

Seized timber worth Tk 10cr rot in CHT forest offices

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Huge quantity of timber worth around Tk 10 crore has been getting rotten for seven years at the range offices in Chittagong Hill Tracts due to negligence of forest officials and lengthy procedure in inviting tender to sell those.

The forest officials seized the timber planks during the drives on different occasions. With the valuable timber turning into firewood, both the government and the timber merchants are counting huge losses, forest officials said.

Khagrachhari Divisional Forest Office sources said they have recovered about 20,000 cubic feet (cft) timber worth about Tk 2 crore. The seized



Huge quantity of timber on the premises of divisional forest office in Khagrachhari.

illegal timber kept at four range offices under Khagrachhari DFO office are getting rotten as tender could not be floated due to legal complications following a writ petition filed with the High Court by timber merchant Md Manirul Islam Bhuiyan, divisional forest office sources said.

Over 80,000 cft of seized timber worth Tk 8 crore are lying under the open sky at six forest range offices of Jamtali, Hazachhara, Merung, Bagaihat and Rangamati Forest Range, under the Conservator of Forest in Rangamati, said the sources.

Sources said the process of putting the seized timber on sale is being delayed due to sealed tender system introduced by the ministry of forest

and environment in the early 2003 replacing the open auction system.

The lengthy procedures discourage the timber merchants from participating in the tender when small merchants can hardly participate in the tender or auction due to financial constraint, they said.

In the open auction system, the persons interested can participate and purchase timber according to their needs.

The timber merchants said the government officials want to sell the seized timber at Kalurghat in Chittagong at high prices instead of selling them through tender locally, prompting the local timber merchants to file a writ petition with the High Court in 2003. With the case yet to be

disposed of, the seized timber are now getting rotten lying exposed to the sun and the rain for years in Rangamati, they said.

Khagrachhari Kath Babosayee Kalyan Samity sources said the forest officials play hide-and-seek over the seized woods in Chittagong Hill Tracts, causing the timber seized six years ago to lie under open sky.

Abu Tayob, a member of Khagrachhari Kath Babosayee Kalyan Samity, said they went to court for legal step to stop the initiative to sell the seized timber at Kalurghat in Chittagong depriving local merchants.

Timber trader Mohammad Rafiq said a remarkable quantity of the legal timber planks are seized with the illegal ones.

The forest officials on many occasions seize legal woods along with illegal ones saying that they would return those after sorting out and illegal ones would be sold through open tenders locally, he said. The merchants had to go to the court as former divisional forest officer (DFO) of Khagrachhari Shah-E-Alam refused to discuss the matter with them, he said.

Mohammad Asadur Rahman, ranger of Naraichhari, told the Daily Star that they seized about 60,000 cubic feet timber worth about Tk 6 crore. "The seized timber are now lying under open sky at Jamtali forest range under Dighinala upazila as we could not call tender due to legal suit," he said. "The timber would now have to be sold at a very poor price since they have lost their tamper and quality," he said.

Another forest official on condition of anonymity said they have about 10,000 cft of timber worth about Tk 50 lakh in Merung forest range, over 7,000 cft worth Tk 70 lakh at Hazachhara forest range and about 3,000 cft of timber worth about Tk 30 lakh in Bagaihat forest range.

Khagrachhari DFO Ali Kabir said foresters never seized legal timber and introduced sealed tender system following an instruction from the Ministry of Forest and Environment.

"If higher authority or the ministry concerned gives directive to sell those seized illegal timber through open tender, we would obviously follow the instruction," he said.

"The process of putting the seized timber on sale is being delayed now due to the writ petition filed with the High Court," he said.

The laboratory is being set up at CID Chittagong divisional headquarters at Dampara Police Line under a Tk 19.49 crore project with the financial assistance from Japan Debt Cancellation Fund (JDCF). The three-storey building will house the laboratory, first of its kind outside the capital, said the sources in CID.

Process for setting up the laboratory has started with some necessary equipment procured from Germany and the UK.

The laboratory is expected to open after appointment of sufficient manpower by December this year, CID, Chittagong Special Superintendent Mohammad Muslim said, adding that installation of the equipment would start soon. It will start functioning in the existing three-storey building with 10 sections, including a chemical laboratory, reducing the lengthy process of examining evidences to a great extent, Muslim said.

Other CID officials said they are now to depend completely on the depositions of the witnesses during the investigation of a case. They said after the laboratory facilities are available it will be easier for them to detect the type of crime and criminal through examining evidences to be collected by the 'crime scene unit' from the spot.

If the criminals are detected after thor-



Chittagong headquarters of Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Modern forensic lab for CID by Dec

NUR UDDIN ALAMGIR

A sophisticated forensic laboratory will be opened at Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in the port city by December for examining evidences, detecting crimes and identifying the criminals.

Sources said four 'Crime scene vehicles' will be procured to collect evidences from the spot for examining immediately after the incident.

An 'IT Crime Investigation Section' would also be set up at the laboratory for investigating information technology related crimes.

Besides, there would be 'Ballistics section' for examining arms and explosives and separate sections for examining the footprint, forgery and counterfeit note.

On the other hand, there will also be 'crime scene unit, finger print bureau, micro analysis section, handwriting bureau and photography bureau for accelerating the investigation, they said.

Sources said at present the lone forensic laboratory in the capital examines evidences of cases collected from all over the country.

It takes a long time to get laboratory report that delays investigation and sometimes causes damage to the evidence.

When set up the laboratory, Chittagong CID will be able to carry out tests and examine evidences sent from the police stations in Chittagong and Sylhet divisions, said the officials.

Sources said two five-storey buildings have also been constructed to set up forensic laboratories in Rajshahi and Khulna.

The existing three-storey building that would house the forensic laboratory will be raised up to fifth floors, they said.

the week that was

Birthday of Hasina observed

The 63rd birthday of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was observed with festivity in the port city on Monday.

Primary and Mass Education Minister Dr Afsarul Ameen in his speech as the chief guest called upon the party leaders and activists to work unitedly under the leadership of Hasina to help implement the charter for change and materialise the dream of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Chittagong city AL organised the meeting at the party office of Darul Fazal Market marking the day. AL central leader Aminul Islam Amin and city AL General Secretary spoke as the special guests.

On the occasion, another meeting was held at the Dampara residence of late AL leader Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury.

Former AL lawmaker Md Ishaq Mia was the chief guest at the programme with Chittagong city AL vice-president and local AL lawmaker Nurul Islam Bsc in the chair.

Chittagong city units of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), Bangabandhu Smriti Parishad, AL Chittagong north and south district units and their front organisations also observed the day.

Tributes paid to Pritilata

The 77th death anniversary of Pritilata Waddadar, a veteran of the anti-British movement, was observed with due solemnity here on Wednesday.

Samajtantrik Mahila Forum Chittagong district unit placed wreaths at the monument of Pritilata at Pahartali where she committed suicide not to give in two British forces on September 24 in 1932.

A discussion was held beside the monument where BSD Chittagong district unit coordinator Manash Nandi, railway workers' leader Sadek Chowdhury, Samajtantrik Chhatra Front Chittagong city unit President Satyajit Bishwash, Mahila Forum organiser Poppy Chakma and Purabi Chakraborty spoke with Parveen Akter in the chair.

Birkanya Pritilata Trust also organised elaborated programmes at the village of Pritilata at Dhalghat of Patiya in the district.

Different organisations placed wreaths at the statue of Pritilata on the Dhalghat Pritilata Private Primary School premises.

A discussion meeting also held on the school premises.

Foods distributed

Speakers urged the private organisations as well as the well

off section of the society to play pro-active role in reducing poverty from the society.

They were addressing a programme to distribute foods among the distressed. Lions Club of Green City organised the programme at the city's Lalkhan Bazar on Thursday.

Lion Club District Governor Shah Mohammad Hasan was the chief guest at the programme with Safi Uddin Shahjada in the chair.

Speakers at the programme emphasised arranging short training programmes for the youths and women from the distressed families so that they can run their livelihood on their own.

The club distributed food items and clothes among 250 distressed families of Lalkhan Bazar, Bagghona and Pora Colony.

Adviser of the club Jafar Ullah Chowdhury, Secretary Sirajul Hoque Ansari, Treasurer Md Nazrul Islam, Region Chairpersons Syed Md Ayub and Dr Mahbulul Hoque, Club Secretary Mujibur Rahman, members Poritosh Biswas, Saroj Kanti Chowdhury and Shishir Bindu Chowdhury were present at the function.

Quality education stressed

Primary and Mass Education Minister Dr Afsarul Ameen under-

scored the need for making a survey on dropped out children to bring them back to schools.

He was addressing as the chief guest a view exchange meeting on improving quality of primary education in Chittagong at a local circuit house hall room in the city on Friday.

Debendra Chandra Sarker, deputy director of Chittagong division primary education, presided over the meeting. Education officers from all upazilas of Chittagong addressed the meeting. They emphasised the improving primary education.

Afsarul Ameen in his speech said this year final examination of class five will be held on the same date in all the schools across the country.

He said the competitive examination will help know standard of education and pass rate of the schools and steps will be taken accordingly to improve quality of education.

He assured of taking measures to re-construct and renovate the dilapidated primary school buildings in the rural areas.

'Expand CTV broadcasting hour'

Artistes and performers of Chittagong Television centre urged the authorities concerned to expand its broadcasting hour to help the centre focus culture, history and heritage of the region properly.



They were addressing a view exchange meeting with the Director General (DG) of Bangladesh Television (BTV) Abu Jafar Siddique in the chair on Sunday.

Artistes, composers, music director spoke at the meeting. They expressed their opinions on different issues like discrimination in wages of artistes, irregularities of the staffs and officials of the centre and upgrading the class of the artistes.

Siddique assured them of taking immediate steps regarding their demands.

He urged the officials and staffs of CTV to work with honesty and sincerity.

Composers and music direc-

tors Farid Bangabashi, Bani Kumar Chowdhury, Swapan Das, Fazlul Kabir Chowdhury, Tapash Barua, Dipak Acharyee, Shahidur Rahman, Alamgir Alauddin and Shankar Dey, Programme Producers Rupam Bhattacharjee, Afsar Uddin Oli and Jalal Uddin Sagar also spoke.

Agrabad HM Hakim Ali at a function at the hotel urged the government to take steps for developing different spectacular sites in Chittagong in order to developing the tourism industry here.

The hotel chalked out different programmes including drawing and essay writing competitions for the school students to raise awareness about tourism.

It also offered 50 per cent discount in its room rates and 20 percent discount against its dishes.

Mentioning the theme of this year's World Tourism Day as "Tourism Celebrating Diversity" Hakim said the port city as well as the Chittagong region can be turned into an important tourist zone since there are lots of spectacular sites and places like Cox's Bazar, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Foy's Lake, Patenga Sea Beach and War Cemetery.

He expressed his resentment over absence of proper security measures and other facilities in many of these spots.

Deputy Director NM Shahed Chowdhury read the written statement at the conference while Deputy Chief Accountant AYM Badruddoza, Manager (Human Resource and Admin) Moksed Ali and Executive Farid Uddin were present at the programme among others.

A colourful procession was brought out from the hotel premises in the morning.

Concern Services for Disabled (CSD) Secretary and former cricketer Biswajit Gupta Bishu hands over crests to the cricketer brothers Tamim Iqbal and Nafis Iqbal at a get-together on the occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr and Durga Puja organised by CSD on Sunday.

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