

Consumption of shoots threatens bamboo production in CHT

KAFIL MAHMUD, Khagrachhari

Bamboo production is under serious threat as ignorant locals are indiscriminately cutting shoots for human consumption, defying a ban.

The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is one of the largest producers of bamboo in the country and if the production is hampered, there will be a serious scarcity of bamboo in the country. The government will also be losing crores of taka in revenue from this natural resource of the CHT.

Throughout the country, bamboo is a vital component for pulp, besides its importance in construction sector, rural home building and many other purposes.

In a bid to increase bamboo production, the forest officials concerned in Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban imposed a three-month ban in June on all kinds of bamboo-cutting in 25 upazilas of CHT as bamboo shoots start growing in the monsoon.

Traditionally, bamboo shoot is a popular dish among the tribal population. But over the years it has become popular among Bangalee settlers too, increasing much its demand as a vegetable.

Due to lack of policing and publicity of the ban, more people are getting into the trade of collecting and selling the shoots openly in the markets.

Ratnamoni Chakma of the district recently brought about 12 kilogram shoots to Modhupur Bazar in the town for sale. She said she



PHOTO: STAR

Two persons gather bamboo shoots, a popular food among the tribal people of Chittagong Hill Tracts, to take them to Shanirbar Bazar in Khagrachhari district for sale.

was not at all aware of the ban on cutting of bamboo shoots.

"Believe me if I knew about the ban I would never try to cut or sell shoots," she said.

Vegetable trader at Khagrachhari bazaar Shefali Marma said she sells about 45 kilogram of shoots every day at around Tk 40 per kg.

Shefali said that poor villagers in different areas of the district including Alutilla, Krishigobesana, and Noimile collect the shoots from the adjoining

bamboo clusters and sell those to the traders at a slightly cheaper rate.

Mohammad Mizan, a bamboo trader at Khagrachhari bazaar for last 15 years, said bamboo production is falling every year due to illegal collection and sale of shoots for consumption.

Ananta Bikash Tripura, a first class contractor of the district, said if the consumption of bamboo shoots is not stopped during the monsoon, bamboo prices will go up affecting the construction sector of the country.

"Now a piece of a good quality bamboo ranges between Tk 150 and 170. The other variety (*muli*) costs between Tk 1000 and 1200 per bundle of 100 pieces.

"We are already witnessing a 30 percent rise in bamboo prices compared to last year's," Ananta added.

Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Khagrachhari Mohammad Zohurul Alam said the ban was imposed in accordance with a work plan, prepared by Conservator of Forest Mahbubuddin

Chowdhury.

The Karnaphuli Paper Mill relies heavily on bamboo from the area but now the mill is facing closure due to the shortage of bamboo, he said. "We are trying to increase awareness among local people through community leaders," he said.

In the 2010-11 fiscal year, the forest department of Khagrachhari alone issued permits to harvest nearly 33 lakh pieces of bamboos, from which the government earned Tk 28.48 lakh in revenue.

SHARANKHOLA CLASH JCD leader killed in infighting

A CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A union level Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader, who was seriously injured in a factional clash between two local JCD groups at Rayenda in Sharankhola upazila on Friday night, died at a clinic in Khulna on Monday night.

The victim was identified as Hasan Akon, 16, JCD organizing secretary of Rayenda unit and son of Joynal Akon of Jilbunia village in same upazila.

Father of the victim Joynal filed a case with Sharankhola police station accusing 11, including the upazila unit BNP secretary Anwar Hossain on charge of killing his son.

Police, locals and family sources said, two rival BNP groups, led by the upazila unit BNP president Matiur Rahman and secretary Anwar Hossain engaged in a clash over control of an extended workers' meeting of JCD, held at Rayenda Pilot High School ground on Friday night.

The clash left eight people, including Hasan injured from both sides.

Being informed, police rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

The injured were admitted to a local hospital from where Hasan was shifted to a private clinic in Khulna. There he succumbed to his injuries at 10:00pm on Monday.

Police, however, arrested Anwar following the case filed by the victim's father.

THAKURGAON DIABETIC HOSPITAL Patients suffer as druggists assoc bans fair price sale

QUAMRUL ISLAM RUBAIYAT, Thakurgaon

Around 4000 diabetic patients of Swasthaseba Hospital in the town have to buy insulin and other medicines for higher prices from outside as Thakurgaon Chemists and Druggists Association allegedly forced medical representatives to stop supplying the items to the hospital pharmacy hospital three months ago.

Authorities set up the pharmacy inside the diabetic hospital, facilitating the patients to buy medicines for fair prices, said hospital sources and patients.

The hospital sells insulin to its patients at Tk 1,000 a vial while pharmacies in the town sell it for Tk 1,100 to 1400.

But the drug association forced stopping medicine supply by representatives of different pharmaceutical companies to the pharmacy at Swasthaseba Hospital in last April without showing any reason.

The association members even manhandled a few medical representatives when they went to supply insulin and other drugs to the hospital.

Following a memorandum submitted by diabetic patients to the deputy commissioner (DC) for taking steps to resolve the problem, the district administration arranged a negotiation at the conference room of the DC office on July 20.

Leaders of Thakurgaon Chemists and Druggists

Association, officials of Swasthaseba Hospital, ruling party leaders of the district and local journalists attended the meeting with D C M u h a m m a d Shahiduzzaman in the chair.

In the meeting, it was decided that the medical representatives could supply insulin and other drugs to Swasthaseba Hospital.

Even after the settlement, medicine supply to the hospital is yet to resume, Dr Ekramul Hossain Swapan, executive director of Swasthaseba Hospital, told this correspondent on Saturday.

"The drug store owners in the town have formed a syndicate to prevent the medical representatives from supplying insulin to the hospital. The syndicate is out to make exorbitant profit by preventing the patients from buying medicines for fair prices at the hospital pharmacy," said Abul Khayer, 75, a diabetic patient of Hallpara in Thakurgaon town.

When contacted, Azizur Rahman, president of Thakurgaon district Chemists and Druggists Association, said, "The problem was resolved through arbitration and I have already instructed the representatives to supply medicines to the drug store of the hospital."

Meanwhile, 2-3 companies have resumed 'conditional' supply of a few drugs in the last couple of days, pharmacy sources said.

Tower soon on Kuakata beach to watch nature

Site selected at Huchanpara

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism will build a 175 feet high tower on Kuakata sea beach so that tourists can enjoy natural beauty of the beach and watch both sunrise and sunset from the tower.

After selecting a site at Huchanpara near the main point of the sea beach, Patuakhali district administration has sent a proposal to the ministry for its approval.

Kalapara upazila administration has also

sent a proposal to the ministry to acquire two acres of land in the area to build the tower.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Dedarey Alam Mohammad Maksud Chowdhury said the proposed tower will be 175 feet in height. It will have a restaurant at 110 feet height, an open-air deck at 126 feet height and two separate lifts--one for male and the other for female tourists, the UNO added.

A four-member team headed by Md Jamal Hossain, deputy secretary of the civil aviation and

tourism ministry conducted a feasibility study on Kuakata beach on May 15. The other members of the team are Khalid bin Majid, manager (planning) of the same ministry, Asifur Rahman Bhuiyan, assistant chief engineer of the Department of Archaeology and a representative of Patuakhali DC.

The body submitted its report to civil aviation and tourism ministry on May 30. Later, the ministry asked Patuakhali DC to select a site for the tower and send a proposal in this regard.

Man killed by son in Sylhet

UNB, Sylhet

An elderly man was killed allegedly by his son over a family dispute in the city's Surma residential area on Sunday night.

The dead is Aftab Ali, 56, of the area.

Police said Akter Hossain Deepu allegedly hit in the head of his father Aftab with a stick, leaving him critically injured at about 8 pm.

He was rushed to Sylhet Osmani Medical College Hospital where the duty doctor declared him dead on arrival.

Police arrested Deepu on charge of killing his father.



PHOTO: STAR

The recent downpour has left Kalapara-Kuakata road near Alipur ferry terminal denuded of bricks, mortar and tar. Now there are only sticky mud and potholes, putting vehicular movement at grave risk. Another fall-out is that the condition of the road makes it extremely difficult for tourists to travel to Kuakata beach.

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