

## Jhum cultivation continues unabated

At least 120 types of wildlife on the verge of extinction and birds have virtually lost their safe habitats

JASIM MAJUMDER,  
from Khagrachhari

About 25,000 acres of forest land, including reserve forest, have been brought under jhum cultivation in the current season at eight upazilas in Khagrachhari in defiance of law.

Jhum is a traditional method of cultivation of indigenous people in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).

As a result, not only the government is losing a huge amount of revenue but also at least 120 types of wildlife are on the verge of extinction, environmentalists and locals said. The birds have virtually lost their safe habitats.

Continuous tilling of hill slopes is also appears as a major concern of massive soil erosion as forests and shrubs are cleared off and burnt, damaging biodiversity that may cause environmental disaster, they said.

During jhum cultivation, many valuable timber trees and medicinal plants are also stolen from the forest. Even the jhum farmers sometime build permanent house in the forest land, ignoring government circular, sources said.

Zaliyapara Range Office sources said they are trying their level best to make farmers aware of the possible disaster, but they pay little attention to their advice.

They burnt to ashes 2,069 acres of Reserve Forest at Baillachhari under Matiranga upazila while most portion of 2,500 acres of Jugalchhari Reserve Forest under Panchhari upazila, some 30 acres of Khagrachhari reserve forest and 20 thousand acres of land for non-classified state forest land have been brought under jhum cultivation, sources said.

Though indiscriminate jhum cultivation on flood-free hill slopes is increasing as it earns good profit for

farmers, particularly in the rainy season, the revenue income from the reserve or unclassified state forest is gradually decreasing, they said.

Biru Kumar Tripura, 28, from Baillachhari reserve area, said he burnt a big area in the reserve forest at Baillachhari as jhum cultivation is their traditional right. He said he has cleared about five acres of the reserve forest land. About 100 more farmers from his village did the same, he added.

Biru, however, said he has no knowledge about the ban on such acts and nobody ever has told them about the law.

Rajkumari Tripura, a woman from the same area, said the people living in the reserve forest are very poor. They engage themselves in jhum cultivation inside the forest since they have no source of income, she said.

According to a statement of the Zaliyapara

range, 25,03,490 teak saplings were planted in the forest in last 25 years. But this correspondent did not find a single tree in the reserve forest.

Guimara Union Parishad Chairman Nayan Tripura said the forest has been reduced due to jhum cultivation for lack of timely action.

Zaliyapara Forest Ranger Zillur Rahman said most of the indigenous people are involved with jhum cultivation destroying the forest.

Zillur said he had lodged a general diary with Guimara Police Station against jhum farmers on March 5 who set fire to reserve forest and made it barren.

Baibonchhara UP Chairman Aprushi Marma said about 1,000 farmers who have houses either in the reserve forest or unclassified state forest are engaged in jhum cultivation.

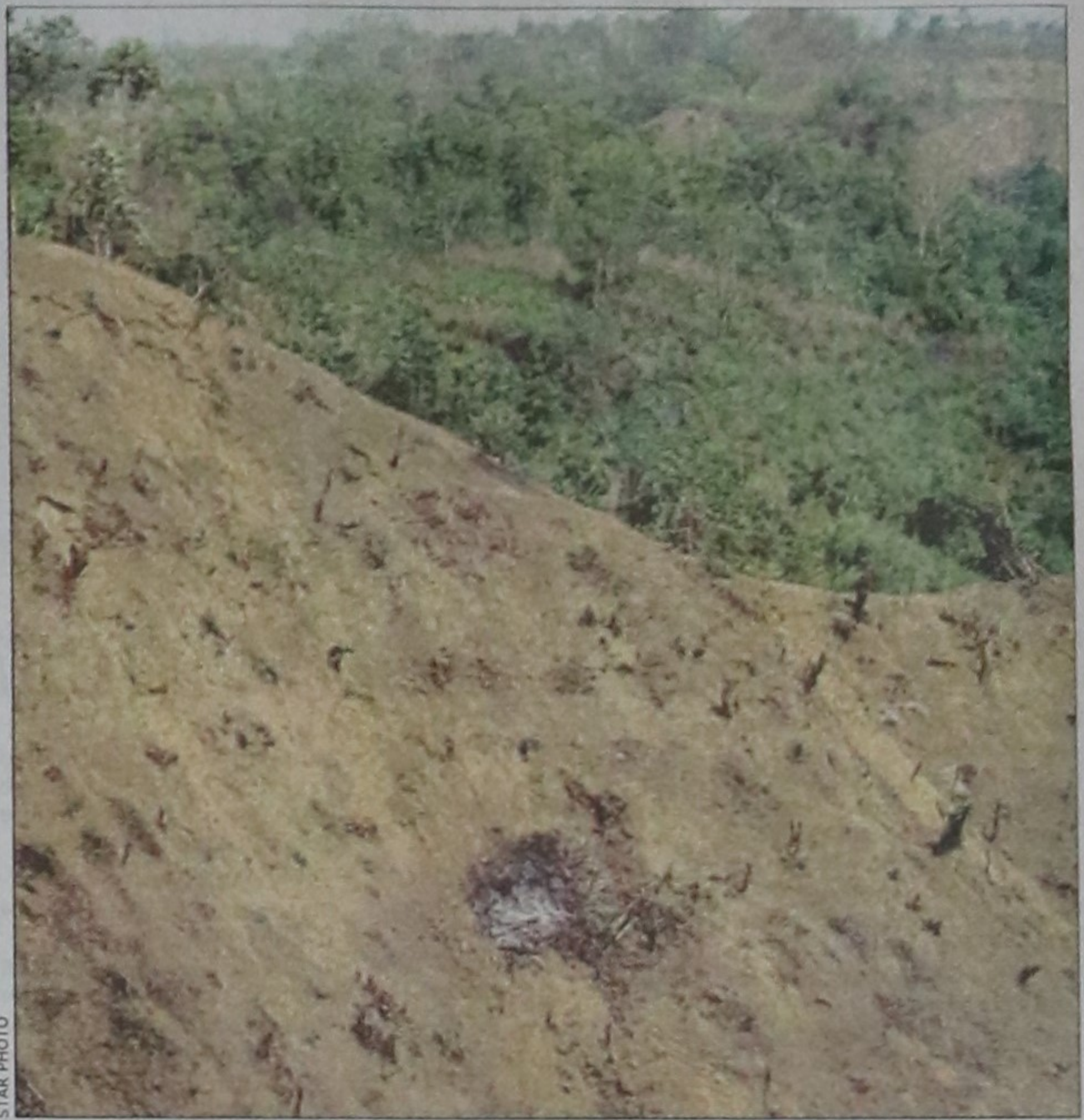
Bangladesh Environment Lawyers' Association (BELA) network member Muhammad Abu Daud said at least 70 varieties of medicinal plants have been lost due to massive jhum cultivation inside forest.

Pradip Chowdhury, Programme Supervisor of Centre for Sustainable Development (CSD), said jhum cultivation is responsible for extinction of wildlife and destroying environment.

Executive Director of Global Village, Rangamati Fazle Elahi said indigenous farmers are forced to jhum cultivation as they find hardly any alternate way of earning bread and butter and the government should come forward to help them.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Mohammad Ali Kabir admitted to jhum cultivation in the reserve forest and damage to the environment.

He said he can't deal with over 30 to 40 thousand jhum farmers with limited staffs.



A part of unclassified state forest for jhum cultivation.

### the week that was



State Minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud gives away prizes among winners of the annual sports competition of Chittagong Press Club (CPC) at a function on Friday.

#### Role of media lauded

State minister for Foreign Affairs Dr Hasan Mahmud lauded the role of media in guiding a government towards right track, saying any government can be benefited greatly from the constructive reports, recommendations and suggestions of both print and electronic media.

He said this while he was speaking as the chief guest at the prize giving ceremony of annual sports of Chittagong Press Club (CPC) on Friday at the club auditorium. CPC President Abu Sufian chaired the function.

"To be a true patriot is the foremost precondition of development of the country. We all can contribute to building the country by doing one good work every day and thus the 15 crore people will be able to deliver as many good work each day. And by doing so, we will successfully turn into a middle-income country by next ten years," he said.

Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) President Mostak Ahmad, CPC Senior Vice President Faruk Iqbal, General Secretary Rashed Rouf, Joint Secretary Mohsin Chowdhury and Sports Secretary Morshed Alam also spoke.

Later the chief guest distributed prizes among 150 winners of different events. A total of over 400 competitors including club members, their wives and children took part in the month-long sports, sponsored by NCC Bank Ltd.

#### OFA Ctg chapter AGM held

The annual general meeting and biennial election of the Chittagong chapter of Old Faujians Association (OFA), an organisation of former students of Faujdardhat Cadet College (FCC), was held here on Friday.

Addressing the day long programme as

the chief guest OFA Central Committee Chairman OFn Dr Sarwar Ahmed, also member of Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), called upon the old Faujians to gear up activities of the organisation for building up society as well as country.

Over 100 old Faujians were present at the programme held at the Party Centre of Chittagong Club.

In the biennial election OFn Saiful Islam and OFn Dr Sarwar Ahmed were elected president and secretary. OFn Dr Mesbah Uddin Ahmed was elected joint secretary and OFn Dr Mahtabuddin Hasan treasurer.

OFn Engineer Ruhul Matin announced the new executive committee for 2009-2011.

#### Workshop on 'Drug protection, prevention'

A workshop on "Drug Protection and Prevention" was held in the port city on Saturday.

Nagar Samaj Unnayan Sangstha and Sirajul Islam Patwary Foundation jointly organised the workshop at the conference room of Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP).

Narcotic and AIDS Specialist Prof Dr Sirajul Islam was the chief guest at the workshop with CMP Deputy Commissioner (Headquarters) AKM Shahidur Rahman in the chair.

Narcotic Control Department Additional Director Mohammad Wahiduzzaman, CMP Deputy Commissioner (North) Banaj Kumar Majumder and Manusher Jonno Foundation Programme (Capacity development and CHT) Jahed Hasan were present as the special guests.

Prof Sirajul and Jahed Hasan put up different negative aspects of the drug and ways for protecting and preventing it through multimedia projections.

Sub-inspectors, assistant sub-

inspectors and constables from different police stations attended the workshop.

#### Nazrul's birth anniversary observed

Global Scholar School observed the 110th birth anniversary of National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam on its campus on Monday.

A discussion and cultural programme was also organised to mark the day. The cultural programmes included recitation of poems of Nazrul and dances.

The poems recited in the programmes were Linchu Chor, Khandu Dadu, Khunki o Khathbirali, Ami Hobo, Pravati and Ma.

Principal Nahid Israt, Sayna, Samin, Sajid, Sumana, Mukarrama, Saad, Maisha, Hashmat, Mehnaj and Fabia recited and performed dances.

#### Science, geography fair held

A daylong science, geography and home economics fair was held at St Scholastica Girls High School on Saturday.

A number of students from class IV to class X participated in the fair with a total of 90 projects.

Chittagong District Education Officer Hosne Ara Begum was the chief guest at the inaugural session of the fair while the school management committee President Father Philip D Rosario, Headmistress Sister Merry Palma, Assistant Headmistress Sister Marcia Gomez and a number of guardians were present.

Speakers at the inaugural session called upon the students to build themselves as a qualified citizen through hard industry, patience, human virtues and practicing sciences.

Later, the winners of the best projects were given prizes.

## Seasonal fruits still dearer

Use of harmful chemicals to accelerate ripening of fruits alleged

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Prices of seasonal fruits in the port city are still beyond the reach of the common people despite huge supply of fruits this year, compared to the previous years.

Besides, consumers are worried as the use of harmful chemicals to ripen the fruit is posing a serious health hazard.

They expressed their resentment as no initiative was taken by the law enforcement agency or the authorities concerned so far in this regard said.

Wahidul Haque, assistant commissioner (DB), said they are trying to know through their informers whether harmful chemicals are being used or not for ripening the fruits in the port city.

Huge pile of fruits from different parts of the country and abroad is still dearer to the buyers of middle income families for higher price.

With the arrival of season, huge quantity of mango, jackfruit, pineapple, litchi, blackberry, palm and a number of other seasonal fruits from different parts of the country have started coming here.

Both the wholesale trade points of fruit --

BRTC for mango and Firingibazar for jackfruit, pineapple and local mango -- are now busy in unloading lots of fruits.

But the traders as well as vendors expressed their disappointment over the poor sale.

Price of jackfruit coming from the Chittagong Hill Tracts is much higher this time compared to the previous years. Vendors are selling a medium sized jackfruit at Tk 100 to Tk 130 while same sized jackfruit was sold at Tk 70 to Tk 80 last year.

Zahidunnabi, a teacher, said there is no reason of such price for jackfruit in this middle of the Bengali month of Jaishtha since it is the right season for the fruit.

Vendors blamed it for increased transport cost.

Pineapple from Naniarchhar, Burughat of Rangamati and other regions of Hill Tracts were sold at Tk 5 to Tk 7 a piece at Firingibazar on Sunday while it was at Tk 15 to Tk 20 in different city markets like Reazuddin Bazar, Karnaphuli Market and others.

Buyers are also not happy with mouth-watering mango for its higher price and comparatively poorer quality.

Different genres of

mango like himshagar, langra, gobindo, sundari and guti from Rajshahi, Kustia, Meherpur and some northern region are now on sale here but quality is not very good.

Mangoes are being sold at Tk 80 to Tk 180 at Reazuddin Bazar, Kazir Dewry, Bahodderhat and Karnaphuli market.

Kamal Uddin at Reazuddin Bazar said they are selling himshagar and langra at Tk 100 to Tk 140 per kilogram while sundari at Tk 80 and guti at Tk 70.

Md Salahuddin said he bought some locally grown mangoes as they were comparatively cheaper and free from added chemicals.

Local mangoes are being sold at Tk 40, a seller said.

Salahuddin alleged that harmful chemicals are being used in most of the fruits to accelerate the ripening of fruits.

He said the artificially ripen fruits look nice from outside but when cut a portion is found green while other part is rotten.

Sources said a section of unscrupulous traders are allegedly using harmful chemicals like carbide or insecticides to change the colour of the unripe

fruits like mangoes or pineapples to fool the buyers.

Traders usually spray the chemicals keeping the mangoes in the baskets, said the sources, adding that the colour of the unripe mangoes can change within a day.

Dr Gofranul Hoque, head of medicine department of Chittagong Medical College (CMC), said people might face digestive trouble and suffer from other blood related diseases if they take fruits with carbide.

Some vendors and retailers said they also were incurring a loss by storing artificially ripen mangoes since they become rotten in a very short time.

Zaman, a retailer, said they can't identify the chemical-added fruits while buying from the wholesale markets.

Md Sabuj, a wholesaler at BRTC, refuted the allegation of adding chemicals.

He said there is no need for adding chemicals this year since the weather is hot enough for fruits to be ripened naturally.

Consumers, however, urged the law enforcement agencies to take stern action against such activities.



There are abundant supply of seasonal fruits in the city markets. The photo was taken from Reazuddin Bazar on Tuesday.

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