capacity of 5000 metric tons was proposed for Lohagara, Banskhali, Mirer Sarai and Hathazaria upazila.

Moreover, there are plans to construct six godowns -- one with capacity of 4500 metric tons in Khagrachhari, one with capacity of 1000 metric ton in Rangamati, one with capacity of 500 metric ton in Bandarban, one with capacity of 1000 metric ton in Cox's Bazar, three with capacity of 2500 metric tons in Comilla, one with capacity of 500 metric ton in Brahmanbaria, one with capacity of 1000 metric ton in Chandpur and three with capacity of 2500 metric tons in Laxmipur, said the sources.



ABUNDANCE OF MONSOON FRUITS: Traders bring huge monsoon fruits in the port city from Chittagong Hill Tracts. The photo was taken from Shubhalong of Rangamati on Friday.

the week that was

Fame, a local drama group, stages a drama titled 'Jharhafi' at Theatre Institute Chittagong on Friday.



Seminar on physiotherapy treatment held

A seminar on physiotherapy treatment was organised jointly by Lions Club of Chittagong Presidency and Lions Anwar-Taher Physiotherapy Clinic at the clinic at Zakir Hossain Road on Saturday.

Lions Club of Chittagong Presidency Adviser Quazi Akramuddin Ahmed was present as the chief guest in the seminar chaired by club president Dr M Zakirul Islam. Club's Cabinet Secretary Prasun Kumar Barua, Treasurer Jahangir Alam and District Governor MS Alam were present as the special guests.

Physiotherapy Expert Dr Ashraf Uddin presented the key-note paper in the seminar while club secretary Nizamuddin Mamun spoke.

The speakers said poor patients with related diseases can avail the physiotherapy treatment at a cheaper cost at our clinic.

May Day observed

Speakers at a rally urged the government to pay workers proper wages and benefits and resume operation at closed state-owned enterprises.

In observance of historic May Day, Human Hauler Driver and Helper Union and Chittagong District Auto Tempo Rickshaw (CNG) Workers Union jointly organised the rally at city's Lalkhan Bazar intersection on Saturday.

Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation leader Abul Kalam Azad presided over. Ward Councillor AFM Kabir Ahmad Manik, Central Adviser Farid Mahmud, Central Coordinator Belayet Hossain Belal Adviser Abdus Jaher Jasim

and Central General Secretary Shahjahan Company addressed the seminar.

Mercantile Bank consumers' conference held

Consumers' conference of Mercantile Bank Limited Chittagong Region's branches was held in the port city on Sunday.

The bank Board of Directors Chairman Mohammad Abdul Jalil, also Awami League lawmaker, was the chief guest at the conference with the bank Managing Director Dewan Mujibur Rahman in the chair.

The board First Vice Chairman SM Ahsan, Executive Committee Chairman Akram Hossain Humayun, Audit Committee Chairman Dr Towfiq Rahman

Chowdhury, directors Mohammad Mansuruzzaman, AKM Sahid Reza, Mohammad Shahabuddin Alam, SM Abdul Mannan and Mosharraf Hossain attended the conference.

Speakers at the conference called for developing the corporate-relationship with the consumers. The conference was followed by a cultural programme.

RWC meeting ends

The two-day long Regional Welfare Committee (RWC) Meeting of International Committee on Seafarers Welfare concluded in the port city on Tuesday.

Seaman's Welfare Committee (SWC), Bangladesh organised the meeting at Hotel Agrabad.

Shipping Department Director General Commodore Bazur Rahman was the chief guest at the inaugural session

while Managing Director of Haque & Sons Ltd Enamul Haque Chowdhury, Chittagong Port Authority Member (Harbour & Marine) Captain Sheikh Arif Mahmood, Mercantile Marine Department Principal Officer Captain Habibur Rahman, ITF Seafarer Trust Administrative Officer Tom Holmer, Regional Welfare Committee (South Asia) Chairman Captain Ashitha Sumendha Wijesekera spoke at the inaugural session.

Speakers at the session said the role of seafarers in global maritime transportation is very essential and Bangladesh has long tradition of supplying best professional seafarers.

"Bangladesh has ratified many International Labour Organisation (ILO) maritime conventions while accepted various recommendations and incorporated those into the national law," they said.



Jatiyatabadi Dock Sramik Dal forms a human chain in the city's Nimitala area of Chittagong port demanding reinstatement of terminated workers on Thursday.