

Tree looting threatens Kuakata 'green belt'

Over 2,000 felled in last three months

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Random looting of trees from Gongamoti reserve forest near Kuakata sea beach in the district threatens the 'green belt' created by forest department to save the area from natural disasters like cyclone, flood and tidal surge in the coastal region.

The reserve forest covering an area of 12,000 acres of land is rich in different species of mangrove trees like *chhoila*, *kewra*, and *gewa* but a few gangs often fell trees there at night and send the logs to different places in

the country by trawlers, local sources said.

There is also a beautiful lake inside and the local upazila administration recently built a bridge on the lake which is open to tourists.

During cyclones and tidal surges, fishermen often take shelter inside the forest.

During a visit to the area a couple of days ago, this correspondent found remains of several felled trees in the reserve forest.

Looters recently cut down at least 1,000 trees in the forest, said a local resident seeking anonymity.

Members of a few gangs regularly loot trees with the help of local forest staff, sources said, adding that if any local protests the matter the staff then by filing false cases.

"Forest department men unofficially sell trees for very cheap prices to gangs whereas cases are filed against local poor people for cutting even a branch. Besides, a section of locals have cleared a part of the forest land to cultivate paddy there but forest officials are overlooking the matter," said Abul Hossain Fakir, member of the local

union parishad.

At least 2,000 trees have been felled and looted from the reserve forest in last three months, said another source.

Md Rezaul Karim, Gongamoti bit officer, denied the involvement of forest staff in illegal tree felling and said, "We have only three forest guards who are too insufficient to save the large forest area. We have already filed several cases against tree looters and the cases are under trial. Manpower should be increased to save the reserve forest."



PHOTO: STAR

Felling of trees for illegal sale is now a common sight at Gangamoti Reserve Forest near Kuakata sea beach in Patuakhali district, thanks to the negligence of the authorities concerned.

3 Gazipur UPs go to election tomorrow

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Three union parishads (UPs) under Gazipur Sadar upazila will go to polls tomorrow.

District election office sources said all necessary preparations have been taken to hold free, fair and neutral elections to Bhawalgarh, Mirzapur and Pirozali union parishads.

Upazila Election Officer Ayesha Akhter said as many as 42,935 voters in Bhawalgarh union, 25,586 voters in Mirzapur union and 12,889 voters in Pirozali union are expected to cast their votes at 36 centres of the three unions.

In Bhawalgarh union, 14 candidates are contesting the election for the post of chairman, 11 candidates for three reserved women seats and 55 candidates for nine member posts.

In Mirzapur union, five candidates are in the election race for chairman seat, 10 candidates for the three reserved women seats and 39 candidates for nine member seats.

In Pirozali union, five people are contesting the polls for the post of chairman, while eight candidates for three reserved women seats and 24 candidates for nine member posts.

Students lock school, demanding more teachers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Students of Nilakkhia RJ Pilot High School in Bakshiganj upazila yesterday locked the institution, demanding recruitment of teachers for six vacant posts.

Around 900 students brought out a procession on the school premises at around 11:00am and then locked all classrooms.

The agitating students said they would not unlock the classrooms until their demand was met.

A five-member committee had chosen six candidates for appointment to the posts through a written test on April 19 this year, but the managing committee did not approve the list.

"We could not fill up the vacant posts as the school authorities rejected teachers' selection by the five-member committee," said Alamgir Hassan, headmaster-in-charge.

Rejoinder and our reply

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) refuted a report published on page 8 on May 5 that said that a Bangladeshi cattle trader was shot dead and three others were injured by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) on Putkhali border under Benapole Police station on Friday night (May 3).

In a rejoinder issued on May 6, BGB said no incident of killing occurred on Friday night and that none had talked to the BGB members at Putkhali camp to verify the news.

The rejoinder signed by BGB Public Relations Officer Muhammad Mohsin Reza, however, said two shots were heard from the Indian side at around 11:00pm on Thursday night (May 2), and upon inquiry it was learnt that one Jahangir Alam was injured in that incident. He was then taken to Kolkata for treatment.

Our Reply

The Daily Star talked to Putkhali BGB camp in-charge Shafiuddin by phone on May 4 when he admitted to the incident of killing.

The camp's havildar (quarter master) Quasem also corroborated the fact, and said that the cattle trader had houses both in Bangladesh and India.



PHOTO: STAR

Students of Galachipa Government Girls' Primary School in Patuakhali district attend their first terminal examinations at Galachipa upazila Awami League office as the dilapidated schoolhouse (inset) has turned too risky for use.



Exam at ruling party office as school bulding 'risky'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The ongoing first terminal examinations of Galachipa Government Girls Primary School are being held at the upazila Awami League office as the school building has turned too risky.

"After collapse of a garment factory building at Savar in Dhaka on April 30, upazila LGED engineer Atiqur Rahman visited the school and declared it abandoned due to its bad condition. Finding no

alternative we arranged our first terminal examinations at the upazila Awami League office. It started on May 2 and will end on May 15," said Gouri Rani, headmaster of the school.

"The school building had become venerable due to lack of renovation for long. Earlier we sent several letters to the authorities concerned for its renovation but to no effect," he added.

"We have declared the school building abandoned as cracks were found

in its walls, pillars, roofs and floors. We sent letter to the higher authority seeking permission to demolish the highly risky building," said Md Atiqur Rahman, upazila engineer of LGED.

Upazila Education Officer Md Harun-or-Rashid said he has already discussed with teachers, managing committee members and local elite regarding the matter and attempt is on to arrange schooling of the children at a safe place.

30 Jamaat-Shibir men arrested in 5 dists

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Police arrested more than 30 leaders and activists of Jamaat-Shibir from Bagerhat, Sherpur, Jhenidah, Chittagong and Rangpur districts yesterday.

In Bagerhat, police arrested ten activists of Jamaat-e-Islami from different parts of the district early yesterday.

Former ameer of local pourashava Jamaat Maulana Sheikh Mobarak Ali, Tajjul Islam Faraji, president of Putkhali union Jamaat in Morelganj upazila and secretary Mosharraf Hossain were among the arrested. Three Shibir activists were also held.

Police said they arrested the ten in connection with cases filed for attacking policemen.

In Sherpur, police arrested five Jamaat activists from different parts of the district early yesterday, reports UNB.

Former ameer of Jhenigati upazila Jamaat Mohammad Abdur Rahim was among the arrestees.

They were held on charge

of planning subversive activities following the verdict of ICT-2 against Jamaat leader M Kamaruzzaman, said police.

In Jhenidah, police arrested eight Jamaat workers, including four women, from different places of the district.

The arrestees were identified as Parvin Akhtar, Mohirunnessa, Jamela Khatun, Nasima Khatun, Minhazul Islam, Selim Hossain, Mohidul Islam and Monirul Islam.

Additional police superintendent Hasanuzzaman said they were arrested in cases filed earlier for road-block, vandalism and obstructing police from performing duties.

In Chittagong, police arrested six Jamaat-Shibir activists from different areas from Friday night till early yesterday.

The arrestees include member of Shibir's central committee Faruk-e-Azam, Jamaat worker Asgar and Kamal and, Shibir worker Hasan Mahmud.

Police said they were held for planning sabotage ahead

of the today's hartal.

In Rangpur, police arrested a Jamaat leader from Damdama area in Mithapukur upazila yesterday morning.

He was identified as Mahabubur Rahman, assistant secretary general of Pairabandh union under the upazila and accused in five cases, reports our correspondent.

Police said, they arrested Mahabubur on charge of murder, resisting police from performing their duties and attacking them and torching Mithapukur upazila Awami League office on February 28 last.

Meanwhile, Rangpur Kotwali police arrested two Shibir activists from different areas in Rangpur city early in the morning.

They were identified as Khorshed Alam, 19, son of Azizul Haque of Khataria village under Damer upazila in Nilphamari district and Abdur Rauf, 35, son of Shahiruddin of Char Khataria village under Kaunia upazila in Rangpur district.

6,000 kg mangoes ripened with carbide destroyed

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Mobile courts in Jessore and Satkhira districts have destroyed around 6,000 kilograms of mangoes as they were mechanically ripened with harmful chemicals.

Sources said, unscrupulous traders use calcium carbide for ripening green mangoes or other fruits.

Officer in-charge (OC) Emdadul Hoque Sheikh at Jessore Kotwali police station said, police seized a truck loaded with 4,500 kg of carbide mixed mangoes from Murali intersection on the outskirts of the district town on Friday evening.

Later, a mobile court headed by Sadar upazila nirbahi officer Shamimur Rahman, also executive magistrate, destroyed the mangoes and dumped those into a garbage yesterday morning.

The mobile court also fined trader Abdul Malik Tk 20,000.

Malik is son of Abdul Majid, resident of Sagordari village in Keshabpur upazila of the district.

In Satkhira, a mobile court destroyed around 1,200 kilograms of mangoes on Thursday as they were artificially ripened with the help of harmful calcium carbide.

Officer in-charge of Tala police station Enamul Haque said that one Mahbub Hossain was ripening a large quantity of mangoes at the house of Moslemuddin in Simondokathi village, he raided the house and seized the mangoes.

Later, a mobile court led by upazila nirbahi officer of Tala upazila Mahbubur Rahman, the mangoes were destroyed by throwing those under the wheels of running vehicles.

Mahbub Hossain, hailing from Noakathi in Paikgachha upazila in Khulna, however, managed to flee the scene.

SNIPPETS

Garment worker found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sherpur

A garment worker was found dead in Nokla upazila headquarters yesterday. The deceased was identified as Raisul Islam, 26. Son of Shamsul Haque of Kaiakuria village in the upazila, he worked at a garment factory in Gazipur. Quoting locals, police said, Raisul came to his village home Kaiakuri while on leave on Wednesday. He left home on Friday and went to one of his cousins' house in Nokla. Later, locals found his body on the bank of a pond behind Sonali Bank's Nokla branch in the morning. He might have been strangled, police said.

Convict dies in hospital

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A convict of Sirajganj Jail died at Sadar Hospital on Friday morning. Identified as Sakawat Hossain, 65, of Shibpur village in Raiganj upazila he was sentenced to life term for murder. Jail sources said, Sakawat suddenly fell sick at about 11:00am. He was taken to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital where he died later while undergoing treatment. The body was handed over to his family members.

Lightning kills three

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Three people were killed by lightning in Purbadhola, Kendua and Mohonganj upazilas on Friday night and yesterday morning. They are Phulbanu, 35, wife of Siddiq Mia, of village Budhi in Purbadhola upazila. Salim Mia, 22, son of Abul Mansur of Oraudha village in Kendua upazila and farmer Vikchan Mia, 50, of Khalua village in Mohonganj upazila.

Four houses looted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Robbers looted valuables including gold and cash from four houses at Bejpara village in Shivalaya upazila early yesterday. Sources said masked robbers, numbering 25-30, went to the house of Sona Mia at around 1:30am and entered by breaking open the door. They beat up the house members and looted 12 tolas of gold ornaments, cash Tk 40,000 and three mobile phone sets. The gang then went to the houses of Masud Mollah, Badal Kumer Mandal and Billal Hossain and looted those one after another.

Idols at 2 temples damaged

UNB, Bagerhat

Unidentified criminals damaged a few idols of Hindu god and goddess at two temples at Rajnagar village in Chitalmari upazila early Friday. Police said, the gangs entered the two temples breaking open the windows and picked up the idols of goddess Kali and god Ganesh in the early hours. Later, they damaged those outside the temples. On information, assistant superintendent of police Sadia Afroz (ASP circle) of Bagerhat visited the temples and assured the villagers that legal actions would be taken against the culprits.

Teenage boy murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Body of an unidentified teenage boy was recovered in the municipality area yesterday morning. Police said that the boy was murdered anytime Friday night by suffocating after torture. The body was recovered at around 9:30am from Forest Colony of Balubari in the district town.

School kids fall sick after taking oral saline

70 food-poisoned after wedding party

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

At least 15 kids of a primary school fell sick allegedly after taking oral saline yesterday.

The students of the school run by Brac at Tepra village under Daulatpur upazila bought some packets of "tasty saline" from the shop of one Lebu Mia at the local bazar at around 10:00am.

Following intake of the saline, the 15 students started to feel pain in stomach. As they started vomiting, they were admitted to Daulatpur upazila health complex.

Medical officer at the health complex Dr. Chandra Shekhar Balo said the students fell sick as the saline was not of good quality.

Civil surgeon of Manikganj Dr. Siddheswar Mazumder visited the hospital. The ailing students are

now out of danger, he said.

Away in Comilla, at least 70 peoples were admitted to hospitals yesterday allegedly due to food poisoning, reports our correspondent.

Locals and hospital sources said, about 300 people were feted at a wedding party at Pashchimgaon near Laksham upazila town on Friday evening.

Yesterday morning, many of them fell sick with pain in their abdomen followed by vomiting. Some also fainted. They were rushed to hospitals and clinics and admitted to the emergency wards.

Sources said, Abdus Sabhan, who offered the feast, also fell sick along with some of his family members.

Laksham health official Dr. Md. Salauddin said excessive hot weather might be the reason behind the food-polsoning.



PHOTO: STAR

Children of a primary school at Tepra village in Daulatpur upazila under Manikganj district being treated at the upazila health complex as they fell sick after taking tasty saline bought from a local shop yesterday.