

BADC under-construction warehouse roof collapses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A part of the roof of an under-construction warehouse of Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) in Sadar upazila collapsed yesterday.

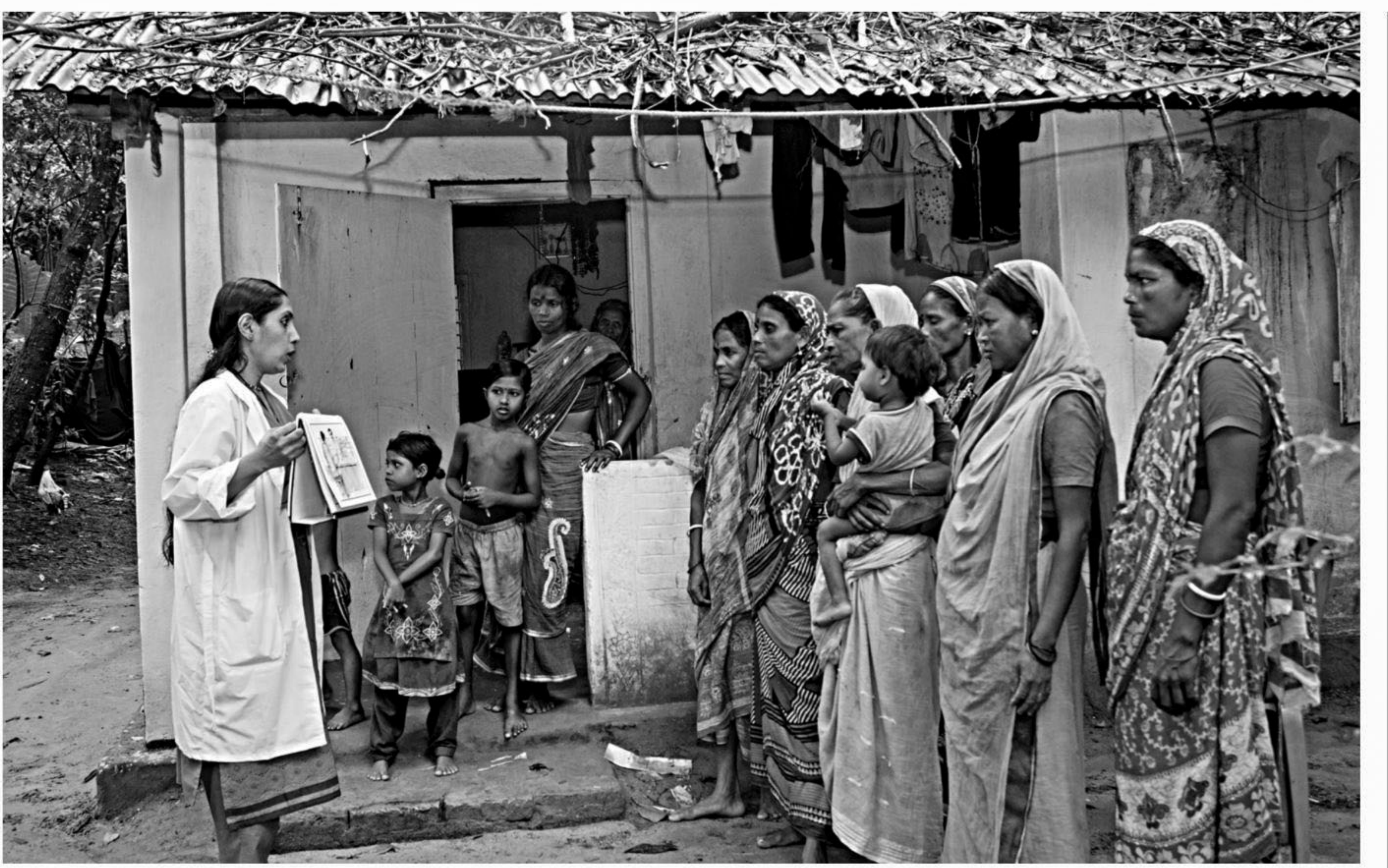
Three workers were injured.

BADC is implementing the project of the Ministry of Agriculture in Sadar upazila. Under the project, a seed warehouse of 2,000 tonnes capacity, sunning floor, office building, 200 tonnes capacity transit warehouse, boundary walls and loading and unloading sheds will be built for its seed processing centre.

Bangladesh Machine Tools Factory Ltd is supervising the project.

Locals said a part of the roof of the warehouse collapsed with a bang. Members of Fire Service and Civil Defence rescued the trapped workers.

Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Redwanur Rahim said police have cordoned-off the area.



A medical service provider on a field visit, aiming at making underprivileged people aware of the prevention and cure of TB, at Lakkatura tea garden in Sylhet Sadar upazila a few days ago.

Rickshaw-van puller stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Criminals stabbed a rickshaw-van puller to death and injured another in Kaharol upazila yesterday.

The deceased was Uday Chandra Roy, 26, son of Jogesh Chandra Roy of Sundarpur village in the upazila. The injured is Afizul, 26, son of Mominul Islam of the village.

Police said Uday and his neighbour Afizul were going to Ranipur Bazar to sell garlic in the morning. As they arrived near Purba Mallikpur, a gang of criminals attacked them with sharp weapons and fled the spot after stabbing them indiscriminately.

Locals rushed them to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in the district, where Uday succumbed to his injuries.

The condition of Afizul was worsening, the doctor said.

Officer-in-Charge of Kaharol Police Station Ayub Ali said the criminals did not take anything from the two.

Police sent Uday's body to a hospital morgue for autopsy, he added.

Elderly man killed under train wheels

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

An elderly man was killed under the wheels of a train in Baharpur bazar area under Baliakandi upazila of Rajbari yesterday.

The deceased was Kaytu Sardar, 70, son of late Khokon Sardar of Baharpur village in the upazila.

Harun Majumder, officer-in-charge of Rajbari GRP Police Station, said when Kaytu was crossing the rail line, Bhatiapur Express hit him in Baharpur bazar rail gate area.

Newborn found dead in Habiganj canal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A newborn was found dead in a canal in Mahmudabad area of Habiganj town yesterday afternoon.

Informed by local councillor Sheikh Umed Ali, police recovered the body from the canal around 2:30pm, said Yasirul Haque, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

Someone dumped the body in the canal to hide his or her crime, said the OC.

The body was sent to Habiganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said the police official.

WORLD TB DAY TOMORROW

Sylhet tea workers at high risk

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The tea workers in Sylhet region are at high risk of tuberculosis (TB) due to unhygienic living, malnutrition and lack of awareness.

Meanwhile, the country along with the rest of the world is going to observe World TB Day tomorrow.

"I was suffering from cough, chest pain and fever for several weeks. I took paracetamol and Napa but to no effect. Lastly I came to TB centre in Sreemangal upazila town and they found TB after checking me on March 13," said Mithun Roy, 28, a tea worker of Kalighat tea garden in Sreemangal upazila of Moulvibazar.

Dhumketu Tanti, 45, of same tea garden, said, "I used to take drugs from my youth. At one stage I was attacked by TB. I am now okay after long treatment. I no longer take any drugs."

According to HEED Bangladesh, 14,703 tuberculosis patients were found including 2,233 people among the tea gardens workers in 16 upazilas of Sylhet, Habiganj and Moulvibazar last year while 13,385 patients were found including 1,382 people among the tea gardens workers in the same area in 2016.

The non-governmental organisation is working in three districts under Sylhet division from 1980, said Munuru Jacob, project director of Challenge TB under HEED Bangladesh that works with the cooperation of GFATM (Global Fund for Aids, TB, and Malaria).

Challenge TB project covers 184 tea gardens and 72 Punjees (villages with betel plantations) located in 16 upazilas. So far, 1.43 lakh and 784 patients have been cured through the HEED-run projects, he added.

Countrywide, 221 people in every lakh suffering from tuberculosis but it is over 300 in Sylhet tea gardens, he said, adding that the number of TB affected tea garden workers is increasing because they cannot meet the basic requirements of life.

Dilip Ranjan Kurmi, president of Sylhet Cha Jonogosthi Chhatra-Jubo Kalyan Parishad, said around 95% tea workers take illegal and unhealthy homemade drugs, costing a good portion of their daily wage of Tk 85 and they can hardly afford nutritious foods.

Makhon Lal Karmokar, president of Bangladesh Cha Sramik Union, said there is lack of drinking water facilities in the tea gardens, along with other problems, which make the workers vulnerable to TB and other diseases.

Dr Md Abul Kalam Azad, deputy civil surgeon of Sylhet, said awareness, healthy

living and timely treatment is needed for dealing with tuberculosis.

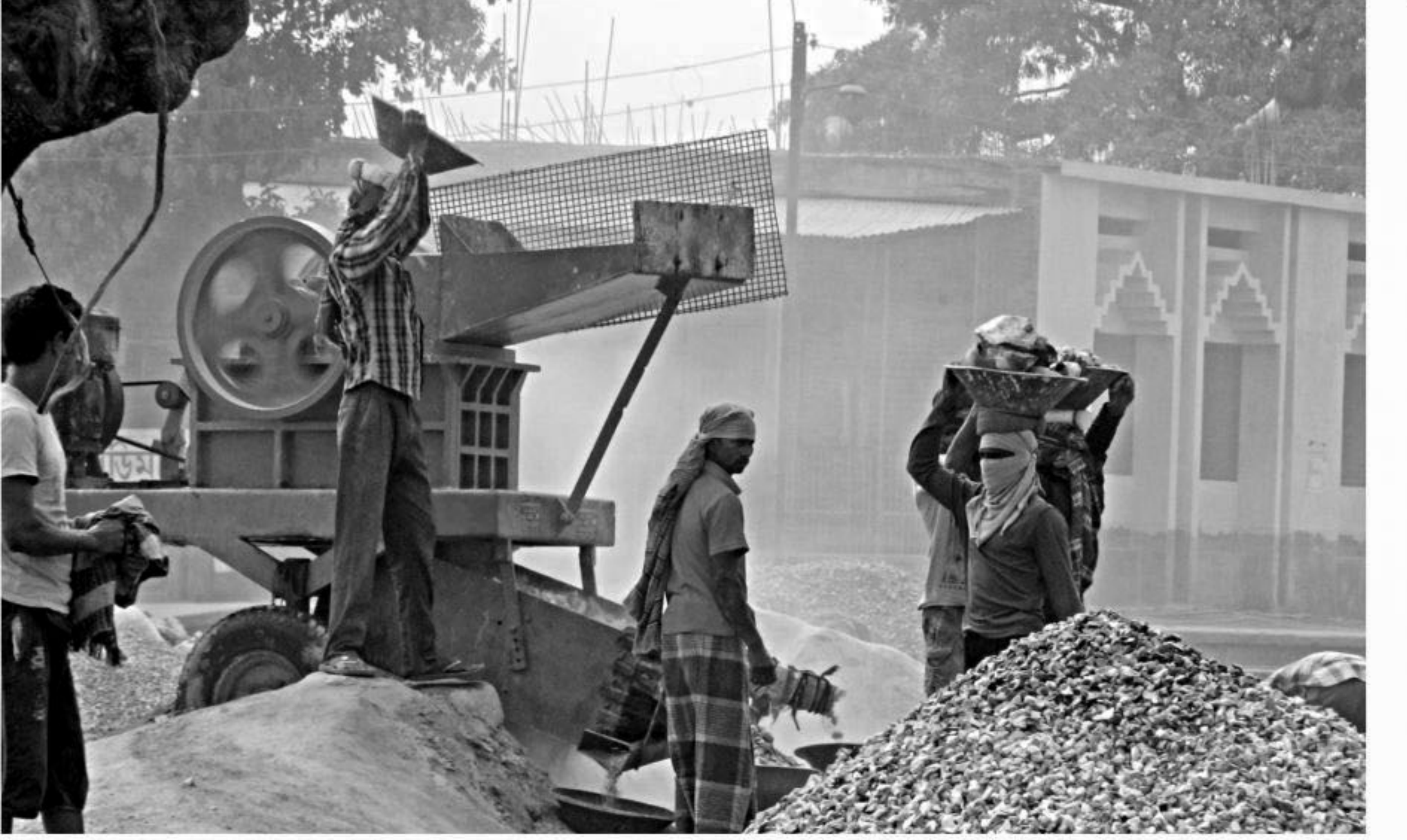
Saytakam Chakrabarty, civil surgeon of Moulvibazar, said living in congested and dirty environment and lack of healthy food is responsible for high prevalence of tuberculosis among tea garden workers.

They are reluctant to take treatment facilities outside certain boundaries of tea garden areas, he added.

TB is caused by a bacterium called Mycobacterium tuberculosis, which usually attack the lungs, but it can attack any part of the body such as kidney, spine, and brain, experts said. Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick.

Two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection and TB disease.

If it is not treated properly, TB disease can turn fatal.



Dust from a stone crushing machine covers the Burimari land port area in Patgram upazila of Lalmonirhat. The photo was taken recently.

Stone crushing pollutes environment

The illegal work continues unabated despite drives

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Illegal stone crushing is causing environmental and noise pollution in Burimari land port area under Patgram upazila, but it has continued unabated in spite of drives by mobile courts against the crushers.

Mobile courts formed jointly with the upazila administration and the Department of Environment (DoE) conducted five drives in the last six months, said Patgram Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Noor Qutubul Alam, adding that 18 stone crushing machines were destroyed, six cases were lodged and a total of Tk 1.40 lakh was realised as fine.

Anwar Hossain, 55, a school-teacher in Burimari village, said the stone crushers have made their lives miserable due to the dust and horrible sound. "We can't stay in our homes comfortably due to the sound, and we can't walk on the road due to the dust," he added.

"It isn't possible to walk without covering the face and nose as the area remains dusty due to stone crushing," said Noor Islam, 52, a trader in the land port area. The machines are run all day and even at night, he alleged.

"Students and teachers cannot attend to lessons and work due to the horrid sound of the stone crushers," said Ufarmara Government Primary School Headmaster Aliar Rahman.

They protested against the illegal stone crushing several times, but to no result, he added.

Abdul Karim, 46, a trader in Burimari bazar, said occasional drives by the administration have not helped to keep the area free from environment pollution. "If the administration takes stern action, the owners will not dare to run their machines round the clock," he said.

Sirajul Islam, 45, owner of a stone crusher, said they are crushing stones imported from India and Bhutan, and

10 to 12 labourers run each crusher. "We use water on the stones during crushing to keep the area dust-free," he said. "Stone crushing is our legal business and we are operating the machines by the roadside due to lack of a safe zone here," Sirajul said.

DoE acting Deputy Director in Rangpur Mezbah Ul-Alam told this correspondent that around 400 machines are being run illegally in the land port area and polluting the environment. "Due to shortage of manpower, we cannot conduct more drives," he said, adding that DoE will go for tougher action against illegal stone crushers with the help of the local administration.

"They use water during crushing stones, but not in sufficient quantity. They also run the machines near schools, colleges, health centres and residential areas," the UNO said, adding that drives against illegal stone crushers will continue.

GREEN COCONUT TRADE Boon for middlemen, bane for growers in southern dists

M JAHIRUL ISLAM JEWEL, Jhalakathi

Green coconut trade is now boon for middlemen but bane for farmers.

Farmers grow coconut with the hope that it would help them to survive round the year but they are never able to reap the expected benefit from the fruit cultivation. They never get proper price.

Plenty of quality coconut is grown in all southern districts, which are supplied to different parts of the country.

During summer, the demand for the fruit has gradually increased in the capital and other cities.

As the green coconut contains sweet, fresh and tasty water which refreshes the body, people like to drink it especially during the scorching

summer heat.

A tree bears coconut four or five years after its plantation in the month of June and July, said Md Riaz Bahadur, agriculture officer of Rajapur upazila.

The coconut of the area is sweeter and larger than other areas as the land of the coastal area is very favourable for growing the fruit, said Sheikh Abu Bakar Siddik, deputy director of agriculture extension office in Jhalakathi.

After buying coconuts from farmers, local traders sell them to middle businessmen, who later sell the fruits to wholesalers in Dhaka. The wholesalers then sell it to vendors or small traders who sell it to consumers across the capital, said local trader Rahman Sheikh.

Local collectors buy each coconut for Tk 10 to Tk 15 from the farmers. The

local traders then pay Tk 20 for a coconut which is sold to Dhaka wholesalers for Tk 29 to Tk 35. The petty traders and vendors later buy one coconut for Tk 40. The consumers then pay Tk 45 to 60 for the fruit, said Rahman.

They have been running the coconut trade for over two decades and got prosperity, said Bachchu Hawlader, business partner of Rahman, adding that they earned profit of Tk five to ten by selling each coconut.

"I was surprised knowing that a green coconut is sold for Tk 60 while we get Tk 10 to Tk 15 only," said Md Majeda Begum, a coconut farmer of Rajapur.



Green coconuts being loaded on a Dhaka-bound truck. Demand for the refreshing fruit sees rise in different places including the capital during summer. The photo was taken from Bagri in Jhalakathi recently.