

IMPACT OF BLOCKADE, HARTALS

1,500 salt workers pass hard days in Jhalakathi

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL, Jhalakathi

Around 1,500 salt workers of Jhalakathi are passing hard days amid hardship as sale and production of salt sees drastic fall due to the non-stop blockade and frequent hartals enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance since January 6.

"We cannot pay the wages of labourers as transport and sale of salt is badly hampered and operation of our mill has become limited to one day a week," said Sultan, tali master (accountant) of Paribahan Salt in Jhalakathi.

"I earned Tk 500 to 600 per day before the blockade and hartal but now I can hardly earn Tk 100. To maintain my five-member family I had to borrow Tk 30 thousand with high interest in last two months. Stop this politics to save us," said Abdur Razzak, a salt labourer.

Another temporarily jobless salt worker Sultan Sardar said he was looking for other works for survival.

During this peak salt producing season, 20 to 30 engine boats usually came to the salt factories here with



PHOTO: STAR
Huge quantity of salt lies stockpiled at the godown of a factory in Jhalakathi as sale and transport of the item is badly hampered due to the countrywide blockade and frequent hartals enforced by BNP-led 20-party alliance since January 6.

raw salt form Noakhali and Chittagong every week but now only two or three boatloads of raw salt come here, said Mamun, accountant of Lucky Salt.

"There are 13 salt mills in Jhalakathi but now their production often remains suspended for six days in a

row. If the situation continues, the salt industry will be badly affected, and we will have to stay on the street," said Babul Howlader, president of salt workers union in Jhalakathi.

"We are incurring huge losses due to the countrywide blockade. Often we fail

to operate our mills due to shortage of supply of raw salt while produced salt remains stored in the factory due to transport problem," said Salauddin Ahmed Salek, owner of Gazi Salt, and president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Jhalakathi.

Hartal in Bandarban withdrawn

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Jago Parbatyabasi, a platform of Bangalee settlers, yesterday withdrew its today's hartal in Bandarban district.

The organisation enforced a 72-hour hartal in the district on Wednesday morning, protesting 'extortion by PCJSS men'.

Bangalee Chhatra Parishad and Parbatya Nagorik Parishad supported the hartal.

Sources in the organisation said they called off the hartal, considering today's SSC examinations.

Abdul Jalil and Kamal Uddin, two leaders of Jago Parbatyabasi, said though the hartal was withdrawn, their protest against 'extortion by PCJSS men' will continue.

First man-made

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scientists say could be the first man-made landscape.

Archaeologists working in southern Libya have found that large sections of a 350km long escarpment have been built up from dropped stone tools.

They discovered as many as 75 tools in just a single square metre of ground along the slopes of Massak Settafet, near Fezzan, Libya.

And they have estimated that there could be between 500,000 and five million tools created by early humans for every square kilometre of Africa.

The researchers behind the study claim their findings may force a rethink on how we define human history and the impact we have had on the environment.

Dr Marta Mirazon Lahr, a reader in human evolution at the University of Cambridge, said: "The Messak Settafet is the earliest demonstrated example of the scars of human activity across an entire landscape."

The researchers, whose work is published in the journal Public Library of Science One conducted a survey of the site in the Sahara in 2011 by randomly examining plots along the plateau of the escarpment.

They sifted through the sandstone rocks in each plot searching for those that showed signs that they had been worked by humans.

One of the key pieces of evidence for human tool making is a characteristic bulge or dent on the surface of a stone known as a bulb of percussion.

The researchers say that the intensive stone tool industry in the Messak Settafet also shaped the landscape in a way that helped later human inhabitants.

Logs of illegally felled roadside trees seized in Gaibandha

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Police seized at least logs of 26 illegally felled trees from Gobindaganj upazila of the district on Tuesday.

In 2006, Kamdia Union Parishad and local Basayen Samity planted over 1,000 eucalyptus trees along Kamdia-Basayen road in the upazila, said police and locals.

Without any prior permission from the upazila administration, Moshahed Hossain Chowdhury, chairman of the union parishad, and Santosh Chandra, president of Basayen Samity, recently sold 400 among the roadside trees for Tk 3.4 lakh, they said.

On Monday afternoon, at least 26 trees along the road were felled. Being informed, police rushed to the spot the following day and seized the logs of the felled trees.

None was arrested in this connection.

A UP member, Mojidul Islam, alleged the chairman

has misappropriated the money earned from selling the trees as the amount it is yet to be deposited in the account of the parishad.

Refuting the allegation of misappropriation of the money, the UP chairman

said the matter of selling trees was decided at a joint meeting with Basayen Samity recently for the welfare of the samity and the union parishad.

The president of Basayen Samity also made similar

remarks.

Contacted, Upazila Nirbahi Officer Mamunul-Hasan said punitive action would be taken against those responsible for selling the roadside trees illegally.



PHOTO: STAR
Seized logs of eucalyptus trees that were illegally felled beside Kamdia-Basayen road in Gobindaganj upazila under Gaibandha district on Monday.

EFFECT OF LIMESTONE CRUSHING

Two more silicosis-affected workers die at Burimari

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Two more limestone crushing workers in Burimari land port area of Patgram upazila under Lalmonirhat died of silicosis in last two days.

At least 40 limestone crushing labourers in the area died of the incurable lung disease in last four years and many others have been affected, locals said.

Of the two deceased, Abdur Rashid, 42, of Bamadal village in Burimari union in Patgram upazila died at Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday while Bakul Miah alias Mukta, 38, of the same village died at his home on Wednesday.

"The two dead limestone crushing labourers, both members of our organisation, were suffering from silicosis for the last two years, and they died finally. They could not get proper treatment due to monetary problem," said Maniruzzaman Manir, general secretary of Lalmonirhat district unit of Sangjukt Sramik Federation.

Despite the disease, the two labourers

continued the risky job as they had no alternative to earn, family members said.

Dr Mostafa Kamal, civil surgeon of Lalmonirhat, said the disease develops as 'simple silicosis' at the primary stage and if the patient refrains from further exposure to silica dust, it does not get worse. But continuous exposure virtually leads the patient to death.

"Wearing protective devices like safety mask while working in the limestone crushing factories can save the labourers from this disease. We will conduct a campaign regarding the matter soon," he said.

Over a thousand limestone crushing labourers working at 26 factories in Burimari land port area are under risk due to direct exposure to silica dust that can cause silicosis within a few months, said the stakeholders, adding that labourers, mostly young men, work from dawn to dusk for Tk 300 to Tk 350 daily to make lime powder to be used as poultry feed.

Asked about the responsibility of providing safety masks for workers, several limestone crushing factory owners declined to talk on it.



PHOTO: STAR
Like them, over a thousand people working at limestone crushing factories in Burimari land port area of Lalmonirhat district remain highly vulnerable to silicosis as they work dawn to dusk without any safety mask for preventing the affect of silica dust.

Infrastructure Development Company Limited (IDCOL) Improved Cook Stove (ICS) Program under RERED-II Project

Invitation to Participate in IDCOL's Improved Cook Stove (ICS) Program

IDCOL is a public-private sector institution promoting economic development in Bangladesh by encouraging private sector investment in infrastructure, renewable energy and other eco-friendly sectors. IDCOL seeks applications from non-governmental organizations ("NGOs")/ micro-finance institutions ("MFIs")/ private entities for selection as Partner Organizations (hereafter referred to as "POs") under its Renewable Energy Program for installation of Improved Cook Stoves (ICSs) in areas where traditional cook stoves are used as the primary mode of cooking (the "Project"). Selection of new POs will accelerate dissemination of ICSs across Bangladesh which will fulfill the basic energy requirements in the rural areas as well as reduce exposure to indoor air pollution.

NGOs / MFIs / private entities having successful track record of doing business and/or micro-credit operations and interested to work in the field of renewable energy may apply to become a PO of IDCOL's ICS Program. IDCOL will provide institutional development grant and technical assistance, as applicable, sourced from the World Bank and other development partners to POs for implementation of the project. IDCOL has a target of financing installation of 1 million ICSs by 2018.

Interested organizations are requested to download complete application package from the link provided below. Application package may also be collected from IDCOL office at a cost of BDT500 (non-refundable). Completed applications must be submitted to the address mentioned below before 4:00 p.m. on 15 April, 2015.

Applications will be evaluated by an independent selection committee in accordance with the criteria described in the application package. Selected POs will be required to sign Participation Agreements with IDCOL.

The Applications should be sent to the following address:
Infrastructure Development Company Limited
UTC Building, Level - 17,
8 Panthapath, Kawranbazar, Dhaka-1215.

Should you have any queries or need any clarification, please contact:
Phone: 9102171-8 (Ext-256)
Fax: +880-2-8116663
E-mail: ics@idcol.org

Complete application package can be found at www.idcol.org

IDCOL reserves the right to accept or reject any application without explaining any reason.

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