

Alternative earnings make them forest protectors

NAJMUL ALAM NOBIN, back from Cox's Bazaar

Forest management in large areas of Cox's Bazar and Rangamati districts sees positive changes following initiative for alternative employment of people dependent on forest resources and participation of locals in the programme to protect forests.

Five 'co-management committees' (CMC), formed under a project funded by Integrated Protected Area Co-Management (IPAC), are jointly working with the forest department to protect 14,925 hectares of endangered forests in the two districts.

"Illegal felling of trees by loggers and locals turned once dense Chunati forest bare. Now patrol groups administered by the co-management committee are checking the illegal felling, helping regeneration of several varieties of trees for the last few years," he said.

Twenty-eight women wearing green sarees and holding sticks in their hands work in groups of four to patrol an area of 7,764 hectares of forest land at Chunati

felling of trees in the forests for livelihood are now contributing to protection of forest resources.

"It is easy to convince local people about the importance of forests for their survival. Now we are trying to arrange alternative livelihood for them with the help of the co-management committee," said Md Mahbubul Alam, range officer of Chunati.

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Range to check illegal felling of trees.

The co-management committee in Chunati Range has arranged training on boutique for the local young girls.

Each of the co-management committees comprising 29 members, mostly local people, meet every month to chalk out ways of forest protection and creating alternative employment. Range officer of the respective forest range plays the role of member secretary of the committee.

The CMCs in the forests of Medhakachhapia, Fashiakhali and Kaptai arranged training on making kharang (a basket made of bamboo) for the local women who used to collect wood from the forest.

IPAC provides the local women with necessary raw materials to make the bas-

kets that they sell in the local markets.

Over a hundred women in Medhakachhapia forest, most of whom once depended on collecting wood from the forest, are now engaged in making the baskets, said Mir Ahmed, president of the co-management committee in the area.

"Some of us used to make such baskets at home but now we make it collectively and sell in the market. It has added to our income. Earlier I got about Tk 300 a week now it has increased to around one thousand a week," said Gulzar, a woman in Medhakachhapia.

Moktar Ahmed Chowdhury, president of the CMC in Fashiakhali Wildlife Sanctuary, said they have made significant progress in checking destruction of forests with the help of the committee.



PHOTO: STAR
Bangla speaking people from different areas of Bangladesh and India throng Betna border in Haripur upazila of Thakurgaon district to avail the 'once a year' opportunity to meet their dear and near ones across the border on Friday as the BGB and Indian BSF give the opportunity unofficially on Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year (as per Bangla calendar of India).

Thousands throng to meet relatives across border

Pahela Baishakh gives them the 'once a year' chance

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Pahela Baishakh, the first day of Bangla New Year (as per Bangla calendar of India) on Friday, presented a different scene on Betna border in Haripur upazila of Thakurgaon district as thousands of Bangla speaking people from two sides of the border got a unique opportunity to meet their relatives for some time.

Standing on both sides of the barbed wire fence on the border, people from different districts of Bangladesh and India exchanged greetings and talked heartily with their near and dear ones.

They were seen exchanging various things like biscuits,

chanachur, pens, clothes and towels.

Seeing near and dear ones after a long time, many of them could not check their tears.

A large number of people in both countries, especially those who cannot afford the expenditure to visit their relatives across the border through legal procedure, eagerly wait for this special day when local public representatives from two sides make the arrangement with the help of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and Indian Border Security Force (BSF).

Altaf Rahman, 50, of Chowranghi village under Haripur upazila in

Thakurgaon, came here to meet with his brother-in-law Sirazul Islam, who lives in Paharpur of Uttar Dinajpur district in India. It is six years that they met last.

Bikash Roy, 35, of Shiliguri in India came here to meet his father while Ananta Bala, 32, of Farabari village came to meet her brother and sisters.

BSF opened the door of the barbed wire fence around 1:30pm for an hour to facilitate people to come to the border.

"Every year on this day people from both sides come here to meet with their relatives. We make the arrangement through discussion with the BSF," said a

BGB official.

"As residents of the same country, many people living in different areas were related in various ways for long. But the 1947 partition and creation of India and the then Pakistan made it hard for people to meet their friends and relatives living on the other side of the border. We make the unofficial arrangement for their meeting with the help of BGB and BSF officials," said Nazrul Islam, chairman of Haripur union parishad.

Similar reunion of Bangla speaking people from India and Bangladesh was held on Amarkhana border in Panchagarh Sadar upazila on Friday.



PHOTO: STAR
Police intercept BNP activists in Jhenidah town when the latter brought out a procession as part of their countrywide demonstration programme yesterday.

BNP programme foiled

Police action leaves 19 hurt in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

At least 19 leaders and activists of Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) were injured as police charged batons on their procession in Jhenidah town yesterday morning.

When the processionists reached near the post office intersection, police charged truncheons, fired rubber bullets and teargas canisters to disperse them.

District BNP General Secretary Abdul Malek, General Secretary of BNP pourasava unit advocate Abdul Mazid, Jubo Dal leader Rawshan Bin Kader, District lawyers' association's Organising Secretary advocate Shamshuzzaman,

leaders and activists took out the procession at around 11:00am.

When the processionists reached near the post office intersection, police charged truncheons, fired rubber bullets and teargas canisters to disperse them.

Organising Secretary of BNP Central Committee Moshiur Rahman said police charged batons on a peaceful procession. He claimed that at least 50 BNP men were injured in police action.

Zobaidur Rahman, additional superintendent of police (ASP) law enforcers urged the BNP activists to observe their programme in front of their party office as

some VIPs from Dhaka were scheduled to go to Mujibnagar via Jhenidah yesterday.

Police went into action as the BNP men were holding their programme in the town, disrupting vehicular movement, the ASP added.

Officer-in-charge Iqbal Bahar Sadar of Sadar Police Station said they had to fire teargas cells to disperse the demonstrators.

Riot police have been deployed at different important points in the town to avert any further incident.

NOAKHALI MUNICIPALITY

Re-polling largely peaceful

11 injured in stray incidents, one jailed for violating election rules

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Re-polling at 14 out of 17 centres in Noakhali municipality was held yesterday peacefully barring a few stray incidents.

Voting was postponed at these centres due to violence during election to the municipality in January this year.

Police constable Murad, 37, was injured when the supporters of two rival candidates were throwing brick chips at each other outside Paschim Maijdee Government Primary School

centre at around 9:30am. Constable Murad was admitted to Noakhali General Hospital.

Police opened blank shots to bring the situation under control. Chhatra League workers Emon, Ripon, Jewel, VP Naser and Sumon were injured as police charged batons on the clashing groups.

Assistant police superintendent (ASP) AFM Nizam Uddin said police dispersed the supporters of the rival candidates and brought the situation under control.

Executive Magistrate Harun-or-Rashid sentenced a youth to seven days imprisonment for violating election code of conduct at MA Rashid High School centre. The convict is Shahadat Hossain, 26. His motorbike was seized.

At least five people were injured when police charged batons on some youths who were trying to create panic among the voters by exploding crackers outside Noakhali Pre-cadet School centre and Al Faruq Centre in government residential area at around 12:30pm.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court will deliver judgment in Awami League leader advocate Manjurul Imam murder case today.

The case pertaining to explosive substances Act was recorded with Khulna Sadar Police Station on August 25 in 2003.

Abdullah AL Mamun Jami, youngest son of the slain AL leader, Officer-in-charge Iqbal Bahar Sadar of Sadar Police Station on August 25 in 2003.

filed the case.

Inspector Md Shahjahan Howlader of KMP's Detective Branch (DB), also the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the court on March 11 in 2004, accusing the extremists Shukur Gazi, Ripon, Ganesh Banerjee and Imam Sarder.

Of them, Imam Sarder was killed in a 'shootout' in 2005 while Ripon and Ganesh Banerjee are now on bail. Another charge sheeted

accused Shukur Gazi is still in Khulna district jail.

Advocate Manjurul Imam, president of Khulna city Awami League, was killed in bomb and armed attacks at 10:30 am. on August 25 in 2003 near his residence at Shamsur Rahman road under Khulna Sadar Police Station.

Advocate Bijon Bihari Mondol, who was accompanying the Awami League leader to court, and

rickshaw puller Saidul Islam Akand, who was carrying them, were also killed in the attacks.

Two cases—one under Section 302 of Bangladesh Penal Code (BPC) and another under Explosive Substances Act—were filed with the police station.

All the four charge sheeted accused were earlier acquitted by the same court in the case recorded under Section 302 of BPC.

110 shops gutted in Barguna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 110 shops were gutted in a fire at Chandukhali Bazar in Barnuna district on early Friday.

Police and locals said the fire originated from a shop owned by Taiyab Ali at around 2:30am and soon engulfed the entire bazar spread. On information, two fire fighting units from Barguna and Patuakhali district headquarters came to the spot and extinguished the blaze at around 5:30 am.

The damage caused by fire is estimated at Tk 50 crore. The affected shop owners urged the government to help them recoup the losses.



PHOTO: STAR
Remains of shops lie mangled after a devastating fire destroyed the whole of Chandukhali Bazar in Barguna district, causing damage worth Tk 50 crore early Friday.