



Illegal felling of trees and burning of the remains have become a regular practice in Gongamati Reserve Forest in Kuakata beach area of Patuakhali district.

# Gangs loot trees, burn trunks in Kuakata forest

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Gangs of tree looters have continued felling trees of Gangamoti Reserve Forest and the nearby ecopark in Kuakata beach area under the district.

During a visit there on Sunday, this correspondent found hundreds of trunks of looted trees including babla, koro, chaila, kewra, bain and tamarisk.

The looters fell both live trees and the ones uprooted by tidal surges.

They cut trees throughout the night, sources said, adding that the

logs are sold in the black market and transported by trawlers and country boats.

To destroy evidence, they often burn the trunks using petrol and other fuels, locals said.

"We often see fire in the forest but dare not come out to prevent the act in fear of the criminals. Forest men hardly guard the forest at night," said a local seeking anonymity.

Gangamoti Reserve Forest stretching about eight kilometres was created by planting babla and koro trees while chaila,

kewra and bain grew there naturally, forest department sources said.

But about one-third of the forest land has already gone into the Bay due to the onslaught of natural disasters like cyclones, tidal surges and floods.

Forest department planted mangrove trees to create new forest on 32 hectares of land in 2013-14 fiscal year to save the reserve forest from erosion, forest officials said.

"We have only six forest guards and it is too tough for them to

guard the large areas of forest. Gangs including local fishermen often loot trees at night. I have filed four cases under the Forest Act accusing unidentified gangs with the local police station over the matter," said Parvez Ahmed, beat officer of Gangamoti Reserve Forest.

Md Faruque Hossain, Mohipur Forest Range officer, said, "I have joined here recently. I don't know about burning of tree trunks. We will take legal action against the gangs who are allegedly involved in the matter."

PHOTO: STAR

TEESTA, DHARLA CHAR AREAS OF LALMONIRHAT

# Pumpkin cultivation a boon for landless farmers

S DILIP ROY, LALMONIRHAT

A good number of farmers are now busy taking care of their pumpkin plants on sandy lands in different char (landmass emerging from riverbed) areas of the Teesta and Dharla rivers in the district.

Pumpkin cultivation gives high yield and better profit than that of other crops in the char areas, said farmers.

"We have been growing pumpkin on char lands for the last few years as it brings high yield and good profit. We are expecting good profit this year too," said farmer Nur Islam, 65, at Teesta River basin Island Char Kalikapur of Kaliganj upazila.

"Spending around Tk

1500 for cultivating pumpkin on one bigha (30 decimal) of land, we get minimum 2500 kg of yield. One kg of pumpkin sells between Tk 6 to 7 in the field. If we preserve the vegetable in our home, we can sell one kg for Tk 12 to 20 in off season," said Taherul Islam, 48, of Dharla char village Boalmari in Lalmonirhat Sadar.

Uzir Ali, 62, a landless farmer at Teesta char Kalmati village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, said over a hundred landless farmers in the village have been farming pumpkins on char lands for the last few years.

"Due to favourable weather and good seed we are expecting high yield of

pumpkin this year," he added.

According to the Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) office in Lalmonirhat, around 5,000 landless peasants are engaged in pumpkin cultivation on 2800 hectares of sandy land in Teesta and Dharla river basin areas of 32 villages in four upazilas under the district.

"Pumpkin cultivation on abandoned sandy lands can play a vital role to mitigate poverty in Teesta and Dharla river basin villages in the district. Leftovers from pumpkin can make the sandy land fertile for cultivating other crops," said Safayet Hossain, deputy director in Lalmonirhat DAE.



PHOTO: STAR

A woman waters her pumpkin plants at Char Kalmati village in the Teesta basin area of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila that sees good yield of the popular vegetable this year.

# Housewife tortured for dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A housewife was tortured allegedly by her husband and in-laws at Bejpara village in Kaliganj upazila of the district on Tuesday night.

Victim Dipika Mondol, 27, daughter of Gopi Mondol of Badalsa village in Shaikupa upazila of the district, is undergoing treatment at Kaliganj Upazila Health Complex.

Locals said Depika, mother of one child, was married with Sanjoy Biswas, son of Gyanendra Biswas of the village, nearly eight years ago. After the marriage, Sanjoy and his sister often tortured Dipika for Tk 1 lakh dowry.

After failing to realise the money Sanjoy along with her sister beat up Dipika mercilessly around 10:30pm, leaving her critically injured, said Alamgir Hossain, a member of ward No 7.

Locals rescued her in an unconscious state and rushed her to the upazila health complex, Alamgir added.

Contacted, Anwar Hossain, officer in charge of Kaliganj Police Station, said none has filed any complaint in this connection as of filing up this report yesterday.

# Girl commits 'suicide'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

A college girl allegedly committed suicide at Ramkrishnapur village in Jessore Sadar upazila on Tuesday.

The deceased was identified as Razia Khatun, 18, daughter of Golam Hossain of the village.

Police said Razia's father had been putting pressure on her for marriage for a long time.

On Tuesday night, when Razia's father raised the issue of her marriage, she got infuriated.

Following the incident, Razia took her life by hanging herself from the ceiling of her room.



PHOTO: STAR

SAVAGE VENGEANCE: Rivals caused massive destruction to this banana orchard at Uttar Shialkathi village in Bhandaria upazila under Pirojpur district on Tuesday noon.

# 100 banana trees destroyed over land dispute

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Rivals felled down over 100 banana trees over a land dispute at Uttar Shialkathi village in Bhandaria upazila under the district on Tuesday afternoon.

Following a case filed by victim Badal on Tuesday night, police arrested four accused -- Sarwar Hossain Hawlader, Monir Hawlader, Shahidul Hawlader and

Jafar Hossain of the same village.

"I planted 500 banana and 100 pawpaw plants on 50 decimals of land, leasing it from Mannan Fakir and Shafikul Islam Milon of the village," Badal said.

"For the last few days, Sarwar was demanding the ownership of the land. Around 4:30pm on Tuesday, some 14-15 men led by Sarwar Hossain of the vil-

lage entered my garden with sharp weapons and felled down over a hundred banana trees. They also damaged little pawpaw plants there. That time I was not at home," Badal said.

"Victim Badal filed a case and we have arrested four accused. They were sent to jail through the court," said Sheikh M Abu Jahid, officer in charge of Bhandaria Police Station.

# 62 BNP-Jamaat men sued for torching AL office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Sixty-two BNP-Jamaat men have been sued on charge of torching Dupchanchia upazila Awami League (AL) office in the district on Monday night.

Abu Sayeed Fakir, relief and rehabilitation secretary of upazila AL unit, filed the case with Dupchanchia Police Station on Tuesday night, accusing 27 named and 35 unnamed BNP-Jamaat men.

BNP Dupchanchia upazila unit organising secretary and upazila parishad vice-chairman Abdul Mottaleb Mintu, Sadar union unit general secretary and union parishad chairman Moazzem Hossain, Dupchanchia municipality Jubo Dal general secretary Mobidunnabi Titas are among the accused.

Police yesterday arrested one of the accused in the case, raiding Islampur village under Sadar union. The arrestee, Golam Mostafa, 43, son of Toslim Uddin, is a Jamaat activist.

# 13 get life for killing five in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A Mymensingh court yesterday sentenced 13 people to life imprisonment while two others to 10 years in prison for killing five people in Haluaghat upazila of the district in 1997.

The lifers are Haque Miah, son of Hossain Ali; Sirajul, Manik and Azizul, sons of Akbar Ali; Abdus Sattar, Berek and Noor Mohammad, sons of Umed Ali; Fazlul Karim, Abu Taher, Ramzan Ali and Abul Khayer, sons of Abdul Hekim Munshi; and Abul Kashem, son of Wahid Ali, and Safur Uddin, son of Abdus Sobhan.

The court also fined the lifers Tk 50,000 each, in default they are to suffer six

months more in jail, court sources said.

The court also sentenced two other accused--Jasim Uddin and Abdur Razzaq--to 10 years in prison and fined them Tk 10,000 each, in default they are to suffer another three months in prison.

After examining records and witnesses, Judge Dr Mohammad Amir Uddin of Special Judge's Court handed down the verdict.

The court also acquitted 92 people as charges brought against him could not be proved.

According to the prosecution, there was a dispute between Jalal Uddin and Hossain Ali Mondol of Gupinagar village over destroying paddy field by cows. Several arbitrations

were arranged at the village but the matter was not solved.

As a sequel to the dispute, the supporters of Hossain Ali Mondol equipped with lethal weapons, attacked the houses of Jalal Uddin and his brothers on May 9, 1997.

The attackers also torched the houses and hit family members with sharp weapons, leaving Jalal's brothers Nurul Islam, 60, Abdur Rashid, 45 and Abdul Motalab, 42, Jalal's son Alamgir, 18 and his nephew Shahjahan, 26, killed.

Jalal filed a murder case with Haluaghat Police Station the same day. After investigation, police pressed charges against 107 people.



PHOTO: STAR

The convicts in the five-murder case in Mymensingh.