



A large quantity of unsold rock dust remains piled up on the premises of Madhyapara Granite Mining Company Ltd in Parbatipur upazila under Dinajpur district as demand of the item sees decline during the recent months.

MADHYAPARA GRANITE MINE

Huge rock dust unsold as demand falls

KONGKON KARMAKER with ANDREW EAGLE

At Madhyapara granite mine in Dinajpur's Parbatipur upazila nearly 1.5 lakh tonnes of rock dust lie in seemingly forgotten heaps for a lack of buyers. Dust sales over recent months have seen serious decline.

The dust, which is defined as rocks up to 5 millimetres in diameter accounts for 13% of the mine's production, with up to 700 tonnes produced by underground drilling, blasting, crushing and sorting on an average working day. It currently sells for US \$5.90

per tonne.

Rock dust can be used in floor and wall plaster, in construction of water tanks and irrigation tunnels, to build erosion protection blocks or as an alternative to sand. Cement plants and tile factories can use the dust for raw material.

According to mine officials the rock dust is durable, has high water exhausting capacity and combines easily in cement mixes.

While several companies including Basundhara and Meghna Groups regularly procure dust from the mine their combined demand of

around 20 tonnes per day is far below supply.

Potentially, many state-run enterprises could also make use of the dust, including roads and highways, public works, the local government engineering department, railways and water development board.

"If it were made mandatory for public organisations to use Madhyapara's dust for many of their development projects, the excess supply problem would be solved," says one mine official seeking anonymity.

Indeed with good road

and rail transport connections Madhyapara is well-placed as rock dust source for projects across much of the country.

While production at the mine has been suspended for the last 6 months, it is set to resume at the end of March, according to officials. Once production resumes the mine will face a serious shortage of storage space to accommodate the dust that usually accompanies rock production. As a result the operating company has been requested to cut dust production.



Women with ailing children in their arms wait in a long queue to meet doctors at Dinajpur General Hospital as different diseases among children see rise with the change of season.

Kids with seasonal diseases crowd Dinajpur hospitals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A large number of children in Dinajpur, especially from low income families, are becoming infected with diseases like pneumonia, influenza, fever and diarrhoea that are commonly associated with a change of seasons.

Dr Wadud, a paediatrician at Dinajpur General Hospital, said the number of diarrhoea and pneumonia patients is not alarming, but hospitals in the district town and other upazilas are witnessing a rush of patients suffering from flu and high fever.

During a visit to different hospitals in Dinajpur town, including Dinajpur Medical College Hospital, Dinajpur General Hospital and Orobindh Shishu Hospital, this correspondent found a large number of parents with children aged between one-month and 7 years coming to the outpatient department everyday to get treatment for their children.

Many children are taken to the private chambers of doctors. A similar situation prevails in other upazilas in the district.

On Saturday, this correspondent visited Dinajpur General Hospital and found several hundred parents with their children lined up from 8:00am to see the on-duty doctor, who came to

the hospital at around 10:20am, nearly one hour late.

"I have been waiting in the queue with my granddaughter for two hours to see the doctor, but he has not yet come," Rokhsana Begum said.

After waiting for three hours, Anwara and her daughter got a chance to consult the doctor. When she went with the prescription to the hospital dispensary, she was told that the prescribed medicines were unavailable and she would have to buy them elsewhere.

Mostly poor people visit the outpatient department of the general hospital, but they are forced to buy expensive medicines from

private pharmacies, said a staff seeking anonymity.

Outside the hospital gate, medical representatives of different pharmaceutical companies were seen checking the prescriptions. Many of them were taking pictures of the prescriptions.

The situation was similar when this correspondent visited the hospital again on Sunday and Monday.

Dr Amalendu Biswas, civil surgeon of Dinajpur General Hospital, said there are allegations that doctors are not coming to the hospital on time and that he would look into it. His office would also take steps to stop the nuisance created by the medical representatives at the gate, he added.

Strange, incurable disease spreads in Nilphamari

Pain, stigma make patients' life miserable

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

An incurable strange disease, marked with tumours accompanied by irritation and aching in the whole body, affects a good number of people in several villages of Saidpur and Kishoreganj upazilas under the district.

Social stigma and isolation add to the sufferings of the patients as the disease gives a peculiar look to the affected people.

Visiting the area, this correspondent found many patients of the disease in different villages including Kisamat Kadikhol, Hazarihat Talpukur and Hazarihat Daspara of Saidpur upazila and Ismail Gorerpar, Uttar Chadkhana and Magura Koillatari of Kishoreganj upazila.

Jonab Ali, 70, of Kisamat Kadikhol village of Botlagari union in Saidpur was found with blisters from foot to head.

"I was a healthy young man in my early life. But at the age of 30, when I had married and fathered two sons, a small tumour appeared on my back. Gradually, scores of tumours grew on different parts of my body with irritation, itching and pain. At first I thought the problem to be of leprosy," said Jonab.

"I received treatment at Danish-Bangladesh Leprosy Mission in Nilphamari, Rangpur Medical College Hospital, Lamb Hospital in Parbatipur, and Filaria Hospital in Saidpur but doctors finally found my disease incurable.

"Recently, my younger son Kasir Ali, 40, was also attacked with the same disease. Locals do not want to mix with us due to fear and hatred. Even we do not get work as farm labourer," said a lamenting Jonab.

Affected by the same disease, Asia Begum, 65, wife of late Nirasa Mamud of Hazarihat Talpukur cluster village of Khata Modhupur union in Saidpur upazila, has big tumours on the face, eyes and other parts of the body.

"The disease has also affected my daughter Shamsunnahar, 40, making her look horrible. Now her husband wants to divorce her although they have children," she said.

In many families the disease is passed from generation to generation.

"I inherited this disease from my forefathers. My father, grandfather and a few close relatives died after suffering for long with the

disease," said Abdul Jabbar, 68, of Ismail Gorerpar village in Kishoreganj Sadar union.

"My son Wahidul, 35, and sister Amisa Bewa, 50, are also affected with the incurable disease. People do not want to give us work. Often we have to remain unfed or half-fed as we have to depend on charity for survival," he said.

Many others including Namiruddin of nearby Bottoli village, Alefjon of Magura Jummapara village, and Nisi Das of Daspara village are facing a sort of social isolation due to the disease.

A sense of stigma and frustration always haunts the victims of the strange disease, Saidur Rahman,

chairman of Botlagari union parishad, said, adding that he arranged some help for them from the government's social safety net fund.

"The disease called neurofibromatosis is caused by mutation of gene in human body. No surgery or medicine is yet to prove effective to cure it," said Cynthia Ruth Butlin, medical advisor of Danish Bangladesh Leprosy Mission in Nilphamari.

Dr Abdur Rashid, civil surgeon of the district, said, "Half of the cases of the disease are found to be genetically received. It shortens the life span of patients by several years. Till now, there is no remedy for the disease."



Abdul Jabbar of Ismail Gorerpar village in Kishoreganj upazila under Nilphamari district inherited this strange disease called neurofibromatosis, like many others in the area.

11 held while going to India illegally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) arrested 11 Bangladeshi nationals while they were going to India illegally through Daulatpur border under Benapole Port Police Station on Monday night.

The arrestees are Mehedi Hasan, 18, Sadik Ali, 21, Bishwajit Biswas, 19, Joyonto Mallick, 19, Ahsan Ali, 20, Shamim, 17, Bulu Miah, 32, Hasan Ali, 21, Biplob Hossain, 17, Sabur 34, and his wife Sharmin Nahar, 19.

They hail from different areas of Jessore, Khulna, and Barisal districts.

Amin Uddin, Nayek Subeder of Daulatpur BGB camp, said border guards, acting on a tip-off, conducted a drive in the area at around 11:00pm and arrested the 11 Bangladeshis while they were crossing the border without valid documents.

Sand-laden cargo vessel sinks in Meghna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A sand-laden cargo vessel capsized following collision with a passenger launch in the Meghna River in Hizla upazila of the district yesterday.

Riyadh Hossain, traffic inspector of Barisal port office, said MV Asha-Jawa 2, a Patuakhali-bound launch from Dhaka, hit the cargo vessel near Miarchar around 5:00am.

Though its front part was damaged, MV Asha-Jawa reached Hizla launch terminal safely with 200 passengers on board, said Golam Sarwar, officer-in-charge of Hizla Police Station.

KUAKATA

Jubo League-BCL clash over control of bus terminal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Three people, including the president of Ward No 7 unit of Jubo League under Kuakata municipality, were injured in a clash between the activists of Jubo League and Chhatra League over control of the local bus stand yesterday.

The injured are Anwar Hossain, 32, president of Jubo League Ward No 7 unit, his father Asmat Ali, 60, and Nur Sayeed, vice-president of Jubo League Kuakata municipality unit.

They were admitted to Kalapara Upazila Health Complex and later shifted to

Patuakhali General Hospital as their condition deteriorated.

Locals and police said the clash took place when 20-25 people led by Mojibur Rahman, president of BCL Kuakata municipality unit, went to take control of the bus stand at Chourasta area (Kuakata Zero Point) at around 11:00am.

Another group led by Anwar Hossain, president of Jubo League Ward No 7 unit, swooped on Anwar and his men, prompting them to retaliate.

During the clash, several hundred shops and other establishments shut down and tourists and locals des-

perately sought shelter. Asmat Ali was injured when he went to save his son Anwar Hossain.

Being informed, police from Kuakata naval outpost and Kalapara Police Station rushed to the spot and brought the situation under control.

Abdul Bareq Mollah, mayor of Kuakata municipality, said "I have asked the local Awami League leaders not to create trouble at the bus stand."

GM Shah Newaz, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station, said police have been deployed in the area to avert further untoward incident.



People join a human chain on the Teesta at Haripur ghat in Sundarganj upazila under Gaibandha district yesterday demanding steps to keep smooth flow of the once mighty river. Prakritik Sampad Sangrakkhan Jote and Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association jointly organised the programme.