

# Forest fire spreads, ravaging fresh areas in Modhupur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Fire at different places of Modhupur forests in Tangail district is wreaking havoc on forest resources including its biodiversity for the last five days.

Local said the fire has already damaged about 300 acres of the forest.

The forest department sources, however, could not say anything specific about the damage caused by the fire.

The fire first appeared in Chunia area under Dokhala Range on March 10 when the divisional forest officer (DFO) in Tangail was visiting the forest. The forest guards, in presence of the DFO, extinguished the fire shortly.

A day later, fire broke out again at different points of the forests in Beribaid, Monarbaid, Gaichcha and Shahuria under the National Park Range and North Chunia and Pargachha areas under Dokhala Range, local sources said.

The fire has continued spreading to fresh areas as grounds of Modhupur forest is now covered with dry leaves due to dry weather, witnesses said, adding that different animals are coming out in the locality for want of food following the fire.

Fire fighters have failed to extinguish the blaze, as they could not enter the forests with their vehicles, Modhupur Fire Service sources said. Besides, they are not getting sufficient water to douse the fire.

The fire for the last few days is causing huge damage to valuable and rare trees including herbal plants and creepers while forest wildlife including monkeys, baboons, hares, guisap, wild cocks, fishing cats, bagdas, jackals, snakes, bees and various other worms and birds are losing their

dwelling places and food sources, sources said.

The panicked animals are running to different places to save lives. Locals hunted a few of them when they tried to take shelter at nearby villages.

Local sources have alleged that a syndicate of local influential quarters are involved in setting fire to grab forestlands.

Besides, stealing of forest trees becomes easier in such a

situation, they said.

Additional watchers have been deployed at different places of the forest to prevent spread of the fire to new spots, Sharif Uddin Ahmed, assistant forest conservator in Modhupur, said, adding that they have filed four general diaries with Madhupur Police Station in connection with the fire incidents.

"Fire incidents at

Madhupur forest is an usual matter during the beginning of spring season as dry weather prevails. The fire might have initiated due to throwing of burning remains of cigarettes by cowboys or bus passengers on Tangail-Mymensingh road that runs through the forest," Asit Ranjan Pal, divisional forest officer in Tangail, said.

Claiming that forests

guards have already extinguished fires at different spots and the shal forests have remained unharmed still now, he said, "We have arranged announcement through mikes in the areas to make people in forests and nearby villages aware about not throwing burning cigarettes or bidi to the forest grounds which are now covered with dryleaves."

PHOTO: STAR

Trees in Beribaid area under the National Park Range of Modhupur forest in Tangail district continue burning for the last few days as dry leaves help spread the blaze.



PHOTO: STAR

Exploded by pressure of underground gas, this tube-well at Barabakail village in Majlishpur upazila of Brahmanbaria district has been emitting huge gas for the last two days, sending forth water up to 150 feet above the ground.

## Gas bursts tube-well, pushes water up to 150 feet in B'baria

SHEIKH MD SHAHIDUL ISLAM, Brahmanbaria

Gas and water are leaping up to 150 feet above the ground following explosion of a deep tube-well at Barabakail village under Majlishpur upazila of the district early Friday.

As the tube-well at Shahjahan Mia's home near Location 3 of Titas Gas Field suddenly exploded early Friday, gas and water started coming out with high speed and terrible sound through the five-inch diameter tube-well, villagers said.

The water and gas are flooding croplands and polluting the air.

The large-scale gas emission has caused panic among the people of adjacent areas. Several families have stopped cooking in fear of fire incident.

A team from Bangladesh Gas Field Company Limited (BGFCL) visited the spot on Friday and Saturday but they could not solve the problem.

When contacted, BGFCL Managing Director Md Nurul Islam said, "Although water and gas are coming out through the deep tube-

well with high speed and roaring sound, there is nothing to be panicked. We will take proper action to solve the problem soon."

On the other hand, Shahjahan Mia, owner of the deep tube-well, said, "The BGFCL authorities are yet to take any action to stop this dangerous gas emission. The BGFCL team that visited the spot has said at the moment they are unable to control such a serious gas emission. They will only make a drain and set a big pipe at the spot to dispose of the rushing water."

Locals said gas is also coming out through almost all the tube-wells and thousands of holes at Shyampur, Anandapur and Majlishpur villages and Loiska Beel (water body) near Location No 3 of Brahmanbaria Titas Gas Field since 2006. The BGFCL authorities are yet to take any sustainable step to stop it.

"My team has visited the spot and is now observing the situation. A police team has been deployed on the spot. There is nothing to get panicky," Brahmanbaria Deputy Commissioner Md Haiul Quaiyum said.

## MEET TO CELEBRATE MAR 17, 26

# BCL men chase UNO for not inviting AL leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) Charghat upazila unit yesterday forced the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) to postpone the preparatory meeting for celebrating Bangabandhu's birth anniversary and Independence Day.

According to officer-in-charge of Charghat Police Station Hamidur Rahman, the BCL men chased the UNO Moinul Haque Ansari and vandalised the upazila

parishad auditorium. A ward Awami League leader, who was present at the meeting, was also injured during the incident, the OC said.

The incident occurred at around 12:30pm when an upazila committee headed by the UNO was holding a meeting at the auditorium to chalk out programmes to celebrate Bangabandhu's birth anniversary on March 17 and Independence Day on March 26.

Ten 10 BCL men, led by upazila BCL President Ekramul Haq and General Secretary Dulal Sarker,

entered the auditorium and urged the UNO to postpone the meeting as they said senior AL leaders were not invited to the meeting.

When the UNO refused to do so, the BCL men started vandalising windowpanes and doors of the auditorium. They chased the UNO several yards before police rescued him and took him to his office.

When contacted, UNO Moinul Haque Ansari refused to comment on the issue. He, however, said he informed the higher authorities of the matter.

## Jubo League leader arrested with smuggled sarees

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Baliadangi upazila Jubo League leader Abdus Salam and a truck driver were arrested early yesterday with about 200 expensive Indian sarees at Samader Bhata on Harinmari-Baliadangi road near Baliadangi border in the district.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Baliadangi police station Atiqul Islam told this correspondent over cell phone that on a tip-off, a Detective Branch (DB) police team led by sub-inspector Hasnat took position in Samader Bhata area.

At about 4:15am the team intercepted a three-tonne truck coming from Harinmari village. They recovered 201 pieces of Indian banarashi sarees from the truck and arrested two people.

The arrestees are Abdus Salam, son of Isarat Master and assistant organising secretary of Baliadangi upazila Jubo League and truck driver Nazimuddin, son of late Kamal Hossain of Rajpara at Rajshahi town.

DB police filed a case with Baliadangi police station against the Jubo League leader and the driver in this connection.

According to sub-inspector Hasnat, Salam told police that they brought the sarees from one Sharif Member's house at Kanchirhat village near the border.

President of Baliadangi Jubo League Majedul Islam told this correspondent that he was not aware about Salam's involvement with smuggling.

"Police told me that they have arrested Salam with sarees," he said.

Majedul said they will take a decision in this regard at the upazila committee's meeting soon.

## RU PHARMACY DEPT OFFICE BESIEGED Some teachers have secret link with Shibir: BCL

A RU CORRESPONDENT

Leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) at Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday laid a siege to the pharmacy department office alleging secret liaison between a section of teachers and Shibir men.

BCL men led by unit president Awal Kabir Joy and secretary Majedul Islam Opu besieged the department office for an hour till 12:00pm confining the department chairman and other teachers to their rooms.

They alleged that some teachers have a secret deal with Shibir cadre Ali Reza Faruk who is one of the main accused in BCL worker Faruque Hossain

killing case.

They further alleged that the viva voce examination of third year final class of Ali Reza was taken outside the campus by those teachers on March 11.

They claimed that the teachers also supplied answer sheets to the Shibir cadres for appearing in exams from their rooms.

Earlier on Thursday, the authorities of Shaheed Shamsuzzoha Hall of the university along with law enforcers seized three answer sheets of the department from a Shibir-controlled room.

RU proctor Prof Chowdhury Zakaria rushed to the pharmacy department and held a meeting with the depart-

ment chairman and BCL leaders to settle the matter.

Prof Maruf Ahmed, chairman of the department denied the BCL allegations and said Ali Reza came to the department for viva voce on March 11.

Prof Zakaria said the university authorities will investigate the BCL allegations.

Meanwhile, a group of BCL activists yesterday noon severely beat up two students in front of Madar Bux Hall suspecting them as Shibir cadres.

The assaulted students were identified as Ershad Ali and Maniq, both studying in fourth year at the Islamic Studies department.

## Audience baton charged for viewing 'obscene dances'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

More than 50 people were injured as police resorted to baton charge on the audience at a cultural function at Tajpur Bazar under Osmaninagar Police Station on Saturday night.

Local leaders of Juba League and Chhatra League organised the cultural function at the ongoing Baruni Mela at Tajpur Bazar. Receiving the news of 'obscene' dances at the function, police reached the venue at around 10:00pm and swooped on the audience. The injured were given first aid at the upazila health complex.

Soon after the incident, about 20 local leaders of Juba League and Chhatra league went to the police station and locked in an altercation with the law enforcers. They then came out of the police station and blocked the Dhaka-Sylhet highway at Tajpur Bazar point.

They also took out a procession demanding immediate withdrawal of the officer-in-charge of Osmaninagar of Police Station.

About 500 vehicles remained stranded on both sides of the road for one and a half hours from 10:30pm, much to the sufferings of the passengers of long distance coach services. Traffic resumed on the highway at midnight after local AL leader and Tajpur UP Chairman Ataur Rahman and other leaders removed the barricade.

Jubo League and BCL leaders alleged that police foiled the function as they refused to give them (police) money. Denying the allegation, Officer-in-Charge Nur Alam said police went into action as the organisers arranged obscene dances at the fair in the name of a cultural function.

Sajid Hossain, additional SP of Sylhet, visited the Osmaninagar Police Station and Tajpur Bazar after mid night on Wednesday.

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