

## 10 to walk gallows for killing farmer in Habiganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Habiganj court yesterday sentenced 10 people to death in a case for killing a farmer over theft of ducks. The convicts are Ramiz Ali, Tariq Ullah, Abdur Rahman, Abdul Mannan, Bachchu Mia, Abdus Salam, Yusuf Ullah, Abdul Motaleb, Abdul Hannan and Nasim Ullah of Bakjur village in Habiganj's Baniarchong upazila. Judge Mafroza Parvin of Habiganj Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court delivered the verdict. According to the prosecution, the convicts killed farmer Abdur Razzak of the village over an allegation of stealing ducks. Later, the victim's son Harun Mia filed a case with Baniarchong Police Station in this connection.

## Rock production in full swing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

State-run Madhyapara Granite Mining Company Ltd (MGMCL) in Parbatipur upazila resumed its three-shift production as per original project proposal (PP) on Tuesday, after over two years. The mine, which started functioning in 2006, produced around 3,100 tonnes in the last 24 hours, according to MGMCL officials. According to the original PP, the mine was to produce 5,500 tonnes of hard rock operating three shifts every day, but Namnam, a North Korean company, could not achieve the target till 2013 after taking over the mine in 2006. Later in September 2013, Petrobangla, the parent organisation of MGMCL, signed a six-year contract with Belarus-based Germania Trest Consortium (GTC) for rock production and maintenance of the mine. As per contract, GTC was to produce nine million tonnes of rocks in six years. After taking over the mine in February 2014, GTC produced around 4,000 tonnes of rock every day in three shifts till September 2015. But, GTC suspended the mine's activities in the same month due to shortage of machinery. Since then, production remained suspended till September 2017 despite high demand for the rock due to its quality. The suspension rendered around 600 local miners jobless. Besides, the foreign workers were also sent back to their countries. However, the mine's activities started in September last year with the arrival of required machinery from different countries but the production did not start in full swing. MGMCL Managing Director SM Nurul Awrangzeb termed the increasing production as their biggest achievement. "We are now capable of reaching 5,500 tonnes of daily production target," he said.



People who joined farming for a better future in the border areas share their stories with Shykh Seraj.

PHOTO: HRIDOYE MATI O MANUSH

## Farming changes the border

Alleged smugglers now opt for crop cultivation in Thakurgaon

SHYKH SERAJ

It was 19th of November, 2014. Twenty two year old Shah Alam, only son of Sher Ali from Dinajpur, died being shot by Indian Border Security Force when he, along with others, was bringing in cows across the border illegally. We have seen such news often in newspapers and television before. However, it's really shattering for the families who lost their relatives. Day labourer Sher Ali's dreams are shattered.

However, the situation of this area has changed. People in the area finally realized that bringing goods by illegally crossing the border cannot be an occupation. Everyone started working hard for productive works to make a living. Their livelihood changed dramatically. Let me tell you how.

Almost a year back, I went to visit Thakurgaon BGB 30 Battalion's Betka BOP camp on an interesting invitation. Betka village is under Haripur upazila. You all know BGB (Border Guard Bangladesh) is our border security force. Recently, to develop Bangladesh's socio-economic state, they are participating in various activities alongside protecting our borders. The people who live around mainly make a living by doing agricultural works. However, they do get involved with many criminal activities too. Now, alongside various activities to eradicate poverty from community, works are also being done to get these people involved with some

development agendas. For example, once they never even dreamt of having electricity here. However, through solar and other technologies, they are getting electricity. Therefore, their standard of living is developing gradually. I will tell you the diversified developments in the border area and describe how their socio-economic state has developed and how BGB played a key

"We provided them light, not just for electricity but for spreading knowledge.

They were inspired to take to farming as profession and many have left their past for a better future," he added.

They moved forward focusing on multipurpose agriculture. The initiative is named Alokito Shimanto (enlightened border). "Stop border crime and live by hard work" - is the motto to spread throughout the communities living across the borders.

"We worked hard to make them aware and the initiative gradually yielded results as the people were shown your agricultural documentaries," said the Lt Col.

"How much did you earn earlier?" I asked Jabbar, who was involved in smuggling once.

"For each cow, I used to get Tk 500 but life risk was involved," he replied.

"I am currently working with a fisheries project here. Some of us started a fish farm in 2016," he gladly added.

There was a time when border meant only smuggling, human trafficking and above all anything related to the word 'illegal'. People are gradually getting out of these. Moreover, behind this change, agriculture and its crop diversity is playing a great role. In the past, not many crops used to be grown here. Now, you'll see abundance of crops and flourishing of agriculture.

Over the Nagor river, BGB has built a bamboo bridge and it has

extremely helped the rural community to move from one side to the other. This infrastructural development has also helped farmers to transport their agricultural goods easily to the nearby market. Indeed, lives of many have developed with the help from agricultural offices and BGB and the efforts of general people.

It is very heartening to see children going to school, people getting electricity and gas, growing diversified vegetables and crops. The livelihood has remarkably changed.

Dear readers, we are surrounded by Indian territory. From government and private surveys and research, we see that border area people are mostly indolent. They have high tendencies of doing criminal activities too. Many keep themselves involved in risky illegal activities. For this reason, they cannot think about a stable family and work life. The situation of Thakurgaon's border was like this as well. However, today, you can't find any indolent person here. He who has a land is involved in agriculture. He who doesn't have a land works on someone else's land by taking a lease. Many have established various farms. Still, the locals face capital crisis. Poor and grass-roots farmers could make themselves self-reliant faster if they get funding help. I believe this example of Thakurgaon border will be followed in the country's other border areas too.

## Hindu land grabbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Failing to purchase it forcibly, a local influential person yesterday erected a tin-shed structure grabbing the seven decimals of land belonging to a minority Hindu family at Fakirtokeya Balapara village in Sadar upazila of the district.

The alleged grabber Majnu Miah and his men also threatened land owner Khagendranath Barmon, 42, son of Dinanath Barmon of the village, with dire consequences if he dared to go there further.

"I purchased the land a few years ago to build a new house there for my family," said land owner Khagendranath.

Since the land was purchased, Majnu, 40, son of late Jabbar Ali of the village, had been putting pressure on him to sell the land, which he refused, Khagendranath said.

"As I didn't agree to sell my land, Majnu and his men forcibly grabbed the land yesterday morning and built a tin-shed structure there," he said, added, "I could not do anything to resist the grabbers as they all were equipped with sharp weapons and sticks."

Later, following a complaint filed with Sadar Police Station by Khagendranath, police went to the spot and asked the grabber to free the land in two days.

Majnu told this correspondent that the owner of the land earlier promised that he would sell it to him, but he is declining to sell the property now.

As the land is beside his homestead he built the tin-shed structure in a bid to purchase it in future, Majnu added.

Sub-inspector Mainul Islam of Sadar Police Station said he asked Majnu and his men to remove the illegal structure and free the land within next 48 hours.

## Woman dies in land feud

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

An elderly woman was killed and two others were injured in an attack allegedly by her son-in-law and grandson at Kaharpara village in Rajbari Sadar upazila on Tuesday.

The deceased was Nurjahan Begum, 70, wife of late Goni Sardar of the village.

The victim's daughter Shefali Begum said "My mother gave a piece of land to me a few days ago, which angered my husband, son and daughter."

"On Tuesday evening, the trio attacked my mother following an altercation over the land. When I along with my brother Md Zia, 30, went to save her, they also beat us," she said.

Critically injured Nurjahan later died at Rajbari General Hospital, said Shefali.

A murder case was filed, accusing five people, said Md Kamal Hossain Bhuyia, officer-in-charge of Rajbari Police Station.



A pitha festival, displaying several types of mouth-watering traditional homemade cakes, attracts a good number of visitors at the playground of Majhirkanda Model Government Primary School in Nawabganj upazila of Dhaka on Tuesday. Twelve stalls took part in the festival organised by the school authorities.

PHOTO: STAR

## Firecrackers seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Benapole Customs Intelligence officials recovered 3.5 maunds of firecrackers from a train at Navaran rail station of Jessore yesterday.

Md Abdus Sadeq, deputy commissioner of Benapole Customs Intelligence, said acting on a tip-off, a team raided the Khulna-bound commuter train from Benapole rail station and seized the firecrackers from a toilet of the train.

However, none was arrested in this connection, he said.

Smugglers brought the firecrackers illegally from India through Putkhali border area, said Sadeq.

A case was filed with Benapole Police Station in this connection.

## RECRUITMENT SCAM IN KHAGRACHHARI Ex-dist council chair, civil surgeon sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed a case against six people, including former acting chairman of Khagrachhari Hill District Council and former civil surgeon, on charges of fraud and corruption in recruitment for jobs.

ACC Assistant Director Syed Nazrul Islam filed the case with Sadar Police Station yesterday.

The case statement said the recruitment committee appointed two pharmacists to the health department in 2013 although they did not have the required educational qualification. The appointees joined the department in March 2014.

Former acting chairman of Khagrachhari Hill District Council Biro Kishore Chakma and former Civil Surgeon of the district Narayan Chandra Das of the recruitment committee, along with two other members of the committee and the two people who were recruited, have been named as accused in the case.

Recruited pharmacist Udayan Chakma has been arrested while the other pharmacist, Sumon Chakma, is at large.

Officer-in-Charge of the police station Tariq Md Abdul Hannan, confirmed the matter.

## PRICE HIKE OF PADDY STRAW IN LALMONIRHAT Cattle rearers worried

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Paddy growers in the district are happy as they are getting unexpected earning from selling straw, but cattle farmers are unhappy over the price hike.

The price of paddy straw in the local markets has jumped around four times from last year's as it is the main fodder for cattle and there is high demand for it, said farmers.

One thousand bundles of paddy straw (one bundle paddy straw weighs about half a kg) are being sold for around Tk 4,000 now, while it was around Tk 2,500 a month ago and about Tk 1,200 last year.

Paddy grower Nur Islam, 52, of Mahipur village in Kaliganj upazila, said he got 6,300 bundles of straw from four bigas of land, while he got 58 maunds (one maund=40 kg) of paddy in the Aman season. "I sold 3,000

bundles for Tk 2,500 per 1,000 bundles a month ago," he said. "I sold 2,000 more bundles for Tk 8,000 last week, and I am keeping 1,300 bundles for our two cows," he said, adding that unexpected earning from selling straw has made him interested in farming paddy.

"High price of straw brings profit and we are now interested in paddy farming on a large scale," said Soleman Ali, 58, of the same village. "Now we are getting around 60 percent of the production cost of paddy farming from selling straw," he added.

Cattle farmer Abdul Latif, 48, of Bhadaï village in Aditmari upazila, said he is very upset over the price hike of straw. "I have six cattle and 90 bundles of straw are needed for them daily. I am thinking of selling four cattle," he said.

"Last year, I purchased 1,000 bundles for Tk 1,200, but the price has

jumped to Tk 4,000 this year, which is a threat to cattle rearing," said Ashraful Islam, 45, of Sadar upazila.

Straw trader Rafiqul Islam, 48, of BDR Haat in the town, said huge quantities of straw are being sent to different parts of the country. "High demand this year caused the price hike," he said.

District Livestock Officer Dr Nasir Uddin Khan said now almost all the people in villages and many in town areas rear cattle for additional earning. "The price of straw, the main fodder for cattle, is rising, but cattle price is the same as in the past," he said.

Department of Agriculture Extension Deputy Director Bidhubhushon Roy said around 85,25,000 bundles of paddy straw were produced from 82,500 hectares of land in the last Aman season.



A farmer with the help of his son loads paddy straw on a rickshaw-van to take it for sale at a nearby market of Mahipur village under Kaliganj upazila of Lalmonirhat.

PHOTO: STAR