

Random tree felling goes on in Sundarbans

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Random extraction of trees and other forest resources from the Sundarbans is causing depletion to the world's largest mangrove forest.

The unscrupulous act threatens human habitations in the nearby areas as the forest acts as a shield to protect the country's south-western region from the onslaught of natural disasters, in addition to serving as source of livelihood for thousands of people.

Besides, the government is deprived of huge revenue as the trees are felled illegally in connivance with a section of dishonest forest officials.

Super cyclone Sidr that hit the country's southern region on November 15

in 2007 caused large scale damage to the Sundarbans.

The next year, the government imposed ban on extraction of forest resources from the Sundarbans to prevent its further depletion and also to help natural recovery of the mangrove forest.

Ignoring the ban, wood cutters and timber traders continued extracting different species of trees including sundari, garan, hetal, bain and others from the forest.

During recent visits to different areas of the Sundarbans, this correspondent found open sale of the extracted trees at Shyamnagar Sadar, Noabeki Bazar, Bhetkhali Bazar and other places in the upazila.

The act continues throughout the year, locals said.

"I bought trees extracted from the Sundarbans from Harej Ali and Aminur Rahman of Bhetkhali village and Abdus Samad and Shahar Ali Mollah of Tengrakhali village in Shyamnagar upazila at dead of night," said Rouf Gazi, a log seller of Bhetkhali village.

Tree plundering continues in the Sundarbans due to lack of adequate action by law enforcers, said several locals.

Contacted, Assistant Conservator of Forest Toufiqul Islam said, "We will intensify action against the plunderers who are extracting trees from the Sundarbans ignoring the government ban."

BCL activist stabbed to death in Magura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Magura*

An activist of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) was stabbed to death by one of his rivals in the party in Niznanduali area of the district town yesterday afternoon.

The deceased was identified as Al Amin, 18, son of Hashmat Ali Mollah of Mollapara in the town, said Sheikh Alamgir Hossain, officer in-charge of Magura Sadar Police Station.

Witnesses said BCL activist Tushar of the area stabbed Al Amin at around 1:30pm following an altercation over food distribution at a programme held at Nomani Maidan in the town, marking the death anniversary of former AL lawmaker advocate Asaduzzaman.

The victim succumbed to his injuries at Magura Sadar Hospital at around 2:15pm. Later, locals caught Tushar and handed him over to police.

BSF returns body

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) yesterday returned the body of a Bangladeshi cattle trader, said BGB Benapole check post camp Commander Joynal Hossain.

BSF handed over the body of Tarikul Islam, 32, son of Hamjer Ali of Pachvulote village of the district, to the members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) at around 5:30pm.

BSF of Bornobaria camp caught Tarikul with cattle recently and beat him dead. They took away the body from the spot, police said.



PHOTO: STAR

PICTURE TELLS THE TALE! A large number of people, including students, use this awfully dilapidated iron bridge over Moukaran canal in Dumki upazila under Patuakhali district, thanks to the indifference of the authorities concerned.

A bridge in dire need of repair

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

The iron bridge over Moukaran canal flowing between Lebukhali and Lawkathi unions under Dumki upazila in the district has remained in an awfully dilapidated condition for two years.

Built in 1990 by Local Government Engineering Department (LGED), the 240-metre-long bridge has hardly undergone any repair or renovation.

The bridge virtually collapsed two years ago when it was hit by a sand-laden cargo, said Md Kalu Mollah, Ansar-VDP commander of Lebukhali union, also a resident of Lebukhali village.

"A portion of the bridge broke down and most of its slippers also got displaced. We are using the bridge by setting up bamboos on the collapsed part," he said.

Now schoolchildren have to cross the canal by boat as they cannot use the risky bridge, said Rafiq Mia, another resident of the village.

Several thousand people from different unions of Dumki and Patuakhali

Sadar upazilas still use the bridge as they have to cross the canal to come to Moukaran Bazar, a large market situated to the east of the bridge.

Besides, there are two primary schools, three colleges, two high schools, a technical college, a community clinic and a madrasa at nearby places.

Hasan Mahmud Dulal, chairman for Labukhali union parishad, said they submitted proposal to LGED on several occasions demanding renovation of the bridge but in vain.

When contacted, Md Fuad Hossen, upazila engineer of LGED in Dumki, said, "Now LGED does not repair or rebuild iron bridges and so, we cannot take any step in this regard. The upazila parishad can repair the bridge by taking a project under their annual development programme."

Dumki Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Asaduzzaman said, "We hope to renovate the bridge soon if we can get the project approved in the upazila parishad meeting."



PHOTO: STAR

Logs of trees including sundari, extracted from the Sundarbans defying a government ban, are kept for display and sale beside Shyamnagar-Munshiganj road near Shyamnagar Pilot High School in Shyamnagar upazila under Satkhira district. The photo was taken a few days ago.

Robbers kill boy in Pirojpur, mob beat 'robber' dead in Tangail

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Robbers killed a teenage boy in Pirojpur while an alleged robber was beaten to death by mob in Tangail yesterday.

In Pirojpur, a teenage boy was shot dead by robbers and 12 people were injured during a clash between villagers and robbers at Dakkhin Matibhanga village in Bhandaria upazila early yesterday, reports UNB.

The deceased was identified as Yusuf Mollah, 16.

Police and witnesses said a gang of 10/12 robbers entered the house of Idris Mollah at the village by breaking open the door at around 2:00am.

As the family members cried for help, locals rushed there and surrounded the house. At one stage, the robbers opened fire, leaving Yusuf, a neighbour of Idris Mollah, dead on the spot.

Later, the robbers attacked the villagers in a bid to flee, triggering a clash that left 12 people, including a robber, injured.

Among the injured, Majid Hawlader and Russell Hawlader

were admitted to Bhandaria Upazila Health Complex.

The villagers caught one of the robbers, Kashem, along with a gun and nine bullets and beat him up. Seriously injured robber was admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College and Hospital.

Our Tangail correspondent reported that an alleged robber was beaten to death and another seriously injured by a mob in Basail upazila.

The deceased was identified as Foresh Ali, 45, of Tangailpara village in Kurigram Sadar. The injured is Abdus Salam, 35, of Makhoner Char village under Dewanganj

upazila of Jamalpur.

Habibullah Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Basail police station said a gang of 8-9 robbers entered the house of Mojibar Rahman at Guilla village around 2:30am.

Hearing screams of the family members, locals rushed to the spot and caught two of the gang. They beat Foresh dead on the spot and injured Salam.

Later, police rushed to the village,

rescued the injured robber and admitted him to Tangail General Hospital.

Two separate cases were filed with Basail police station in this connection.

In Pabna, Rab arrested three robbers and recovered 10 sharp weapons, including nine swords and a machete from their possession at Banglabazar village in Sadar upazila on Saturday, reports our correspondent.

Acting on a tip-off that a gang of robbers are holding a secret meeting in Banglabazar Chotopara area, an operation team of Rab-12 raided the area at about 8:00 pm and arrested three gang members while the rest managed to flee.

The arrestees are Md Shamim Sheikh, Md Rana and Md Mofizul Haque. They hail from Banglabazar and Johirpur villages in Sadar upazila.

According to their statements, Rab recovered 10 sharp weapons including nine swords and a machete from their possession. The arrestees were sent to jail yesterday.

ATTACK ON POLICE 20 Tangail BNP men sued, two arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Twenty leaders and activists BNP Nagarpur upazila unit and its associate bodies were yesterday sued on charge of attacking police and vandalising their van at upazila headquarters on Saturday night.

Sub-inspector (SI) Faridur Rahman of the police station filed the case. Police arrested two of the accused. They are Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists Iqbal Hossain, 22, and Imon Ahmed, 25.

Police produced the two JCD men in a Tangail court that sent them to jail.

The other accused are joint conveners of upazila BNP Habibur Rahman Habi and Ahmad Ali Rana, upazila BNP activists Harunur Rashid Harun, Jubo Dal activists Abul Kalam Azad, Msharraf Hossain Musa, upazila Sramik Dal general secretary Rafiz Uddin, Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activists Rafiqul Islam Dipon, Nazrul Islam, Golam Mostafa, Ziad Hossain Dipti, Abul Kashem Manik, Zahidul Islam, Jewel Mia, Abul Bashar, Mohammad Rubel, Shafiqul Islam, Tofazzal Hossain and Krishak Dal activist Abul Hossain.

Rabiul Islam, officer in-charge of Nagarpur Police Station, said the accused with some unidentified people brought out a procession at the upazila headquarters on Saturday night. They swooped on a police team and damaged a police van.

Many leaders and activists of local BNP and its associate bodies have gone into hiding to avert arrest, locals said.

SNIPPETS

Child drowns

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

A four-year-old child drowned in Bhairab River under Avoinagor upazila of Jessore district yesterday morning. The deceased was identified as Badsa Mia, son of Abdul Jalil of Siddirpasa village in the upazila. Witnesses said while Badsa along with his mother was crossing the river from Dhulgram Khyaghat, the child slipped down from his mother's grasp accidentally at about 7:00am. Fire service and locals were trying to recover the body till filling this report in the afternoon.

Youth's body recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Thakurgaon*

Police recovered the body of a young man from Madargonj village of Sadar upazila on Saturday afternoon. The victim was identified as Soheli Rana, 22, son of Tosimuddin of Jamalpur Barapugi village in the upazila. Md Jahidul Islam, sub-inspector of Thakurgaon Police Station, said on information, they recovered Soheli's body from a sugarcane field at the village at about 4:00pm. The body was sent to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. Criminals might have strangled Soheli, the SI added.

3-day wildlife festival

UNB, *Bagerhat*

A three-day festival aiming to raise consciousness among people about preservation of wildlife, including Royal Bengal Tiger, kicked off at Joymonighol in Mongla upazila on Saturday. The festival began with a marathon competition (Sunderbans marathon) where people from all walks of life participated. Lawmaker Habibun Nahar Talukder of Bagerhat-3 constituency inaugurated the programme. Environment experts Dr Anisuzzaman and Dr Reza Khan, among others, were present. Safe, a voluntary organization, organized the festival marking United Nations declared International Forest Year, 2011.

Man electrocuted

UNB, *Pirojpur*

A man was electrocuted while stealing an electric transformer of Palli Bidyut Samity at Rampasha village in Bhandaria upazila early yesterday. The deceased was identified as Abu Saleh of the upazila, said police. On information, they recovered the body and arrested another suspected thief, Rahun-ur-Rashid, from the spot.

Warm clothes distributed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Rangpur*

CARE Bangladesh and Swyam Krishi Sangam (SKS) jointly distributed winter clothes, including 765 blankets, among the destitute people of different unions in Sadar upazila on Saturday. It was distributed under Economic Transformation of the Ultra Poor (SETU) project. Of the blankets, 341 pieces were distributed by CARE in Rajendrapur and Chandanpat unions while 424 by SKS in Uttom, Mominpur and Horidebpur unions.

19 shops gutted, 3 hurt in gas cylinder blast in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

Nineteen shops were gutted in a fire at ferry ghat (terminal) area of Kalapara upazila town early yesterday.

Locals and shop owners said the fire originated from an electric short at a plastic shop at around 4:00am and soon engulfed 18 other shops in the area.

help of locals extinguished the blaze after an hour. At least 10 shopkeepers received burn injuries.

Meanwhile, three members of a family were injured in gas cylinder blast in Patuakhali town yesterday. The injured are Mamun Mridha, 30, his wife Sumi Akhter, 25 and their two-year-old son Afsim.

Family sources said a gas cylinder exploded when Sumi was cooking at their kitchen at around 11:00am. Neighbours rushed to the spot and took the three to Patuakhail General Hospital.

As there is no burn unit at the hospital, doctors referred the three to the burn unit of Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.



PHOTO: STAR

A devastating fire gutted 19 shops in the Ferryghat area of Kalapara upazila town under Patuakhali district early yesterday.