



A few of the trees that are set to be felled on a road between Rail Gate and Safirhat in Patgram's Baura union. The photo was taken on Sunday.

PHOTO: STAR

## UP chairman auctions off live trees as dead

Villagers in petition urge Lalmonirhat DC to save those

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Villagers in Baura union of Patgram upazila reacted with disbelief after they found out that the union parishad (UP) chairman himself auctioned off 240 live trees beside a road.

Urging deputy commissioner (DC) of Lalmonirhat to save those, they, in a written complaint, alleged that the UP chairman and a UP member with the connivance of upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) and upazila forest officer classified the trees as dead so a tree trader could win the bidding in the auction.

During a visit to the road -- between Rail Gate and Safirhat via Kanthatala and Gedaitari -- this correspondent found the trees to be in good health.

Many of the villagers said UP Chairman

Dulal Basuniya with the help of UP Member Abdul Matin, UNO Abdul Karim and Upazila Forest Officer Badsha Miah manipulated the auction in favour of local tree contractor Forman Ali.

They said the perfectly healthy and matured trees -- mostly mahogany, neem and eucalyptus -- were auctioned off on April 8 for only Tk 3,55,000.

The villagers said they will, by any means, resist the culprits from causing harm to their environment.

Amir Ali, a villager, said, "The greenery supplies oxygen and keeps our environment cool. In return, how can we allow those to be felled?"

"The UP chairman and the UP member auctioned off the live trees for their personal financial gains," alleged Abdus Sattar, an elderly

resident of the village.

Confirming that he won the bidding in an auction to fell 240 roadside trees, contractor Forman Ali told this correspondent that he was yet to get a work order for the job.

Refuting the accusation of irregularities, UP Chairman Dulal Basuniya told this correspondent that the trees were auctioned off in open bidding by the UNO, following an assessment report by the forest department.

Asked whether he can arbitrarily authorise felling of healthy and matured trees without those causing any harm, he braggingly said, "This season, I am auctioning off 1,800 more roadside trees on different roads in my union as new trees would be planted there."

Speaking with this correspondent, Upazila Forest Officer Badsha Miah said the roadside trees were categorised under firewood, not wood.

"We only approved dead and risky trees for auctioning, not live trees," he claimed.

UNO Abdul Karim said, although the roadside trees were auctioned off, the auction winner is yet to receive work order for felling those. "The UP chairman can still decide whether to save the live roadside trees because the union parishad is the owner of the trees."

Contacted, DC Shaiful Arif said, he asked the UNO of Patgram to probe into the allegations made by the villagers by visiting the area and submit a report to him within 14 workdays, recommending necessary steps with regards to saving live trees by the road.

### CORPOREAL PUNISHMENT

## 2nd grader suffers fractured finger

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A seven-year-old boy, student of second grade, had his finger fractured after a teacher at his school in Brahmanbaria town allegedly hit him with a metal ruler yesterday.

Rahid, the injured young boy, said his teacher Nur-e-Alam became upset and started hitting him with the metal object after he failed to solve a mathematics problem during class at Annada Government High School.

Assistant Teacher Nur-e-Alam teaches Islamic Studies at the school.

After Rahid's middle finger in his right hand started to bleed, senior students from the school took him to nearby Brahmanbaria General Hospital.

Syed Ariful Islam, a doctor at the hospital, confirmed that they gave treatment to Rahid for fracture and cuts in the middle finger of his right hand.

While at the hospital, the young boy appeared quite shaken up. The teacher's assault on him before his classmates seemed to be worrying him more than his injuries. "Sir [Nur-e-Alam] beat me up in front of all my classmates," a teary-eyed Rahid said.

Reached over phone for his comments, Nur-e-Alam claimed, "I didn't hit the kid that way. He had an old cut in the finger."

The school's headteacher, Farida Nazmin, sided with Nur-e-Alam over her young student's accusation. "The boy is a bit naughty. The teacher didn't hit him. He [Rahid] had injured himself."

### LOW VOLTAGE

## Panchagarh residents besiege power office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Several hundred residents of Panchagarh municipality yesterday laid siege to local power distributor's office for two hours, protesting incessant voltage fluctuations.

The townspeople, mostly from Basuniapara, Fakirpara and Jalapara areas, in a rally in front of the office of Northern Electricity Supply Company Limited (Nesco) said the chronic voltage fluctuations in the areas are damaging their electrical equipment and affecting their day-to-day activities.

Basuniapara resident Ariful Islam said electrical fans in their houses do not work due to low voltage of power, adding to their sufferings during the ongoing heatwave.

Carrying out of household activities in Dokropara area have become impossible as water pumps do not operate with the low voltage supplied by Nesco, said housewife Mamataj Begum.

The agitated consumers called off the siege around 12 noon when Nesco officials concerned assured of taking necessary steps to resolve the problem.

Hasnat Zaman, executive engineer of Nesco in Panchagarh, said they informed their higher authorities of the glitch in their distribution network and hoped to rectify it soon.

## No water source for Kalmakanda Hajongs

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Where there is water, there is life. A reliable source of water is one of the most fundamental requirements of any human society, but it is a far cry for people from Hajong community.

They have to walk one kilometer to reach small springs or a well to fetch water as there is no source of water near their homes at bordering village Gopalbari Chengni in Netrakona's Kalmakanda upazila.

Some 1000 people of the community are collecting water in such a way for years for want of a tube-well in their area.

Ninety-five-year-old Monosha Hajong of the village said she also passed her days collecting water in such a way.

None took initiative yet to install any tube-wells or deep tube-wells to mitigate their century old problems, said housewife Aloka Hajong, 50, of the area.

It is so difficult to walk one km every day to collect water, she said.

Rojita Hajong, 30, of the same village, said the situation worsens when the flow of water from the springs is not the same round the year.

Admitting the acute shortage of water in the

area, Md Saidur Rahman Bhuiyan, chairman of Lengura Union Parishad (UP), said setting up of a tube-well, 1,000 feet deep, is very costly here as the area is an end of a slope of The Meghalaya Hills.

The ultra-poor people set up a ring well at their own expense and collect water from it in queue, he said.

Around Tk one lakh is needed to install a deep-well and it is not a huge cost if the authorities concerned take initiatives, the chairman said.

He also said former Awami League lawmaker Chhabi Biswas visited the area on various occasions and pledged for taking steps to mitigate the problem but no action was taken yet.

The indigenous people have been living in the locality for some 400 years and they never get modern equipments for having pure drinking water, the chairman lamented.

They have recently informed incumbent lawmaker Manu Majumder about the matter, said UP member Sajal Hagonj.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Md Zakir Hossain it is hard to install deep tube-well in the hill area.

Two ring wells will be set up in the area within a month on emergency basis, said the UNO.



People from Hajong community collect water from a well, one km from their home at Gopalbari Chengni village in Netrakona's Kalmakanda upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

## Japan marks end of an era

FROM PAGE 16

Standing on a white dais flanked by Empress Michiko, who wore a long white and grey dress, Akihito bowed after he spoke.

About 300 people attended the ceremony broadcast live on television. They included Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako, as well as the heads of both houses of parliament and Supreme Court justices.

Akihito, together with Michiko, his wife of 60 years and the first commoner to marry an imperial heir, carved out an active role as a symbol of reconciliation, peace and democracy.

Akihito, who has had treatment for prostate cancer and heart surgery, said in a televised address in 2016 that he feared his age would make it hard for him to carry out his duties fully.

At the start of the ceremony, chamberlains carried the state and privy seals into the hall along with two of Japan's "Three Sacred Treasures" -- a sword and a jewel -- which together with a mirror are symbols of the throne. They are said to originate in ancient mythology.

"While keeping in our hearts the path that the emperor has walked, we will make utmost efforts to create a bright future for a proud Japan that is full of peace and hope," Abe said ahead of the emperor's remarks.

At the end of the ceremony, Akihito descended from the dais and took Michiko's hand as she stepped down. Before exiting the room, he paused, turned toward the audience and bowed again.

Earlier, Akihito performed a ritual announcement of his abdication in three palace sanctuaries, including one honouring the sun goddess Amaterasu Omikami, from whom mythology says the imperial line is descended, and two others for departed emperors and Shinto gods.

NHK television showed Akihito, wearing a dark orange traditional robe and black headress, walking slowly into the first sanctuary with a white-robed courtier holding the train and another carrying a sword. Naruhito conducted a similar ceremony.

NEW ERA  
Crowds gathered outside the Palace, a 115-hectare compound in the heart

of Tokyo protected by moats and walls, that is home to the emperor and empress. Security was tight with several thousand police officers on duty in Tokyo, media reports said.

"I think the emperor is loved by the people. His image is one of encouraging the people, such as after disasters, and being close to the people," said Morio Miyamoto, 48.

"I hope the next emperor will, like the Heisei emperor, be close to the people in the same way," he said.

The Heisei imperial era, which began on Jan. 8, 1989 after Akihito inherited the throne, saw economic stagnation, natural disasters and rapid technological change.

Not everyone was excited by the imperial changeover.

"It's a normal day. That kind of political stuff is irrelevant to us ordinary people," said Masato Saito, a 40-year-old construction worker.

"As long as they make our lives easy to live, that's all I care."

US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania offered their "heartfelt appreciation" to the royal pair in a statement.

## Nothing to worry

FROM PAGE 1

She, however, asked people to think before investing in the share market. "It [stock market] is like gambling. You can gain some time, you can lose some time."

"You are happy when you are gaining and [you] blame the government for losing and that is not correct."

"There is nothing to be worried about. We have held meetings to take measures to maintain the stability of the market."

Amid ongoing criticism over the quality of water supplied by Wasa, Hasina said there was a scarcity of water in the capital. "We have resolved the crisis."

"Yes, there is a bad odour in water supplied by Wasa at some places. But I want to ask one thing to the citizens -- do you clean your water tanks regularly?"

"If you complain about filthy water supplied by Wasa, it will fix the issue as soon as possible."

Pointing to the jute mill workers' movement, the PM said the government had taken necessary

steps to give them wages. "But I do not understand why these jute mills are not becoming profitable."

"We need to enquire whether there are any problems in the management of the mills."

"We have to find out whether plundering is taking place at the jute mills."

Hasina once again refuted RaushanErshad's demand for increasing the age limit to enter public service to 35 years from the existing 30 years.

She asked the country's people to remain alert against any militant activities and terrorism. "If you see any abnormality at any place, please take necessary steps."

"We need united efforts against any militant activities and terrorism."

Hasina then said some people were using religion against people. "They are killing innocent people in the name of religion."

"They think that they will be able to go to heaven by killing people. Killing people is a sin; I don't understand how they are thinking about going to heaven after killing people."

She claimed that Bangladesh was developing under the leadership of the current government.

Three bills were passed in the five sittings of the second session of parliament, which began on April 24.

### Admin

FROM PAGE 2

Limited declared that it would buy the oil scooped by the locals -- a move that motivated the villagers to come forward.

The company was buying the oil at Tk20 per litre from the locals.

Ruhul Amin, upazilanirbahi officer of Hathazariupazila, told The Daily Star that they were able to collect at least 15,000 litre of oil from Morachora ca-nal where the wagons fell off.

"I think it is about half of the total oil spilled in the canal. Locals sold at least 8,000 litres to Padma Oil Company," he added.

Three investigation committees were formed by Bangladesh Railway to investigate the incident.