

# Forest denuded for social forestation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The forest department has started work for its social forestation programme by removing trees at Lobonchhara reserve forest under Monchhara beat of Kulaura forest range in Moulvibazar district.

During a recent visit to Lobonchhara forest, this

correspondent saw that a few labourers were cutting trees and bamboos to clean up the natural forest while 10 to 12 people were taking away bundles of just felled bamboos from the area. About 20 acres of this forestland has already been cleaned up.

This forest is rich in the groves of 'mul' and 'khang' species of bamboos.

When asked, the labourers

said the forest officials have appointed them on daily wage basis to clean the jungle there. Poor people living at adjacent villages are taking away the felled trees and bamboos.

The jungle is being cleaned up as the forest department has taken a programme to create social forest on 25 acres of land in Lobonchhara forest, forest officials said, adding that 2500 saplings of timber

producing trees will be planted per acre of land.

Mukhlisur Rahman, the range officer of forest department office at Kulaura, said, "Indigenous Khasia people living at Valaima Punjee near Lobonchhara have encroached lands of the forest during last few years. So the forest department has taken a social forestation programme to protect the forestland. After implementing the programme, poor people of all the communities including Khasia and Garo will be benefited as they will also be partner of this social forest."

Protush Ashakra, vice president of 'Kubraj' - a local organisation of the Garo and the Khasia people, has termed the allegation of land encroachment by Khasia people as 'totally false and baseless'.

"The indigenous people love trees like their children. The initiative taken by the forest department to create social forest by destroying the natural forest is not proper. Influential quarter of the society will be benefited from this social forest," he said.

"The forest department's policy is to create social forest on lands where there is no trees or plants. We will look into the allegation of such initiative on natural forest at Lobonchhara," Delwar Hussain, divisional forest officer of Sylhet, told the local journalists.



PHOTO: STAR

This area of Lobonchhara reserve forest under Kulaura forest range in Moulvibazar district sees no large trees as the staff of the local forest department have cleared the area to create a social forest.

## 4 schoolchildren drown in ponds

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Four schoolchildren drowned in ponds in Dinajpur and Noakhali on Friday.

Two schoolboys drowned in Dinajpur as they went to take a bath in Matasagar pond on Friday afternoon, reports our correspondent.

The deceased were identified as Shawon Gupta, 14, son of Kanai Lal Gupta of Shakhariapatti in the town and Faruk Hossain, 17, son of Badsha Mia at Mirzapur village under Sadar upazila.

Shawon Gupta was a class seven student at St Philips High School.

Villagers said Shawon and Faruk along with their five friends went to the Matasagar pond at Prannathpur village under Sadar upazila to take a deep.

As Faruk and Shawon went missing, their friends informed the villagers. After three hours of hectic search locals and divers of fire fighting unit recovered their bodies from the pond.

Both were rushed to the Dinajpur Medical College and Hospital but the on-duty doctors declared them dead.

In Noakhali, two schoolgirls drowned in a pond at Amanatpur village in Begumganj upazila, reports UNB.

The deceased were identified as Sumaiya Akter, 11, daughter of Dr Belayet Hossain and Halima Akter Tisha, 10, daughter of Abul Kashem Selim of the same village.

Both were students of Dakkhin Nazirpur Government Primary School. Sources said Sumaiya and Tisha went to a nearby pond to take bath at noon.

But they met the tragic end of their life as they did not know how to swim.

Later, the family members and locals recovered the floating bodies from the pond.



PHOTO: STAR

Young Star Club brings out a procession in Magura town yesterday, holding a 1061-yard-long flag of Germany. Amzad Hossain of Ghoramara village in Magura Sadar upazila made the flag in favour of his favourite team in the World Cup Football.

## Fire destroys 17 shops in Munshiganj

BSS, Munshiganj

At least 17 business establishments were gutted in a devastating fire at Nimtoli under Sirajdikhan upazila of the district on Friday night.

District fire service sources said the fire broke out at 8pm and soon engulfed the whole market including cloth and shoe stores.

Fire fighting units from Dhaka and Srinagar rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control at 9.30pm after struggling for more than one and half an hour with the help of locals.

No casualties were reported from the fire incident.

Local lawmaker Sukumar Ranjan Ghosh visited the spot. He told the journalists that at least 17 shops, including cloth and shoe stores, were burnt in the fire incident.

Ghosh also assured the fire affected people of providing all possible help.

## 15 hurt as AL, JP men clash in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

At least 15 people were injured in a clash between the activists of Awami League and Jatiya Party at Badarganj upazila headquarters yesterday.

The clash ensued following an altercation between Jatiya Party lawmaker from Rangpur-2 constituency Anisul Islam Mondol and Kutubpur Union Parishad Chairman Istiaque Ahmed over distribution of rice under Test Relief (TR) programme at a meeting in the conference room of the upazila complex in the afternoon.

Four of the injured were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital while the rest were given first aid at the upazila health complex.

Upazila Chairman Biswanath Sarker Bitu, also a

local Awami League leader, said Jatiya Party MP Anisul Islam Mondol and Kutubpur Union Parishad Chairman Istiaque Ahmed had an altercation after the lawmaker demanded 50 tonnes of rice under TR programme in the meeting.

As a rumour spread that upazila Chairman Biswanath Sarker Bitu and his men beat up Anisul Islam Mondol, JP leaders and activists besieged the chairman's office.

Hearing the news Awami League activists rushed to the upazila complex and attacked the JP men. During attack and counter-attack, at least 15 people from both sides were injured. Police rushed to spot and dispersed the clashing groups.

Anisul Islam Mondol told this correspondent that he did not place any demand for rice under TR programme in the

meeting. "Chairman Istiaque Ahmed, instigated by Upazila Chairman Bitu, insulted me without any reason and later Bitu's men attacked JP activists at the upazila complex," the lawmaker alleged.

Contacted, Upazila Chairman Biswanath Sarker Bitu said JP lawmaker Anisul Islam Mondol and his supporter swooped on the AL men, leaving five of them injured.

Upazila Parishad convened the meeting for allotment of rice under TR programme. Upazila Parishad vice-chairmen, upazila nirbahi officer and chairmen of all unions under Badarganj upazila attended the meeting with Upazila Chairman Biswanath Sarker Bitu in the meeting. Anisul Islam Mondol MP was also present in the meeting as an adviser of the TR committee.



PHOTO: STAR

Locals form a human chain in front of the staff quarters at Rainagar in Sylhet city yesterday demanding arrest and punishment of the killers of Abu Taher, inset, president of the CBA of Jalalabad Gas Distribution and Transmission Company.

## SYLHET CBA LEADER MURDER

# No arrest yet as police fail to make headway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police could not unearth clues to the murder of Jalalabad Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited CBA chief Abu Taher and arrest any of the killers as of yesterday.

However, no case was filed with the police station concerned as the family members are yet to back from their village home in Chittagong.

Police said they are working just on the basis of a general diary (GD) registered by them after the killing that took place in Sylhet city on Thursday last.

A human chain was formed at Rainagar in the city yesterday to press the demand for immediate arrest of the killers Abu Taher. A rally was also held at the venue.

A police official said they are now working on the basis of GD and other findings. "We are waiting for the return of Taher's family. If the family members refuse to file case,

we will have to do it," he said.

Acting officer-in-charge of Sylhet Kotwali Police Station Narayan Dutta said they have so far quizzed 20 employees and union office bearers of Jalalabad Gas Transmission and Distribution Company Limited. Internal feuds in the ruling party backed CBA might have a link to the murder, he added.

Fazlul Bari Didar, accounts assistant of the company, who was accompanying Taher at the time of attack, has remained admitted to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital since the incident on the plea of sickness. But, he sustained no injury, police said.

The acting officer-in-charge, who filed the GD after the killing, said they have quizzed him at the hospital. "We have kept Bari under observation. He would be quizzed further."

Deputy Commissioner of Sylhet Metropolitan Police (SMP) Ahsan Habib Palash said, "We are almost sure the

## 65 injured in clashes in Narsingdi, B'baria

UNB, Narsingdi

At least 50 people were injured in a fierce clash between the people of two villages in Raypura upazila yesterday morning.

Police said people of Ismail Hossain of Haripur village and Felu Mia of Dorigaon village, equipped with lethal weapons, locked in a bloody clash at noon over establishing supremacy in the area. The clash left over 50 people injured from both groups.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control at noon.

The injured villagers have been admitted to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital, Raypura and Nabinagar upazila health complexes.

In Brahmanbaria, at least 15 people were injured and 25 houses vandalised as rivals launched attack in Panchbhita area of Ashuganj upazila on Thursday morning.

Locals said there was a longstanding conflict between two groups of people of Panchbhita and Madhur over establishing supremacy in the area.

They said Bilal of Madhur group locked in an altercation with Mizan of Panchbhita area over a trifling matter at about 8:00am.

Later, Madhur group equipped with lethal weapons and sticks attacked the people of Panchbhita. They beat up the villagers indiscriminately leaving 15 people injured, two seriously.

The attackers also ransacked and looted 25 houses creating panic in the area.

Critically injured Fazlur Rahman, 70, and Anwara Begum, 65, were admitted to a local hospital.

On information, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

## CHITTAGONG CITY CORPORATION POLLS



PHOTO: STAR

1) Materials for the June 17 Chittagong City mayoral election being kept at the auditorium of Chittagong gymnasium, 2) Nagorik Committee backed candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury addresses a press briefing, 3) Unnayan Andolon supported candidate M Manjur Alam conducts a mass contact at Shulkbahar in the city, and 4) supporters of two BNP-backed ward councillor candidates engage in a scuffle at Shulkbahar.