

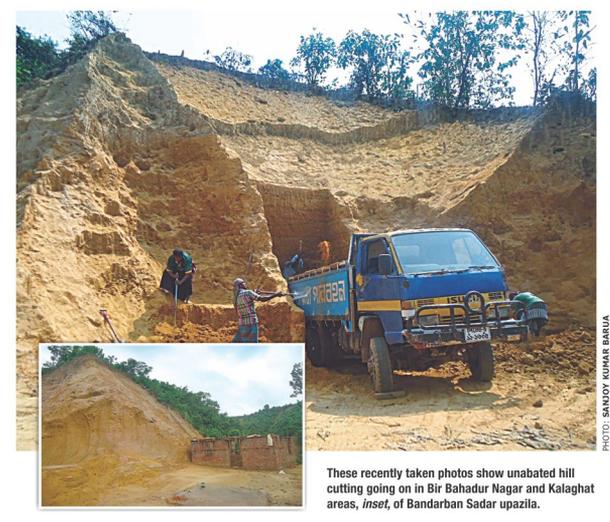
Legal hill cutting goes unabated in Bandarban

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA, Bandarban

Hill cutting continues unabated in Bandarban violating environmental laws as the authorities say they can't stop the illegal activity due to 'pressure from some political quarters'. Such activity is taking place in the name of constructing roads, houses, school buildings, brick kilns and setting up businesses. Sangu High School in Bandarban Sadar upazila is at risk of landslides as a contractor has been illegally cutting the hill next to the school for around a month. A landslide from the hill on June 12 dumped large chunks of earth on the school building. A resident around Al said the school of 500 students was under serious threat from landslides. Kamal Pasha, contractor of the hill cutting project, claimed he took permission from the local MP for cutting the hill.

Also the president of the school managing committee, said he has been ordered to build a 'retaining wall to protect the school' from landslides. Alek Hossain, engineer of Education Engineering Department in Bandarban, said the project cost for a new school building was estimated at Tk 62 lakh. He said the under-construction building was also at risk of landslides. Visiting different areas in the district recently, this correspondent found that hills were being razed in Kalaghar, Bir Bahadur Nagar, Lamu Jiri, Islampur, Langipara, Fatong, Bogachhari, Haidanachi, Yangcha, Jarullachari, Sonaichari, Dochhari, Kurikhong, Kagajikola and Baishari parts.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



These recently taken photos show unabated hill cutting going on in Bir Bahadur Nagar and Kalaghar areas, inset of Bandarban Sadar upazila.

TAILOR NIKHIL, KILLING Charges pressed against 2 JMB men, another

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Detectives yesterday pressed charges against three people, including two operatives of outlawed Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), in tailor Nikhil Chandra Jourdard murder case. Ashraf Hossain, investigation officer of the case and also a sub-inspector of Detective Branch of police, submitted the charge sheet before a judicial magistrate's court, source said. The charge-sheet accused are JMB members Moslem alias Suman, who is blind, and fugitive Motiar alias Hridoy. The other accused Nazmul Hasan, rented out his house to the JMB cadres at Elega in Kalihati upazila. The name of Nazmul alias Bike Hasan was dropped from the charge sheet as he was killed in a 'gunfight' with police in Bangladesh. According to the case, three youths with a motorcycle appeared in front of Nikhil's tailoring shop at Dubai Bazar in Gopalmur area on a

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Yet another wake-up call

FROM PAGE 1 Department of Environment under the Ministry of Forest and Environment. This goes for everyone, be the owner of an individual, a company or the government itself. The latest disaster in the hills proves how a perfectly good law could be of little use if not properly enforced. Like every other law, the state had expressed its will in the environmental conservation act. The will was to protect the hills and hillocks from indiscriminate cutting. The government was legally bound to enforce the law through the court. But the administration has utterly

failed largely due to corruption. The law was not allowed to rule the country's hill region, rather people's greed and corruption prevailed. Therefore, no prohibition worked. Over the years, people felled trees, cleared forest for commercial plantation and cultivation, and built houses on hill slopes in the Chittagong region. By doing so, they themselves invited disaster for people living there. More than 500 people died in landslides in the hills in the last 11 years. The latest horror in the hills has become another example how failure to enforce a law has disastrous consequences.

This also says that when the administration continuously fails to act to establish the rule of law, the rule of crooked individuals begins. Numerous incidents of disasters have taken place in recent times. None should forget the deaths of over 1,100 garment workers in Savar's Rana Plaza collapse in 2013, deaths of 115 garment workers in a fire at Tareen Fashion in 2012, and the deaths of another 64 in the Spectrum Garments building collapse in April 2005. The devastating fire incident in the capital's Nimtoli in 2010 killed 117 people. There are many more incidents like these.

Non-enforcement of laws has also caused frequent disasters in water ways that left numerous people dead. One of the worst launch capsize was in March 2012 in the Meghna river. No fewer than 145 passengers perished. The road network is not free from the curse of corruption and violation of laws either. Due to illegal practices and blessings by ruling party men, untrained drivers get licenses, and unfit vehicles get road permits. These cause frequent road crashes, killing and maiming many every year. The communications minister last week told parliament that a total of 888 people were killed in road accidents

across the country in the first four months of 2017. Whenever a manmade disaster occurs, the government wakes up and promises to take some measures to prevent recurrence. But after a few months, things go back to the way it was. It has been like this in the hills, in the garment sector, on water ways, in the transport sector and where not, as if we live to mourn deaths of our people. Here, every tragedy mocks the rule of law. Every unfortunate incident unequivocally tells the truth that people are not safe until law rules. When will our policymakers wake up to this reality?

Bangladeshi UN staffer charged with visa fraud in New York

REUTERS, New York

US prosecutors have charged a United Nations employee in New York with committing visa fraud by bringing into the country a domestic worker from Bangladesh and then failing to pay her a lawful wage. The employee, a Bangladeshi national, was charged with visa fraud, fraud in foreign labour contracting and aggravated identity theft in a criminal complaint unsealed yesterday in the Manhattan federal court. He was expected to appear in court yesterday afternoon, according to a spokeswoman for US prosecutors.

Hamidur's lawyer could not immediately be identified. The UN did not immediately respond to a request for comment. According to the complaint, Hamidur, who is identified as a program director at the United Nations Development Program in Manhattan, initially contacted with the employee to pay her \$420 per week, and submitted that contract to the US State Department to obtain a visa for her.

He was employed by UN in the United States in November 2012, the complaint said, Hamidur had sign a new contract with a wage of \$290 per week. Hamidur took away the worker's passport, and told her at various times

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Victims not getting rice meant for them

FROM PAGE 1 Another woman alleged that the owner of her rented house picked up her sack, saying that he feared that she might not be able to pay the house rent for June and July. Around 330 people who now live in Bangladesh Open University Shelter could not have lunch as the meal supplied by the authorities was unpalatable, alleged people living at the centre and sources at the shelter. Such allegations were found in other places too. In Ward-1, the authorities found a list of affected persons with twice as many names as those actually affected. The administration blamed a BNP Ward Councilor Helal Uddin for this and warned him of charges. He couldn't be reached for

comments despite repeated attempts. Out of 70 names in the list, he found 49 to be fake. Some of the persons and addresses listed there do not even exist. Besides, 23 people who were affected really, but were not included. Prakash Day, an assistant manager, said he went along with fire fighters and locals, visited the spot, told an executive magistrate. To combat such corruption, the authorities have decided to prepare a new list of affected people involving executive magistrates, police and local elected representatives. The leaders, who were allegedly involved in the irregularities blamed each other.

Talal Islam, former president of Natun Para Social Development Committee said he only took one sack of rice in the name of his relative and his company leaders for the misappropriation. Abdul Hai, president of the committee, said he took a sack of rice as he was not affected. "What you are pointing out is correct. They did not listen to me. They prepared that list as they wished and gave rice accordingly". A ruling party leader of the area Md Hasan said he took a sack rice for himself and another for his brother. Locals told The Daily Star that none of these people were affected badly in the landslide.

Noreh Majumder, joint secretary of Ward-6 unit of Al said some misappropriation took place in his ward. Knowing this, the police assured of giving relief to those who were deprived earlier. Local ward Councillor Rabi Mohon Chakma termed the incidents very sad and promised to steps to this end. Contacted, Rangamati Municipality Mayor Md Akbar Hossain Chowdhury said he was looking into the matter. "I stopped relief distribution in some places because of this. Now we are preparing new lists with the district administration to make sure that no one is deprived". He added that actions would be taken against the persons responsible. District administration officials Syed Mahbubul Haq, executive magistrate and SM Monjurul Hoque, assistant commissioner (land), said they were verifying the lists with police and local elected representatives. Mahbubul added that he would report to the deputy commissioner about the

perpetrators. DC Moham mad Manzurul Mannan told The Daily Star that an additional Tk 1 crore and 400 metric tonnes of rice were allocated for affected people. Relief would reach the people who did not get anything yet. He added around 100 sanitary toilets were set up in the 19 shelters. A 500 litre water tank has been installed in each centre. Besides, every family has been given a 10 litre water bottle for storing drinking water. The DC who visited shelters said he discouraged people and groups to bring food reliefs for the victims in a haphazard way and urged them to give clothes. He said road communications would be established in a couple of days.

How to fight fake news? Yunus Centre refutes PM's accusations

Regional conference suggests checklist for readers, journalists to take on misinformation

THE STRAITS TIMES/ANN Singapore

The two-day "Keep it Real: Truth and Trust in the Media" conference ended yesterday with a suite of recommendations aimed at curbing the spread of misinformation in Asia. As one of their first moves, news organisations will also share up a step-by-step checklist to help journalists and readers identify and flag fake news.

Members of the Asia News Network, a regional alliance of 22 media organisations, will also share with one another a list of websites that actively purvey misinformation in their respective countries, as well as stories and content that each member produces to debunk fake news stories. The checklist will also cover how to check dubious information originating in a member country with the respective ANN member based there.

These were among the outcomes from deliberations of three workshops on the second day of the event, which was organised by The Straits Times and the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA). The conference was held at the Singapore Management University's Summing up the conference, Warren Fernandez, Editor-in-Chief of The Straits Times, said media organisations must strive to stay true to their mission of providing reliable and responsible news against the onslaught of misinformation.

"Trust is something that we have to earn, inasmuch as it is not taken for granted. In light of the very real threats the media is up against," said Fernandez, urging news organisations to be more proactive in calling out questionable content and sharing

stories that they have debunked with their communities. He added that media in the region could also set up collaborative projects to cross-check information regarding common concerns such as terrorism, the environment, or the South China Sea. Added Gilles Dempts, Director Asia of WAN-IFRA: "The widespread proliferation of false news on digital platforms is indeed an opportunity for quality publications to stand out and demonstrate the value of real journalism. However, a key conclusion of this event is that a multi-stakeholders approach involving tech companies, social media networks, news and government agencies and the civil society is required to effectively fight misinformation. It is encouraging to see that the different parties in today's news ecosystem have spontaneously joined the event and committed to collaborate on implementing some of its key recommendations."

Torben Steffan, Director of Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, a key partner of the event, said fake news is a major problem for social media networks. I only trust independent, professional and critical journalists who verify their sources carefully. This is the quality of news the world needs now."

Associate Professor Eugene Tan from Singapore Management University's school of law, whose group was tasked to look at the legal and regulatory framework to tackle misinformation, suggested the setting up of an independent regulatory body to act on perpetrators of fake news.

On why his group was wary of governments taking on this role, Prof Tan said: "Governments themselves, for a variety of reasons, could also become a part of the problem. The government being the judge and the jury."

Participants in this group also

PM: "I gave Grameen Phone business to him. It was in our members' interest that the phone bill will go to the poor through Grameen Bank. Not even that happened. He embezzled the money for himself." YC: Again no evidence is provided, no embezzlement case ever initiated against Professor Yunus. But the accusations continue. Telecom license was never given to Professor Yunus or any individual. So the question of Professor Yunus selling it off does not arise. Professor Yunus could not sell something which he never owned. Grameen Bank never owned any share of GrameenPhone either. So the question of selling the Grameen Bank's share does not arise. PM: "Why had he gone so greedily for the position of MD even after becoming a Nobel Laureate? He violated the rules of GB and stayed as MD for almost 10 years. He was told to leave the post. Our finance minister and Gowher Rizvi himself told him. He did not pay heed and filed a case instead."

YC: Professor Yunus was never "greedy" to hold on to the managing director's position. Every time he offered to step down, the board members insisted that he stays on. In 1990, the government's ownership in Grameen Bank was reduced from 60% to 25%, and the ownership of the borrowers was raised from 40% to 75%. Under the amended ordinance, the authority of appointing the managing director was vested to the board of directors with prior approval from Bangladesh Bank. All the control of the bank was given to the board. No government control was kept except for the appointment of three members of the board out of 13, including the chairman. Grameen Bank was not required to follow government service rules. Bangladesh Bank was given the authority to approve the appointment

of the managing director made by bank's board, as in other privately owned banks. Bangladesh Bank approved the appointment of Professor Yunus. Professor Yunus did not violate any rule of Grameen Bank. PM: "He [Yunus] made Hillary Clinton to call me on the issue." YC: Professor Yunus did not "make" Hillary Clinton, if Hillary Clinton did in fact call the Honourable PM she may have done so of her own accord. Many other world leaders expressed their concern about the fate of Grameen Bank by making phone calls, writing letters, making joint statements in globally aimed newspapers, sending personal emissaries, and through one on one discussions with the PM. Hillary Clinton, if she did call the prime minister, would not have been the only one. PM: "He [Yunus] sent his investments abroad, put his investments abroad, sent his investments abroad. How did he give that money to the Clinton Foundation?" Now all these are being questioned."

YC: Professor Yunus does not send money from Bangladesh to outside world for investments. He brings his foreign earnings home. He brought big investors like Telenor to Bangladesh. He brought big name companies for joint ventures in Bangladesh such as Intel Corporation, Danone, Veolia, Unileo, BASF, Euglena and other companies. There was no allegation anywhere that Professor Yunus has personally donated money to the Clinton Foundation or to Hillary Clinton's campaign fund. These are fabricated by some local papers. President of Grameen America, Vidar Jorgensen, a wealthy US businessman, paid \$20,000 per year as fee to attend Clinton Foundation event called Clinton Global Initiative. He believed CGI is a good place to meet potential donors for

his organisation Grameen America which required continuous flow of funds to reach out to more poor women with microcredit. By the end of this year Grameen America will have given out a total of one billion dollars as micro loans to poor women in 12 US cities. Professor Yunus or Yunus-inspired NGOs never donated any money to Clinton Global Initiative. He always attended CGI as a speaker, and was not required to pay any fee. PM: "World Bank was stopped from giving money" to Padma Bridge Project, and accused us of corruption. There is no doubt that their hands were behind this all." YC: Professor Yunus did not "create corruption allegations" against the government. He has always supported the Padma Bridge project as the bridge would benefit millions of people of Bangladesh. At the end of the release, the Yunus Centre also noted that a recent letter to the chairman of the Padma Bridge Judiciary Committee, Senator Grassley, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, is being presented in the press as a senate judiciary committee investigation. "This is not correct," it clarified. "Such a letter does not constitute an investigation which is a serious process. This has to be debated in the committee which has to come up with a resolution to start the process of investigating. It is not Padma they will be investigating. Usually it is a time consuming process. Senator Grassley's letter does not trigger the process," Yunus Centre said. "However, if the Senate decided to investigate, the Yunus Centre would welcome it. Through such investigation the truth would emerge. Professor Yunus has become a target of false propaganda. When truth emerges, there will be no further place for falsehood."

PM: "Dr Yunus removed Grameen Bank's money, poor people's money while working as MD and made 40/50 companies in his own name." YC: This is a very shocking accusation. It is difficult to believe that Professor Yunus transferred all these money from Grameen Bank over all these years, and that the Central Bank with all its annual inspections and audits and many more monitoring visits could never detect it. PM: Professor Yunus owns 40/50 companies. YC: Professor Yunus does not own any company anywhere in the world. He does not even own any share in any company anywhere in the world. To establish that Professor Yunus has stolen money from Grameen Bank to set up his personally owned companies will require evidence. The Honourable PM does not appear to care to provide any evidence whatsoever.

PM: "World Bank was stopped from giving money" to Padma Bridge Project, and accused us of corruption. There is no doubt that their hands were behind this all." YC: Professor Yunus did not "create corruption allegations" against the government. He has always supported the Padma Bridge project as the bridge would benefit millions of people of Bangladesh. At the end of the release, the Yunus Centre also noted that a recent letter to the chairman of the Padma Bridge Judiciary Committee, Senator Grassley, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, is being presented in the press as a senate judiciary committee investigation. "This is not correct," it clarified. "Such a letter does not constitute an investigation which is a serious process. This has to be debated in the committee which has to come up with a resolution to start the process of investigating. It is not Padma they will be investigating. Usually it is a time consuming process. Senator Grassley's letter does not trigger the process," Yunus Centre said. "However, if the Senate decided to investigate, the Yunus Centre would welcome it. Through such investigation the truth would emerge. Professor Yunus has become a target of false propaganda. When truth emerges, there will be no further place for falsehood."

PM: "World Bank was stopped from giving money" to Padma Bridge Project, and accused us of corruption. There is no doubt that their hands were behind this all." YC: Professor Yunus did not "create corruption allegations" against the government. He has always supported the Padma Bridge project as the bridge would benefit millions of people of Bangladesh. At the end of the release, the Yunus Centre also noted that a recent letter to the chairman of the Padma Bridge Judiciary Committee, Senator Grassley, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, is being presented in the press as a senate judiciary committee investigation. "This is not correct," it clarified. "Such a letter does not constitute an investigation which is a serious process. This has to be debated in the committee which has to come up with a resolution to start the process of investigating. It is not Padma they will be investigating. Usually it is a time consuming process. Senator Grassley's letter does not trigger the process," Yunus Centre said. "However, if the Senate decided to investigate, the Yunus Centre would welcome it. Through such investigation the truth would emerge. Professor Yunus has become a target of false propaganda. When truth emerges, there will be no further place for falsehood."

PM: "World Bank was stopped from giving money" to Padma Bridge Project, and accused us of corruption. There is no doubt that their hands were behind this all." YC: Professor Yunus did not "create corruption allegations" against the government. He has always supported the Padma Bridge project as the bridge would benefit millions of people of Bangladesh. At the end of the release, the Yunus Centre also noted that a recent letter to the chairman of the Padma Bridge Judiciary Committee, Senator Grassley, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, is being presented in the press as a senate judiciary committee investigation. "This is not correct," it clarified. "Such a letter does not constitute an investigation which is a serious process. This has to be debated in the committee which has to come up with a resolution to start the process of investigating. It is not Padma they will be investigating. Usually it is a time consuming process. Senator Grassley's letter does not trigger the process," Yunus Centre said. "However, if the Senate decided to investigate, the Yunus Centre would welcome it. Through such investigation the truth would emerge. Professor Yunus has become a target of false propaganda. When truth emerges, there will be no further place for falsehood."