



Large banners and signboards are stuck to an old blackberry tree with long iron nails near Uttara EPZ at Shangolshi village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila. The unethical practice, very common in the area, causes harm and even gradual death to the trees, and poses risk for passers-by and commuters.

PHOTO: STAR

Roadside trees face risk

Signboards, banners hung by hammering nails

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Many private organisations and even individuals in Nilphamari hang their signboards and banners from busy roadside trees unethically to advertise either their goods or personal service.

Usually, people hang signboards and banners by hammering big nails into the tree.

Trees are regarded as the main source of oxygen and this practice will gradually cause serious infection of the trees, even leading to their death, said Prof Abdul Latif, head of Botany department at Nilphamari Government College.

"If one inserts big nails deep into a tree trunk or branch fluids containing food nutrients will come out through the wound and hamper its natural growth."

"Different kind of bacteria, virus and rain water enter inside it through the wound and rot the affected part, which could even lead to its death," added Prof Latif.

While visiting some important roads, including Nilphamari-Saidpur, Domar-Dimla, Dimla-Sutibari, Nilphamari-Domar and Domar-Chilahati road, this correspondent saw many giant roadside trees are covered with banners and signboards of herbal medicine practitioners, coaching centres,

diagnostic clinics, school admission, travel agents and shopping centres.

"I prefer doing this because I am having a good advertisement of my service free of cost," said marriage registrar Aftabuddin Ahmed, 60, who hung a signboard on a giant blackberry tree near Uttara EPZ in Sadar upazila.

Like him, herbal ointment seller Fateh Ali, 55, of Ambari village in Domar upazila, said he is doing nothing wrong hanging his signboard as one can easily learn about his medicine.

Most of the roadside trees across the district belong to the Zila Parishad, LGED and RHD department,

but the authorities concerned seem less bothered with the problem.

Zila Parishad Engineer Rabiul Islam said, "Roadside trees are government property and causing any harm to them is a punishable offence."

They cannot monitor the trees properly due to inadequate manpower, Rabiul added.

Emdadul Huq, convenor of Green Nature, a local voluntary environmental organisation, said, "Zila Parishad should build advertisement corners beside the busy roads for hanging banners and realise fees from the publicity seekers."



The district's central Shaheed Minar at Saptana in Lalmonirhat town shows all signs of neglect. PHOTO: STAR

Lalmonirhat dist Shaheed Minar in utter neglect

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

People from all walks of life in the town urged the authorities concerned to renovate the district's central Shaheed Minar in Saptana area in the town as it has become dilapidated due to lack of maintenance.

They said this at two meetings of the townspeople at the central Shaheed Minar on December 20 in 2017 and on January 9 this year.

Locals said the condition of the central Shaheed Minar has been deteriorating since its construction in 1968. The authorities paint it before February 21 every year but do not take any steps to maintain it after that, they added.

Political parties, cultural activists and teachers and students of different educational institutions come to the Shaheed Minar to observe important national days every year, but none of them come forward to repair it, locals said.

"I have been hearing for the last few years that a special project will be taken up to renovate the central Shaheed Minar, but I do not see any implementation," said Nurul Islam, a college teacher at Thanapara in the town. "Many Shaheed Minars in the villages are in

better condition than the district central Shaheed Minar," he added.

Language Movement hero Comrade Shamsul Haque of BDR Haat Road in the town said the government is building big office buildings, roads and bridges by spending a lot of money but is not repairing the central Shaheed Minar. "Shaheed Minar is the symbol of our Language Movement and the Language Movement is the first step of our Liberation War. The government must reconstruct, modernise and maintain the Shaheed Minar," he added.

"I personally contacted many high officials of the government many times for funding to reconstruct the district central Shaheed Minar, but I got nothing except promises," said another Language Movement hero Abdul Quader Bhasani of the town.

Lalmonirhat Municipality Mayor Reazul Islam Rintu told this correspondent that the district's central Shaheed Minar will be reconstructed and modernised with the municipality's fund. "Design of the Shaheed Minar has already been approved and the work will start in the current fiscal year," he said, adding that it will be very attractive.

SSC examinee found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

An SSC examinee was found dead at Char Lalpur village in Ashuganj upazila yesterday.

The deceased was Jhony Das, 16, son of Uttam Das of the village. He was appearing in the SSC examinations from Lalpur SK Das Chowdhury High School.

Officer-in-Charge of Ashuganj Police Station Md Badrul Alam Talukder said Jhony went to his room on Monday night after having supper.

Later, his body was found hanging from a tree near their house, said the OC.

An unnatural death case was filed with the police station in this connection, he said.

Drug peddler jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

A court here on Monday sentenced a drug peddler to 12 years' imprisonment.

The convict is Kalam Sardar, 35, son of late Ensan Sardar of Zia Sharok of Barisal city.

District and Sessions Judge Md Ikhtiarul Islam Mallick also fined Kalam Tk 5,000. In default, he is to suffer another three months in prison.

According to the prosecution, Rapid Action Battalion arrested Kalam with 507 Yabba tablets in Nalchity upazila in 2016.

Later, a case was filed, accusing Kalam with Nalchity Police Station.

Khaleda files appeal with High Court

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fine, and suspend the five-year prison sentence against her.

The bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Shahidul Karim set tomorrow for holding a hearing on accepting the appeal.

Claiming herself innocent, Khaleda mentioned 44 grounds in the 1,222-page appeal on which the HC may consider her prayers, Sagir Hossain Leon, a lawyer for the BNP chief, told The Daily Star.

Khaleda in the appeal said "The lower court fraudulently and deliberately misquoted me in the verdict."

In its judgment, the trial court had said Khaleda in her defence statement confessed that she had abused her power. "So, there is no bar to punishing her under Section 409 of the Penal Code and 5(2) of Corruption Prevention Act-1947."

The appeal said, "The conviction and sentencing of the appellant [Khaleda] are based on grotesque distortion of her statement and such the same is liable to be set aside."

"...protesters are being killed by mindless shooting if they protest the unjust. Students and teachers are being killed. Are not these abuses of powers? Did I abuse powers?"

She said "under the facts and circumstances of the case the impugned judgement and order of conviction and sentence against her being untenable and unsustainable in law is required to be set aside."

"...the trial court erred in law in omitting to consider that the impugned remittance by way of donation was a private transaction from United Saudi Commercial Bank and the prosecution failed to trace out the name of the sender/donor according to

evidence of PW [prosecution witness] 26 to prove a case of entrapment and criminal breach of trust within the meaning of Section 409 of the Penal Code..."

"...the defence elicited evidence in cross examination of witness being PW 31 and 32 that the remittance was from the Amir of Kuwait for Zia Orphanage Trust and in this respect a notarized certificate issued by the Embassy of Kuwait of Dhaka filed in court for judicial notice under Section 57(6) of the Evidence Act and the learned trial court on surmise and conjecture disbelieved certificate as forged and fabricated."

In the appeal, Khaleda also said the trial court "erred in law and facts in omitting to consider that the instant case has been cooked up by fabrication of records."

Khaleda also said the trial court "erred in law in omitting to consider that she had been three times prime minister of Bangladesh and chairperson of Bangladesh Nationalist Party [BNP] and the instant case has been cooked up for victimization due to political rivalry."

"The instant case had been initiated during the regime of the caretaker upheaval of army back rule of the day in 2008 and vigorously pursued by the government in power after general election by overturning the first enquiry report of PW 32 who found no case against her."

Khaleda further said in the appeal that "the holder of the office of the prime minister being the head of the executive branch of the republic holding a constitutional office, and not removable from the office otherwise than in accordance with the modes prescribed by the constitution, does not come under the defini-

tion and purview of "Public Servant" in Section 21 of the Penal Code 1860 or "public officer" as defined in Article 152 of the constitution of Bangladesh, Section 409 or under Section 409/109 of the Penal Code being applicable to criminal breach of trust by a public servant, conviction and sentence of the appellant not being a public servant is erroneous, absurd and unfounded; hence liable to be set aside."

The trial court "illegally and improperly without any evidence on record took into consideration a few letters allegedly written by accused Dr Kamal Siddique [Kamal Uddin Siddique, former principal secretary to the PM] kept in case diary and relied on the same and such letters were not proved and brought or recorded as evidence and the appellant [Khaleda] was not confronted with such documents during her examination under Section 342 of the Code of Criminal Procedure..."

"Such an illegal step has vitiated the trial resulting in miscarriage of justice, she said in the appeal."

Khaleda said the trial court "erred in law in convicting and sentencing her under Section 409/109 of the Penal Code in absence of any evidence of entrapment of any impugned fund received as foreign donation as donated by the donor/person/authority or handling of the fund by her and for absence of evidence or criminal breach of trust constituting an offence under Section 409/109 of the Penal Code, although she was not charged under Section 409/109 of the Penal Code and there was no evidence of either the offence of Section 409 of the Penal Code or any evidence of abetment and this has resulted in prejudice in defence and miscarriage of

justice."

The BNP chairperson said in the appeal that she was neither the settler nor a trustee or a beneficiary of "Zia Orphanage Trust" and thus she had absolutely no involvement in either the opening of the account, operation thereof, creation of the trust, or application of the trust fund.

"As such the conviction and sentence for misappropriation of the trust fund is totally unfounded and perverse as will be evident from the deposition of the Prosecution Witness 1 -- Harun-or-Rashid, also the informant and investigation officer of the case."

"The prosecution witnesses have admitted that the original file on the subject matter was not available at the office of the prime minister and shadow file was created."

"The informant and investigation officer being the same person it is clearly manifested that the investigation was not conducted properly and was vitiated by malice in law and ulterior motive as the investigation officer was very much interested in the outcome of the case."

"The trial based on such biased investigation report, the finding of conviction and the sentence passed therein against the appellant [Khaleda] are therefore liable to be set aside and the appellant may kindly be acquitted," he added.

She said "the trial court has ignored to consider the fabrication and falsification or record by various tampered documents by witnesses warranted consideration for holding of an inquiry under Section 476 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, but illegally and improperly omitted to do so and this had resulted in miscarriage of justice."

"The Anti Corruption

Language Movement hero desires to see PM

KONGKON KARMAKER, Dinajpur

Language Movement veteran Sumanta Kumar Basak, who has been suffering from various old age complications, has expressed his desire to see Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with his own eyes.

"Without contribution from the family of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Bangladesh would not exist in the global map," said the 96-year-old Language Movement hero, who lives at Roykali village in Joypurhat's Akkelpur upazila.

"It has been 66 years since the Language Movement in 1952 and I never desired anything in my life before," Sumanta said.

"My first and last desire is to see Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with my own eyes," said the veteran in a shaky voice.

Due to different complications, the language hero spends most of his time sitting on a wooden wheelchair as he is too weak to walk.

His family members said alongside reading daily newspapers and listening to songs on Language Movement are still his inspiration for living.

After passing his matriculation examination, Sumanta, born at Roykali village on January 25, 1922, took admission at Government Azizul Haque College in Bogra.

Recalling the thrilling days of his college time, he said, "We actively participated in different meetings and hartal in Bogra, demanding Bangla as our state language."

Advocate Gaziul Haque was the organiser of those move-

ments, he recalled.

He could not even appear at his Intermediate final examination after the then East Pakistan government issued an arrest warrant against him, Sumanta said.

After successfully passing his Intermediate the following year, he started his teaching career at Roykali High School the same year.



Sumanta Kumar Basak reads newspaper on the yard of his house at Roykali village in Akkelpur upazila of Joypurhat.

PHOTO: STAR

Sumanta, a father of five children, alleged that the Language Movement heroes are much neglected. "No one inquires about us," he added.

The language hero, who retired from teaching in 1991, urged the people of the county to respect the Shaheed Minar.

He also thanked the government for organising Ekushey Book Fair in the month of February.

Principal embezzles Tk 20 lakh

Says letter to DC, signed by 47 out of 48 college teachers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The principal of Moukaran BLP Degree College in Sadar upazila allegedly misappropriated Tk 20 lakh in 30 months after joining the college.

Following a complaint submitted by 47 of the 48 teachers of the college, the Patuakhali deputy commissioner (DC), also chairman of the college governing body, on January 25, has ordered investigation in this regard.

According to the letter, HM Golam Mostafa joined the college as the principal on August 1 in 2015, and since then he allegedly misappropriated around Tk 20 lakh till January 2018, while the total income of the college was about Tk 36 lakh.

Vice-Principal Md Jasim Uddin Howlader said, according to the rules, all income should be deposited in account No

184 in Moukaran branch of Sonali Bank, but the principal did not deposit the incomes in the bank and misappropriated the money.

Mostafa misappropriated money by submitting false vouchers, Jasim alleged.

Principal Mostafa rejected the allegations as false and said some teachers are making propaganda against him.

"Some teachers wanted to be principal but in vain, and after I joined they engaged in false propaganda to harass me," he said.

Nurul Hafiz, additional deputy commissioner for ICT and education, said they have started investigation into the matter and he has visited the college.

"If we find the principal guilty, action will be taken against him as per rule," he added.

Commission initially appointed an inquiry officer being PW 32 who conducted the inquiry and submitted a report on June 11, 2008 and admitted in his evidence that he found no involvement of accused appellant [Khaleda] in respect of subject matter of the case", she stated in the appeal.

Khaleda also said "the trial court erred in law and facts and arrived at erroneous finding and decision in convicting her on misreading and non-reading of evidence and omitted to take into consideration the admitted position that impugned foreign donation was not state to state remittance with any advice to the office if the Prime Minister where there never existed at any time before or after Prime Minister's Orphanage Funds".

The BNP chief filed the appeal with the HC a day after the Special Judge's Court-5 of Dhaka, which found Khaleda guilty in the corruption case on February 8, released the full verdict on Monday.

On February 8, Judge Md Akhtaruzzaman of the special court also sentenced Khaleda's eldest son and BNP Senior Vice Chairman Tarique Rahman and four others to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment, and fined Tk 2.10 crore each.

The other convicts are Kazi Salimul Haque, ex-BNP lawmaker from Magura; Sharfuddin Ahmed, a businessman; Momtazur Rahman, a cousin of Tarique; and Kamal Uddin Siddique, former principal secretary to the PM.

The ACC filed the case with Ramna Police Station in July 2008, accusing Khaleda and five others of misappropriating over Tk 2.1 crore that had come from the foreign bank as grants for orphans.