

# Mere ban not enough to stop eucalyptus menace

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Defying a ban on eucalyptus, the nurseries in the district have kept on producing and selling saplings of the harmful tree.

Botanists and agriculturists said that eucalyptus, originating in Australia, is highly detrimental to our ecology mainly because its rate of transpiration is extremely high.

Pollen emission from its

flowers is also high, which may cause respiratory problems to humans, they said.

Eucalyptus is also inhospitable to local birds and insects, they added.

Besides, its leaves take much longer time to degrade in the nature, causing cementation of the ground. The leaves and its fruits are also rejected by herbivorous animals.

The eucalyptus plantation in the district is so

extensive that it can be found in numbers on every yard, office premises, by the roadsides and along the railway tracks. Its popularity is mainly due to its quick growth and demand for its cheap timber and fuel wood in the rural areas.

Head of the Botany Department of Kurigram Government College, Mirza Md. Nasir Uddin said that an eucalyptus tree absorbs water 20 times more than

any other tree in the country.

"The tree produces a kind of chemical called *aleopathy* which makes it impossible for other trees to grow near it," said Nasir Uddin, adding that eucalyptus is not fit for the country's ecology, he added.

Deputy director at Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in Kurigram, Prodip Kumar Mondal said that the eucalyptus transpires so heavily

that it absorbs the groundwater at a much quicker rate than any other trees.

While most people remain unaware of the bad effects of this menacing tree, the forest department officials said they had no fund to launch a campaign against plantation of eucalyptus.

Forest department sources said that so far 30 varieties of eucalyptus are found worldwide. In 1978, the government decided to import seeds of four species for forestation and agro forestry. But in 1995 when its bad effects were discovered, the ministry of environment and forest in an official order asked the forest department to exclude eucalyptus from its forestation programme and inform the people about its effects on the environment. But by then, the situation was out of hands as nurseries around the country already produced and sold the saplings in thousands.

Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) of Kurigram Md. Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan told this correspondent that in 2008 they officially asked the nursery owners' association to stop sale and plantation of all varieties of eucalyptus.

"The government and non-government organisations should take up awareness campaigns immediately to inform people about its bad effect," the ACF said.

A nursery owner in Kurigram town, Md. Monsur Ali, said that he was aware of the bad effects of the tree but had to grow the saplings for his own survival.

"When I stopped selling eucalyptus, my business suffered a lot while others made quick bucks", he said.



PHOTO: STAR

**Rows of eucalyptus trees mark Food Godown Road at Khalilganj of Kurigram town as locals, hardly aware of the eventual bad effects of the towering foreign species on soil fertility and ecology, grow it for mere profit. Inset, eucalyptus saplings grown at the nursery of Mansur Ali in the town.**

## Gambling goes on under nose of law enforcers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Gambling is going on unabated under the nose of law enforcers at different villages in five upazilas of the district.

Local people are worried as their school and college going children also join this illegal act of betting. They alleged that some unscrupulous policemen help the local gangs to arrange gambling at their villages in exchange for money.

Honest police officers sometimes raid the spots, but they can not nab the gamblers as they get information in advance from a section of cops and quit the places, the villagers alleged.

According to Majidul Islam, 55, of Phulgachh village in Sadar upazila, gambling is being arranged at their village every night. Police raided the village several times but they could not find the gamblers on the spot, he said.

Atiar Rahman, 47, of village Barobari in the upazila said, an organised gang had arranged gambling at the village in the name of fair, but police were not taking any action

against the culprits as they bribe them regularly.

"We do not dare to raise voice against gambling as unscrupulous policemen and a section of local political activists are helping an identified gang to arrange such illegal game at our village," said Radha Ram Borman, 56, of Dalgram village of Kaliganj upazila.

Gambling is being held at three spots at the village every night but the villagers keep mum, fearing harassment, he said.

A gambler of Satpatki village in Sadar upazila, seeking anonymity, said that they give police men Tk 6,000 to 10,000 per night for a spot. "We get information about raid in advance from the policemen," he added.

Contacted, police superintendent Habibur Rahman said that the law enforcers raid different areas every night to check gambling.

"We are investigating the allegations against some policemen," he said, adding that if the allegations are found true, they would face departmental action.



PHOTO: STAR

Nightlong gambling is a common scene at places in Lalmonirhat district, especially during the ongoing dry season, as a section of influential people arrange the illegal pastime that fills the pockets of a few with quick bucks at the cost of losses to many others. The photo was taken from Fulgachh village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila a few days ago.

## 4 extortionists

FROM PAGE 1

Tk 20,000, locals said.

Sensing their presence in Kalam's house, villagers of the area organised themselves and chased the miscreants.

The mob managed to catch four of the gang from several points in Kaliani and the neighbouring Harodanga village and beat them to death, police said.

On information, police rushed to the spot and recovered the bodies, said Md Samsul Islam, officer-in-charge of Faridpur Police Station.

They were sent to Pabna Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsies, he said, adding that a shutter gun was recovered from the spot.

Johurul Islam Bokul, chairman of Faridpur Upazila Parishad, said the activists of the outlawed party led by Khalil had long been extorting from local people. The villagers in a meeting last week had decided to resist the criminals.

Rejaul Hossain, brother of Kalam, said the gang earlier went to his brother's residence on Wednesday night and demanded Tk 20,000.

"As the family members could not arrange the money that night, the gang again turned up this (yesterday) morning," he said adding that the villagers started chasing them with sticks.

Jahangir Hossain Matabbar, superintendent of police of Pabna, told this correspondent the villagers had vented their pent-up anger on the outlaws by beating them to death.

"The law enforcers had earlier advised the villagers to resist the criminals with their support," he said, adding that police were investigating the incident.

## Sircar

FROM PAGE 20

Zahirul Haque of the Senior Special Judge's Court passed the bail order after they surrendered before the court and sought bail in the cases.

The court fixed January 10 for passing an order on whether it would take into cognisance the charges brought against the accused.

The ACC on December 28, 2010 filed the cases with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station in Dhaka.

The anti-graft body pressed charges against Sircar and Akhtar Hamid on November 7 and 8 this year.

According to one case statement, Sircar drew around Tk 27.86 lakh in the name of treatment abroad. He himself approved the amount, abusing his power as the speaker.

He was aided and abetted by Ashraful Islam, the then chief accounts officer of the Parliament Secretariat.

Sircar, now a BNP lawmaker, has been charged with abuse of power also in two cases filed against BNP leader Khandaker Delwar Hossain and Akhtar Hamid for drawing around Tk 6 lakh and Tk 1.21 lakh in the name of overseas treatment.

Another case statement says Delwar moved furniture worth Tk 6.09 lakh from the chief whip's official residence to his own house. He did that on Sircar's approval, which was unlawful.



PHOTO: STAR

**Policewomen who took part in a procesion marking International Women Repression Prevention Fortnight, apparently escort it at Lalmonirhat town yesterday. Similar programmes were held also in other districts on the occasion.**

## PANCHAGARH CS OFFICE

# BCL, Jubo League men snatch tender from contractors

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Tender schedules were snatched from two contractors allegedly by Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) and Jubo League activists on Panchagarh civil surgeon (CS) office premises on Wednesday afternoon.

On October 17, the civil surgeon office invited tender in six categories for supplying medicines, surgical instruments, chemical reagents, linen, gauge bandages and furniture.

As many as 142 schedules were sold until Wednesday, the last date of sale of tender documents. December 3 is the last date for dropping schedules in a tender box, which will be opened at the CS office the same day.

Md Shahan Shah and Waliur Rahman,

representatives of Aleya Corporation and

Banani Medical Store, Dhaka, bought 12

schedules to bid for six supply categories.

Witnesses said when the two came out of the CS office, a group of BCL and Jubo

League men led by district Jubo League leader Mizanur Rahman snatched tender schedules from them.

The two submitted a written complaint to the CS office yesterday, urging the CS to invite fresh tender, canceling the current process. They also submitted a complaint to the deputy commissioner and sought his intervention in this matter.

Denying the allegation of snatching tender schedules, Jubo League leader Mizanur Rahman told this correspondent over cellphone that a few Jubo League activists were present at the CS office Wednesday afternoon as they bought schedules for participating in the bidding.

Contacted, Civil Surgeon Dr Mozammel Haque said he was not aware of any such incident. About submission of a written complainant by the representatives of two contractors, the CS said, "I am out of the station for official purpose."



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

**General students of MM College in Jessore town bring out a procession on the campus yesterday demanding arrest of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal activist Kabir (inset), who shot at his opponents from a firearm during the clash between two factions of the pro-BNP student organisation on the college campus on Tuesday.**

# Molasses, sugar unsold

## Mills continue to count losses

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Rangpur Sugar Mills incurred a loss of around Tk one crore as around 3,000 tonnes of molasses worth Tk two crore remained unsold for the last one year.

Our Gaibandha correspondent reported that a fresh tender was called yesterday for selling 1000 tonnes of molasses but its market price dropped to Tk 220-240 from Tk 586 per maund, much to the worry of the authorities.

In 2010-11 crushing season, the mills produced 2,970 tonnes of molasses. On August 17 last year, the mill authorities called tender for selling 500 tonnes when the price shot up to Tk 586 per maund in the market.

The authorities, however, cancelled the tender for 'unavoidable' reasons although the highest bid stood at Tk 477 per maund.

It was beyond our imagination that the demand of molasses in the market would continue to decline so fast pushing down the price abnormally, said Abdul Khaleque, managing director of the mills.

The labour union leaders of the mills blamed the authorities for creating the 'unwanted' situation.

Meanwhile, Joypurat Sugar Mill is set to

start its 50th cane crushing season today although around 3000 metric tons of sugar produced in last season remained unsold, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

The largest mill in the country in terms of its cane crushing capacity had incurred losses of Tk 160 crore since it started its operation in 1962-63 due to manifold problems, official said.

Moreover, around Tk 2 crore were needed to procure necessary chemicals like diesel and sulphur for starting the crushing season, he said.

They have targeted to crush at least 90,000 tonnes of cane to produce 6,750 tonnes sugar in the upcoming season, he added.

In 2011-12, the mill crushed 64,000 metric tones cane and produced 4,300 tones of sugar, incurring losses of Tk 25 crore. Of them, 1400 tonnes were sold, said the official.

Md Shahid Ullah, managing director of the mill, said at least 2,900 metric tonnes sugar remained unsold.

"Production cost of each kilogram sugar was Tk 104, but the produced sugar is sold at Tk 50 a kg at the mill gate and still we hardly see any buyers" he added.



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