

Presence of iron ore in Atrai likely, say experts

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

Experts of Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL) and Hajee Danesh Science and Technology University in Dinajpur have primarily detected the presence of iron ore in Atrai

Follow-up

riverbed at Guliyara village in Khansama upazila under the district.

Dr Shahadat Hossain Khan, professor of soil science department of HSTU, engineer

Quamruzzaman, managing director (MD) of Barapukuria Coal Mine Company Ltd (BCMCL), Mir Mohammad Abdul Hannan, deputy general manager (Geology) of

BCMCL, visited the spot on Monday afternoon.

The experts, who observed the site for an hour, told this correspondent yesterday that their primary observation suggests presence of iron ore in Atrai riverbed.

However, geological

survey is required to determine the presence and quantity of iron ore in the riverbed and underground and mark the area, they said.

"Our primary observation suggests that the 'iron ore' area is not big," said Dr Shahadat Hossain Khan.

Dr Shahadat, who visited the area earlier, collected sample from Atrai riverbed and conducted a laboratory test at HSTU. The test detected presence of iron at the sample.

"But we are yet to ascertain the rate of iron ore there," he said.

Mir Mohammad Abdul Hannan, a geologist of BCMCL, said, "To me it seems that the iron ore found in the bed of Atrai River was transported with the incoming water flow from places in Nepal and India."

BCMCL MD Quamruzzaman said, "The presence of iron ore in the area is obvious. But we need more tests to be sure and to determine the percentage of iron there. I will discuss the matter with officials of Geological Survey of Bangladesh within a few days."

Curious people started thronging the area after hearing that 'iron-like' stones were found in the bed of Atrai River three weeks ago.

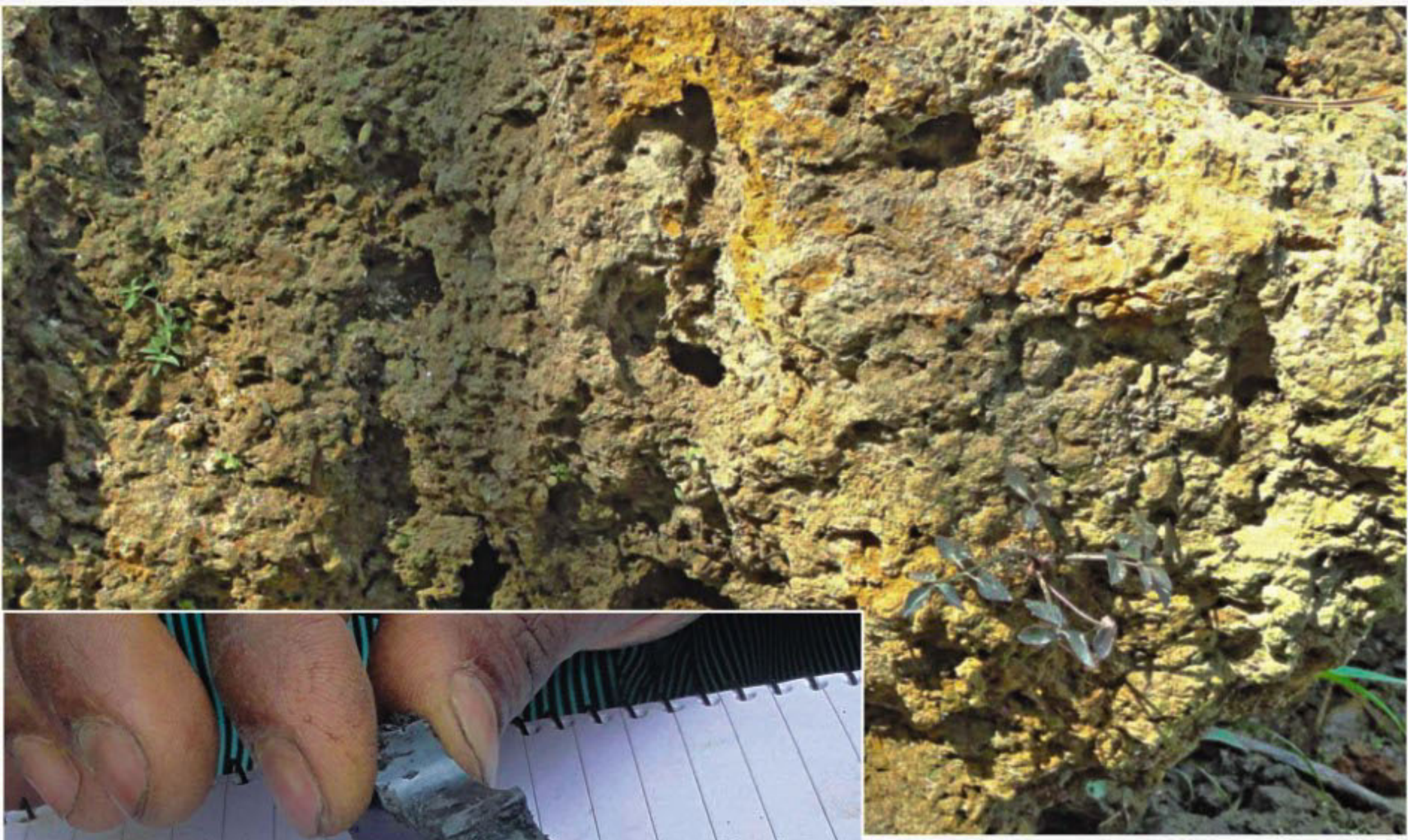


PHOTO: STAR

A scene of raised land containing 'iron-like' hard and heavy soil in Atrai River at Guliyara village in Khansama upazila of Dinajpur district. Inset, a curious person uses magnet to test the presence of iron in the sand collected from the same riverbed.



Low income group suffers due to steep rise in LPG price

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT,
Thakurgaon

The price of Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) has seen a steep rise during the last two months, much to the worry of consumers, especially lower middle class people in Thakurgaon and Panchagarh districts.

Locals find the situation as an added burden on their finances as they are seriously dependent on the fuel for cooking.

A LPG cylinder of Jamuna, Boshundhara, Total and Kleen Heat is selling at Tk 1,650 to Tk 1,700 in local markets although it sold at Tk 1,350 in the first week of January this year, market sources said.

Soon the increased by Tk 70 and sold at Tk 1420.

In the second week of February the price increased to around Tk 1500.

Lastly on March 1, the price increased again and now an LPG cylinder selling for Tk 1,650 to Tk 1,700 in local markets.

During a visit to an LPG cylinder dealer's shop in the town on Saturday afternoon, this correspondent saw that Shakila Yasmin, 28, a housewife residing at Hallpara in Thakurgaon town, came to get a cylinder filled with LPG but returned with her empty cylinder as she was unaware of the sudden price hike.

"I have brought Tk 1500 but now the price has reached Tk 1700," she said.

Biplob Kumer Mohanta, lecturer of a private college in Thakurgaon, said he has to take alternative way to cook as the price of LPG cylinder is too high.

Ahsan Habib Alamgir, dealer of Total and Jamuna LPG cylinder in Thakurgaon, said the company increased the rate as the price in the international market is high.

"Common people have become helpless as the price of essential commodities including LPG cylinder is increasing without proper reason.

The government should strengthen market monitoring system immediately for the sake of protecting interests of common people," said Enamul Haque, member secretary of Thakurgaon district unit of Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

Private companies are increasing the price according to their wish as the supply of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation's LPG cylinders by government-run companies including Padma and Meghna is too inadequate, said.

Besides, the cylinders often contain less than stipulated 12kg of gas while the cylinders are selling at different shops without legal

permission, he added.

Nezarat Deputy Collector (NDC) of Thakurgaon Aslam Mollah said only 20-40 cylinders, each priced Tk 850, were allotted in each load after one or two months for the district.

Due to high prices of LPG, a good number of householders have started using electric heaters for cooking and it adds to the already existing pressure on electricity supply.

In Panchagarh, the LPG consumers coming to buy LPG at dealers shop also expressed deep frustration due to abnormal price hike.

Shafiqul Alam, a dealer of Jamuna LPG cylinder in Panchagarh, said sale of

LPG cylinder has dropped by half during the last couple of months due to the price hike.

A number of locals are using firewood for cooking.

However, many people, especially those who live in rented houses, have no alternative to using LPG as house owners often object to tenants' using wood burners for cooking.

Md Mamunur Rashid, deputy marketing officer of Kleen Heat Gas Company for Bogra region, told this correspondent over cell phone, "The private companies have increased the price as the international market price of LPG has risen due to Middle East unrest."



PHOTO: STAR

A customer bargains with a salesman of an LPG dealer's shop in Thakurgaon town yesterday as price of the fuel used by a large number of people for cooking saw price hike three times during the last two months, including the latest one on March 1.

PCJSS leader abducted

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Khagrachhari

Criminals abducted a leader of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samiti (PCJSS) from Bangmara area under Matiranga upazila on Monday afternoon.

The victim is Kalenjoy Chakma, 40, office secretary of PCJSS Matiranga upazila unit.

Criminals abducted Kalenjoy around 04:30pm when he went to Bangmara from his Matiranga residence to solve a land dispute between him and one Alok Chakma of the area, said officer-in-charge of Matiranga police station Mohammad Abu Yousuf quoting Kalenjoy's family members.

A general diary has been filed in this regard and police are trying to rescue the victim, the OC added.

Contacted, information and publicity secretary of PCJSS central committee Sajib Chakma alleged that Kalenjoy was abducted by the armed cadres of United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF). He demanded immediate release of the abducted leader.

However, organiser of UPDF Khagrachhari district unit Riko Chakma refuted the allegation and cited internal feud of PCJSS as the reason behind the abduction.

Indian handed over to BSF

UNB, Sherpur

BGB handed over to BSF a suspected Indian spy on Monday afternoon, several hours after he was held at Madhutila Ecopark in Nalitabari frontier upazila on Sunday.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) sources said Dilip Kedar was handed over to the 221 BSF (Border Security Force) following a flag meeting between the two border forces held at ICP near Kamal Land Port in Nalitabari.

A patrol team of 6 BGB detained Kedar along with a 9 mm pistol at about 10-0 am on Sunday.

A BSF identity card along with picture was also recovered from him.



PHOTO: STAR

Nature lover Muhibulla, a soil science student of Government BM College in Barisal, came to the city with this cobra, to hand over to the forest department officials yesterday but returned with it the same day as forest officials did not receive the highly poisonous snake due to 'lack of arrangement' for preserving or releasing it into the forest. Muhibulla had rescued the snake, locally known as gokhra, from locals at his hometown Muladi in the district on Monday.

Health centres unfinished largely for lack of care

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barisal

Fate of two urban primary health care centers, scheduled to be constructed in two areas of Barisal City Corporation by June 30, 2012, has become uncertain.

Negligence of authorities concerned, corruption by contractor and handing over the work order to another firm violating public procurement rule (PPR) have been blamed for the situation.

The Tk 2.14 crore project is being funded by Asian Development Bank, Department for International Development (DFID) and Government of Bangladesh.

The tender procedure for both of the work under urban primary health care project (UPHCP-II) of the ministry of local government, rural development and cooperatives, was completed on April 25, 2010.

LGRD ministry awarded the work order to Dhaka based 'Palash Enterprise' on June 16, 2011 after a delay of 14 months with June 30, 2012 deadline.

Visiting the spots and talking with the authorities and contractors, this correspondent came to know that the work of one UPHCP at Amanatganj is yet to start, while the other one near Barisal Govt B M College area has been abandoned after partial piling four months ago.

Palash Enterprise, in the meantime, illegally transferred the work order to Meherun Construction of Barisal through a power of attorney signed on May 24, 2011.

Meherun Construction started the work at the site of B M College area. The authorities, however, stopped the firm in October 2011 following an allegation of low standard of work.

A 3-member probe team comprising executive engineer, assistant engineer and project manger of UPHCP-II was formed on November 1, 2011.

The team visited the spot and submitted their report after laboratory tests on November 20.

According to the report, the qualities of the concrete used for piling were substandard and the diameters of piles irregular.

Construction defects were rampant and most piles too weak to withstand load, said Engineer Golam Kibria, managing director of testing firm CFF Foundation, in the report.

Shariful Islam, executive engineer of UPHCP-II, acknowledging the facts, termed the work order as non-transferable.

"Action would be taken against the firm if it fails to implement the project within the scheduled time maintaining quality of standard as per PPR," he said.

He blamed BCC for delay in handing over land, giving work order and plan layout.

Abdul Motalib, executive engineer of BCC, said complex procedure of selecting site and ownership caused the delay in handing over land.

The project director of UPHCP-II will visit the spots soon to remove the stalemate, he informed.

J A Zahedi of Palash Enterprise said, the 14-month delay in giving work order, plan layout, handing over land and price hike of construction materials complicated the job.

"So we gave the power of attorney to local firm 'Meherun Construction' to complete the work within the scheduled time in a bid to avoid financial loss", he said.

Monwar Hossain Jipu of Meherun Construction said they were trying to complete the work faster for the sake of public interest. Unfortunately a vested quarter is creating obstacle, he added.

About the quality of work, Jipu claimed that they were doing the best possible work within the allotted budget.



PHOTO: STAR

Construction work of a primary health care centre near Government BM College in Barisal city has remained suspended for the last two years.

Lalon fest begins today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A five-day long Lalon Smaran Utsab (memorial festival) will begin at Dol Akhra at Chheuria today.

The festival is held on this month every year at the time of Dol Purnima (full moon). Introduced by Lalon Shah himself, the festival has now turned into a tradition. A large number of baul (mystic) artistes take part in it.

Meanwhile, a large number of devotees and admirers of Lalon from all over Bangladesh and overseas have gathered to join the festival that highlights the philosophy of the mystic saint.

Lalon Academy which looks after the Lalon shrine at the place has organised the programme.

Veteran baul Abdul Karim Shah is expected to inaugurate it. Among others, Chief Whip of Jatiya Sangsad Abdus Shahid, lawmaker of Kushtia-4 Sultana Tarun, food secretary Barun Dev Mitra and secretary to Prime Minister's Office Nazrul Islam Khan will speak at the opening function.

Banamali Bhowmik, deputy commissioner (DC) of Kushtia, will preside.