

# 3,000 trees looted from khas land, 700 seized

PONUEL S BOSE, Narail

A few ruling party men allegedly led by Alauddin Munshi, vice president of Lohagara upazila unit of Awami League, stole at least 3000 mature trees worth over Tk 50 lakh from a khas land in Kalna village between January 24 and 25.

On Friday night Lohagara upazila and police administration seized at least 700 of these trees from Lohagara Bazar area adjacent to a godown belonging to ruling party men. The trees were on a 4.86-acre stretch of a khas plot under No 44 Charjajira Mouja of Kashiani upazila in Gopalganj district. Though on paper, the land is documented under Kashiani upazila of Gopalganj district but it is situated on the Narail side of the Modhumoti River that divides Narail and Gopalganj districts.

Hemayet Hossain of Kalna village under Lohagara upazila of Narail who claims to have inherited

the plot, said he had planted at least 3000 trees on the plot about 15 years ago. "But when the land was enlisted as khas, I filed a case against the government with Gopalganj Judge Court and that case is still pending," he said.

On January 25, when Narail-2 ruling party Member of Parliament (MP) SK Abu Baker came to Kalna crossing Kalna Ferry Ghat, several hundred villagers including women besieged his jeep protesting the tree theft. The villagers chanted slogan demanding punishment of Alauddin Munshi and his followers who chopped down the trees.

The villagers said that Alauddin Munshi, and his followers Motiar Rahman, Munna, Toruk Mollah, Saiful Mollah, Zakir Mollah, Bappy Saha and Soruj Mollah and the labourers felled the trees. MP SK Abu Baker immediately asked the district administration and the police to take action against the perpetrators.

Rebeka Khan, upazila

nirbahi officer of Lohagara, and Masum Billah, additional police superintendent of Narail, jointly conducted a drive and recovered at least 700 stolen trees. Rebeca Khan said that the trees were recovered from Lohagara Bazar area adjacent to Alauddin Munshi's brick kiln godown.

Azizur Rahman, a timber trader of Lokhipasha Bazaar under Lohagara upazila, said that he bought a few trees from Alauddin Munshi. "I had also paid him an advance of Tk 18,000," he said.

Alauddin Munshi denied his involvement in the theft and said that he knew nothing about it. He declined to comment further.

Rebeka Khan, however, said that the ownership of the land was disputed between Khashiani upazila administration and a local man.

"The two deputy commissioner of the two districts will sit in a meeting and make a decision on the next step," she added.



PHOTO: STAR/BANGLAR CHOKH

A farmer collects betel leaves fallen off the stalks at a garden of Ujirpur village in Narail Sadar upazila, and right, betel leaves at Mostobapur village in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah district turn reddish as the persistent cold wave accompanied by dense fog caused massive damage to betel plantations during the ongoing winter.

## Cold, fog hit betel farming

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Persistent cold wave accompanied by dense fog has badly affected betel cultivation in different areas during the ongoing winter.

A large number of betel plantations, locally known as *paner baroj*, in Sadar, Lohagara and Kalia upazilas of Narail are now affected with 'cold injuries', much to the worry of farmers in the district known for extensive betel cultivation, reports our Narail correspondent.

Severe cold and excessive fog cause dropping of the betel leaves and the disease spreads in the betel plantations mainly in damp weather, said Monojeet Mollik, plant protection specialist of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) in Narail.

As a remedy, he suggested the betel planters to spray 1Dithame-45 or Score medicine on the plants.

"The situation will improve if there is sufficient sunlight and flow of air, he added.

During this correspondent's recent visit to different betel plantations in three upazilas, farmers said that about half of over 15,000 betel farmers in the three upazilas have left the cultivation during the last decade.

The reasons behind the farmers' apathy to the betel cultivation include unfavourable weather, pest attack, shortage of capital, dearth of seeds and absence of proper preservation and marketing.

Average cost for production of betel leaf per hectare of land is Tk 2.5 to 3.5 lakh while the yield is about five to six tonnes, several farmers said, adding that if everything goes well, one can earn a profit of over Tk one lakh from per hectare.

But widespread pest and virus attack dashed the hopes of most farmers during the last few years, they said.

"This season we have to count more losses as betel leaves are dropping due to extreme cold but no agronomist has come to visit the affected fields," said Bisnu Biswas, a

betel farmer.

Sobi Hori Das, deputy director of DAE in Narail, however, said they are trying their best to suggest solutions to the farmers who face problem.

Our Gaibandha Correspondent adds: Betel production in Sundarganj upazila under the district sees a serious decline this season as leaves are turning yellowish and dropping off the stalks before attaining maturity due to attack of diseases related to cold injuries.

Upazila agriculture department, however, identified the disease as stalk rotting and betel leaf blight that generally breaks out in cold weather.

This season 50 hectares of land in Sundarganj upazila have been brought under betel leaf cultivation and farmers made over 700 betel gardens in different areas of Kanchibari, Dhopadanga, Chandipur, Santiram, Dahabandh unions, said sources at the upazila agriculture office.

"Betel plantations need much care for good yield. They need fencing and shade. Betel farming is costly but this season we will suffer serious drawback in betel production, if the weather does not improve soon," said Bhavesh Chandra, a betel grower of Kanchibari.

The betel growers are advised to adopt precautionary measure spraying pesticide and other chemicals, the situation will improve as soon the cold wave disappears, said Sottyen Kumar, upazila agriculture officer of Sundarganj.

Famous for quality betel production, Sundarganj upazila supplies the item to other areas including the capital but with serious decline in production and supply, price of betel in local markets has already shot up, said the growers.

Now betel leaf is selling for Tk 200 to 300 per hundred, locals said.

Reports of betel garden damage due to persistent cold wave have also been received from Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah district.



PHOTO: STAR

The upazila administration on Friday night seized logs of some 700 trees, out of around 3000 ones felled allegedly by ruling Awami League (AL) men led by Alauddin Munshi, vice president of Lohagara upazila unit of AL, from a khas land at Kalna village in Lohagara upazila under Narail district between Thursday and Friday.

## Settlers enforce hartal in two hill districts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A dawn-to-dusk hartal enforced by Parbatya Bangalee Chhatra Parishad (PBCP) passed off peacefully in the hill districts of Khagrachhari and Bandarban yesterday.

PBCP, a platform of the Bangalee settlers, enforced the shutdown, demanding the arrest of the criminals who shot dead a labourer and injured two others at a brick kiln in Khagrachhari district on January 25.

Brick kiln worker Faruk Hossain, 19, was killed while Abul Hossain, 55, and Mohammad Shajahan 30, of Bhai Bhai Brickfield at Gazinagar in Matiranaga upazila of Khagrachhari were injured as the alleged cadres of United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) opened fire on them for refusing to pay toll on January 25.

After the incident, the PBCP gave the government a 48-hour ultimatum to arrest

the criminals which went unheeded.

All kinds of vehicular movement and shopping centers in the two districts remained closed during the hartal as pickets burnt tyres at different points of the district towns.

Chases and counter-chases took place between police and the pro-hartal activists at Khagrachhari Gate and Shapla Chattar around 10:00 am.

In Bandarban, there was no vehicular movement while shops remained closed during the programme.

Leaders and activists of local PBCP unit brought out processions in different areas, sources said.

The organisation will observe a day-long hartal in Rangamati today as the hartal programme in the district was postponed yesterday due to a function on fifth death anniversary of Rajban Bihar's chief monk Sadanada Mohasthabir, widely known as "Bana Bhante".

### CHANPA MURDER

#### Prime accused Shamim held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Police yesterday arrested the prime accused in Chanpa rape and murder case.

Shamim Mondol, 22, was arrested from a residence of Keraniganj in the capital, said Bijoy Baskak, additional superintendent of police, Faridpur.

Zakia Akter Chanpa, 15, a class nine student at Pordia Girls' High School in Kanaipur union, 'went missing' from a wedding ceremony at her relative's house near their residence at Kashemabad village in the same union on the night of December 13.

The following morning, her body was found hanging from a tree at the village.

Chanpa's elder brother Hasibul Islam filed a rape and murder case with Faridpur Kotwali police station the same day, accusing their neighbour Salam Matabbar, his son Shamim Mondol and four others.

## Attackers threaten family of injured sand trader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Culprits who attacked sand trader Abul Bashar are allegedly now threatening his family members of dire consequences if they did not withdraw the case filed against them.

At a press conference at Manikganj Press Club yesterday, Mousumi Bashar Tina, wife of the injured Jubo League leader Abul Bashar, urged the government to save her family members from the criminals who have been threatening to kill them including her five-year old son Takbir.

They demanded immediate arrest and punishment of the attackers.

According to the case statement, Ahad, 22, son of Akbar Sadhu of Boalia village, Hasem, 35, and Hasmat, 32, sons of Jane Ali of Paschim Dashara village, Adam, 34, son of Awlad of Baro Sarundi village, Mintu, 25, son of Liton, Moslem, 30, son of Surat Ali, Hasan, 22, son of Ramzan,

Monir, 23, son of Abdul Hamid, Rafik, 28, son of Rahim and Babu, 21, son of Alamgir of Paschim Dashara and 5/6 unidentified youths attacked Tina's husband with sharp weapons in broad daylight on January 5.

The criminals intercepted the motorbike of Bashar when he reached Paschim Dashara and demanded Tk. 2,00,000 from him as toll. They stabbed him for refusing to pay toll and took away Tk. 1,38,000 from his possession.

Sand trader Abul Bashar is now fighting for life at the intensive care unit of Savar Enam Clinic, the family members said.

Mousumi Bashar Tina lodged a case with Manikganj Sadar police station, accusing 10 identified and 5/6 unidentified people on January 6.

Contacted, officer-in-charge (OC) of Manikganj police station Shafiqul Islam said the accused fled the area immediately after the incident.

### SNAPS AND SNIPPETS



PHOTO: STAR

Vehicles go off the main road in Tangail town during yesterday's hartal. BCL enforced the half-day shutdown in the district headquarters protesting the death of its district unit leader Abdul Kader Bapon, who was injured during an attack on a procession in the town on January 20. Bapon succumbed to his injuries at a hospital in Dhaka on Tuesday evening.

#### Ban on appointments

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The authorities of Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur, have been asked to stop all kinds of appointments of teachers and others. The direction came to vice chancellor Muhammad Abdul Jalil Miah on Monday through a letter signed by Prof Mohammad Mohabbat, member of University Grants Commission (UGC). The restriction imposed on all kinds of appointments of teachers, officials and employees either on regular, *ad-hoc* basis or on master roll would remain effective until further notice. The commission came up with the move following the recent allegations of massive corruption and irregularities in appointment and other administrative activities of the university.

#### Fake fertiliser seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Over 5000 sacks of fake TSP fertiliser and 700 bottles of adulterated pesticide were seized from two godowns in Auditorium market area of Hatibandha upazila yesterday. To evade arrest, the owner of M/s Morshed Fertiliser Shop, who was producing the fake fertiliser and pesticide for long, went into hiding, said upazila agriculture officer Rafiqul Islam. On a secret information, a team of agriculture officials, led by Rafiqul himself, raided the godowns and seized the fertiliser and pesticide worth Tk 60 lakh.

#### Over 800 BNP men sued

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Over 800 activists of BNP, including its district unit general secretary, were sued yesterday in connection with factional clash of the party on Tuesday. Rajib Al Rashid, sub-inspector at Chandpur Model police station, filed the case, accusing 800 to 900 activists. Police already arrested 10 people in this connection, said the SI. The clash took place between two factions of district BNP over sitting on the dais during a memorial meeting, leaving at least 30 from both sides injured.

### HUMAN CHAIN IN MANIKGANJ

## 'Punish killers of college student Sumon'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Local people formed a human chain and then brought out a procession in Singair yesterday, demanding arrest and punishment of the killers of college student Dewan Tariqul Islam Sumon.

Hundreds of people from all walks of life joined the human chain formed at Charigram Bazar at around 10:00am.

Chairman of Charigram union parishad Sajedul Alam Talukder Swadhin, head teacher of Charigram Shahadat Hossain High School Dewan Mohidur Rahman and victim's father Muktanur Dewan addressed the human chain which continued for about one hour.

They criticised police for failing to catch any of the accused more than one week after the murder.

and exemplary punishment of the killers.

Later, they brought out a procession which paraded different streets in the area.

Dewan Tariqul Islam Sumon, 19, student of BA at Singair College and son of Muktanur Dewan of Charigram village in Singair upazila of the district, succumbed to his injuries at Savar Enam Clinic on January 21.

Tariqul Islam and his friends came under the attack by a group of 10/12 youths, following a quarrel over sitting on chairs at the annual sports competition of Uttar Jamsha High School on January 19.

Victim's father Muktanur Dewan filed a case with Singair police station, accusing 11 people including Swadhin, Hazrat, Kabir and Rafikul of Uttar Jamsa village in the upazila.

Contacted officer-in-charge (OC) at Singair police station Md. Lyaqat Ali said they were raiding different areas to nab the accused.



PHOTO: STAR

Locals and students form a human chain in Singair upzila town of Manikganj yesterday demanding arrest and punishment of the killers of college student Tariqul Islam Sumon.