

200 trees felled in Kalapara forest

AC (land) says action will be taken after probe

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

At least 200 trees at Modhukhali forest in Mithaganj union under Kalapara upazila of the district have been cut down in the last eight to 10 days by a resident of the area.

Locals said the forest department planted many trees, including keora, gewa, and bain, on both sides of Modhukhali lake area around 50 to 60 years ago. The department plants some trees every year in the area, creating a forest, they added.

Abdul Haque, a resident of Modhukhali village, said the forest saves them from disasters like cyclone, storm and flood, adding that they will be exposed to such disasters during monsoon season as many large trees have been cut down.

Hasan Mahmud, a resident of the village, has felled at least 200 trees in the forest, telling the locals that he took permission

from the forest department. However, Harun-ur-Rashid of the Mohipur Range Office of Patuakhali forest department said they did not give Hasan permission to cut down the trees.

Hasan said he bought the land from a local man named Moslem Ali Hawlader, but Moslem Ali's son Mostafa Hawlader said Hasan did not buy the land from his father.

"I have submitted an application to the forest department in Patuakhali for permission to cut down trees but does not know whether the permission has been issued or not," Hasan told this correspondent. Divisional Forest Officer Ajit Kumar Rudhro said they have not given permission to anybody to cut down trees.

Assistant Commissioner (land) Khondakar Robiul Islam said necessary steps will be taken after investigation against those involved in the matter.



A few tree parts lie scattered on bare ground after around 200 trees were felled in Modhukhali forest under Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali. PHOTO: STAR

Jujube orchards a winner for Jessore farmers

MOHSIN MILON with ANDREW EAGLE

Several varieties of jujube, locally known as kul or boroi, are proving to be a worthwhile crop in Jessore. Around 500 local farmers, especially in Sharsha upazila, are benefiting from jujube cultivation, with their harvests being sold in Dhaka and across the country.

Popular varieties include apel, bau and the newly-developed Dhaka-90 jujube strain, all of which can offer solid profits within several months of planting.

"I have been growing jujube on fifteen bighas of land for three years," says one farmer, Azam. "I hope to earn around Tk 1 lakh from each bigha. Even in the first year, with a new orchard, I was able to earn Tk 3.5 lakh. In the years to come I should be increasingly

financially secure."

"My three-bigha jujube orchard is surrounded by netting to protect against raids by birds and bats. I also employ a bagging system to further secure the harvest," explains another farmer, Shariful Islam.

Khorshed Alam from Santa village has been at the forefront of the local jujube industry's development, growing the fruit for the last twelve years. With three orchards spread over ten bighas, his efforts have inspired others. "I started with little capital," he says, "but my jujube farm is going well."

"The bau variety grows well here," he says. "We can achieve a really large-sized fruit. If they are tended properly, the fruit achieves a nice white colour when ripe. For the moment many are yet brown; harvest will continue until

February."

Jujube requires regular fertiliser and irrigation, Khorshed adds. He employs seven regular gardeners to tend his orchard, with many seasonal labourers working during the harvest months.

"It costs a little over Tk 30,000 per bigha to grow jujube," he says. "And fruit sales per bigha from an established orchard should reach close to Tk 1 lakh."

Khorshed is also helping others. This season, around 45 other orchardists will send jujube harvests to Dhaka and Barisal through this renowned jujube farmer, with shipments having started last November.

"Jujube orchards are popular in this upazila," says Sharsha's agriculture officer, Hirak Kumar Sarkar. "Farmers are encouraged by the profits being made."

Pro-AL panel sweeps BAU teachers' polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Gantantrik Shikhkhak Forum, a pro-Awami League teachers' body, swept all the 11 posts in the election of Bangladesh Agricultural University Teachers' Association (BAUTA) held on Wednesday.

Prof Dr AS Mahfuzul Bari of Pathology Department and Prof Dr Mohammad Amirul Islam of Statistics Department were elected as the president and secretary of the association respectively.

The other office bearers include vice president Prof Kazi Shahana Ahmed, Prof Mohammad Aslam Ali and joint secretary Dr Md Raihanul Islam, BAU sources said.

Prof Dr Mosharraf Hossain and Prof Dr Md Ali Ashraf conducted the election as chief and assistant election commissioners respectively.

'Killers threaten Ananda's family'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Eight months into the murder, the killers of businessman Ananda Barmon are yet to be arrested.

The victim's wife Kalpona Rani said, "Police seem reluctant to arrest the killers as they are cohorts of a local Awami League leader. We the family members are passing days in fear of fresh attack on us."

Ananda Barmon, 47, son of late Dakhina Chandra Barmon of Banderkura village in Kaliganj upazila, was strangled to death over a land dispute on May 20 last year. And his body was dumped in a cowshed.

Police later arrested Bulbuli Bewa, 38, owner of the cowshed, in connection with the incident.

A murder case was filed with Kaliganj Police Station, accusing six people, said Officer-in-Charge Maqbul Hossain.

The accused are Bulbuli Bewa, Abdul Matin, 65, his sons Selim Hossain, 32, and Mostafizur Rahman, 45, and Mazibar Rahman, 67, and his son Zahurul Islam, 40, of the village.

The victim's wife said as the killers continued threatening them to withdraw the case, she along with her two daughters and son took shelter at a relative's house in the town.

The OC said the case was transferred to Criminal Investigation Department (CID) in September, and it is under CID's investigation.

CID's Sub-Inspector Amendranath Roy said they are trying their best to arrest the accused.

Teenager found dead in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A fifteen-year-old boy was found dead at a field in Joypurhat's Kalai upazila yesterday, a day after he went missing on Wednesday.

The deceased, Al Amin Islam Sunny, was son of Mokbul Islam of Chandina Balupara village in Shibganj upazila of Bogra.

Police quoted victim's family members as saying that Sunny went out of his house with his father's rickshaw-van on Wednesday night and did not return since then.

Villagers spotted Sunny's body lying at a potato field at Alapara village, Officer-in-Charge of Kalai Police Station Abdul Latif Khan said, adding that they recovered the body and sent it to Joypurhat Modern Hospital for autopsy.

Criminals might have killed the boy and took away the rickshaw-van, the OC added.

Dense fog blurs roads

Traffic hampered, accidents on rise in Dinajpur and Rangpur; lack of road markings adds to the problem

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

Poor visibility amid the prevailing dense fog hampers smooth vehicular movements, adding to the risk of accidents on different roads in Dinajpur and Rangpur region.

Besides, absence of adequate road markings on different roads, especially on the speed breakers, centre lines and side lines, adds to the drivers' problems.

Seventeen accidents took place on different roads in different areas of the region in the last three days, leaving more than 100 people injured, said officials of Highway Police.

Thick fog usually covers the northern region after sunset and continues till the noon next day.

At least 20 people were injured, seven of them seriously, when five buses and trucks rammed each other in Mithapukur upazila of Rangpur in the early hours on Sunday. These vehicles were plying behind each other for avoiding accidents during the fog, but the driver of the front vehicle had to

brake hard when he noticed a turning and it led to the accident.

The injured people were rushed to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

On Monday evening, a passenger bus bound for Baliadangi upazila of Thakurgaon overturned at Pirermor in Kharol upazila of Dinajpur and a Panchagarh-bound night coach overturned at Birganj upazila on December 30 early hours last year as the drivers failed to run the vehicles properly due to poor visibility amid dense fog.

Around 40 people were hurt in the two accidents.

Dinajpur-Dhaka via Gobindaganj regional road and Dinajpur-Dhaka via Rangpur highway and Panchagarh-Thakurgaon-Dinajpur-Dhaka highway are the most important routes in the distant districts of the northern region for travelling to and from the capital Dhaka, said leaders of transport workers unions in Dinajpur and Rangpur.

Such fog related accidents on roads can be averted if the authorities concerned take preventive measures before the onset of the foggy winter.

But, they did not, alleged M Rafiq, president of transport workers union in Dinajpur. As the fog becomes thicker during the cold wave, drivers find it hard to steer their vehicles safely. Overturning, collision with stationed vehicles and dividers is a common sight on these roads, he said.

"Driving on roads becomes more hazardous during fog for absence of centerline and sideline markings, which help safe driving on roads," he said.

During a recent ride on Dinajpur-Gobindaganj road and Dinajpur-Rangpur road, this correspondent found absence of road markings at many places.

Contacted, Masum Sarwar, executive engineer of Roads and Highways Department in Dinajpur, said road markings at a few places are missing as those were washed away by floodwater last year.

"Repainting will be started as early as possible. We are going to start marking the speed breakers by tomorrow," he said.

China builds

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neighbourhood.

The tower and related machine parts occupy 2,580 square metres in Xi'an, the provincial capital of Shaanxi Province in north-west China.

The tower is a solar-assisted large-scale cleaning system. At the base of the tower, there are several greenhouses which could draw polluted air into the tower, purify it before releasing it back to the environment, reported South China Morning Post.

The greenhouses cover an area about half the size of a football pitch.

Dubbed as the world's largest air purifier, the tower can filter out fine particulate matter, including PM 2.5, nitrogen oxides, nitrogen dioxide as well as sulfur dioxide. These substances prompt the formation of smog.



Vehicles run with the headlights on during the daytime as dense fog amid the cold spell obscures the sight even a few metres away. The photo was taken in front of M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur a couple of days ago.

PHOTO:

KONGKON KARMAKER

One dies as sand falls on him

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

A day labourer was killed and two others were injured as sand fell on them while they were digging a septic tank at Natun Bazar in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased was Mohammad Kaiyum, 32, of Chaitannayapur village in Shibganj upazila.

Injured Bairul Islam, 32, and Mohammad Kalu, 30, of Shibganj were admitted to Sadar hospital.

The incident took place around 3:15pm when the three were digging a septic tank at the house of Shah Alam, said Abdul Hamid, acting station manager of Chapainawabganj fire station.

The other accused in the case were acquitted.

Man to die for killing teacher

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A Netrakona court yesterday sentenced a man to death on charge of killing a school teacher in 2015.

The convict, Kala Chand, 40, son of Chhoygaon village in Barhatta upazila of Netrakona, was also fined Tk 20,000, said Md Ziaul Haque, court inspector of Netrakona.

Judge AKM Rasheduzzaman Raza of Netrakona District and Sessions Judge's Court, handed down the verdict.

According to the prosecution, a few people led by Kala Chand waylaid and hacked Arjun Biswas, 43, headmaster of Monash Government Primary School in Barhatta, when he was on the way to school on December 2 in 2015.

Arjun was declared dead at the upazila health complex.

Arjun of Rampur-Dashal village faced the wrath of Kala Chand following a feud over distribution of Tk 30,000 deposited with the school's development fund, local sources said.

Maya Rani Biswas, wife of the deceased, lodged a case with Barhatta Police Station the following day accusing Kala Chand, his brothers Emdadul Haque Hira and ZA Fuad Khan Babul, and Shahidul Islam Bhasani, a teacher of the school, also a resident of Chhoygaon village.

The other accused in the case were acquitted.

Banking sector is not free from flaws

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law would help a single family tighten its hold on a private bank.

The new law stipulates that the tenure of a private bank's board of directors will be nine years, up from six years. Besides, four members of a family, instead of two, can be in the board.

Experts and economists expressed concern that the amended law would worsen the current troubles in the banking sector.

Parliament passed the law at a time when the country's banking sector has been hit by several scams.

"Let transparency and accountability be ensured in running banks and financial institutions without anomalies and flaws," the MP said in his resolution.

The finance minister pointed at various measures taken by the government to ensure good governance in the financial sector.

"Irregularities and flaws have been

prevailing in the sector since the birth of the country and once it had taken a serious turn. The rate of default loan had hit 32 percent. Now it has come down to 11-12 percent."

Muhith said ensuring good governance in the banking sector is a continuous process. He requested Israfil to withdraw the proposal and the MP complied.

Israfil in his resolution also said they often felt embarrassed by the problems or criticisms over the financial and banking sector. "It makes us speechless and frustrated as well."

He said the government and parliament were being blamed for the failures in implementing laws and checking irregularities in the banking sector.

Naming some banks, including Farmers Bank, AB Bank, NRB and National Bank, Israfil said the government's successes on the economic front have largely been marred by

some irregularities in the banking sector.

The amount of default loan in state-run banks also rose, the lawmaker pointed out. "There were incidents of taking loans on fake names. Directors of banks and senior officials were involved in such activities."

"Despite the looting of money, the government has to provide the banks with several thousand crore of taka. This is the money taxed from the people," he said.

The ruling party MP called upon the government to cancel the licences of those banks who failed to meet certain conditions.

"Why the licences of the banks which failed to meet the conditions are not cancelled? Why their licences are being renewed?" he questioned.

The lawmaker from Naogaon-6 said the government should announce the names of the loan defaulters.