

DESTRUCTION OF HILLOCK IN KULaura

Landless woman implicated in UP chairman’s crime

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The chairman of Bhatara union parishad (UP) in Kulaura upazila has been involved in the destruction of environment by razing a hillock in the area, but a quarter with vested interest is apparently trying to implicate a poor house help in the illegal act.

Locals alleged that all of them know very well that UP Chairman Syed AKM Nazrul Islam flattened a hillock to build Islamnagar Syed Sajid-Piyara Primary School, named after his parents, and a mosque.

Many others in the area are also destroying hillocks to sell earth or build houses illegally under the protection of the UP chairman, but rather than taking action against him, the administration has been after the innocent woman, Begun Begum, and her rickshaw-puller husband Nurul Mia, they said requesting anonymity.

Landless Begun Begum used to be a staffer at the school that the UP chairman established, but after the school closed for coronavirus pandemic, she had to start working at different houses as a maid to make ends meet, they also said.

Begun Begum said she has been living under extreme fear and going

from office to office, including that of the Department of Environment (DoE), to prove her innocence.

“I’m a penniless woman with no children of mine. I go to bed hungry at night if I can’t work for one day. But now I’m having to run around in order to clear my name from an accusation that has nothing to do with me or my husband,” said the tearful woman.

Abdul Karim Kim, executive member of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolan, said as per the Environment Conservation (Amendment) Act 2010, hill cutting is a cognizable offence and no one, even the government, semi-government or autonomous organisation, is allowed to cut or raze hills without prior permission from the authorities concerned.

But unfortunately, people with influence have been defying the law and destroying hills across the country to build houses, roads or educational institutions, he added.

This correspondent recently visited the site next to Islamnagar Syed Sajid-Piyara Primary School, in Bhatara union, where the hillock was still being cut.

But the workers engaged in the hill cutting hastily fled the scene before the correspondent was able to speak with them.



Workers fled from the site -- at Islamnagar of Bhatara union in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila -- where this correspondent arrived to witness the destruction of this hillock for the construction of a school, below.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

After this correspondent reached Bodrul Huda, assistant director of the DoE in Moulvibazar, he said, “I visited the spot recently and found that the hill was cut without permission. All hills in the area are being cut with the help of the local UP chairman.”

“I went to Begun Begum’s house... The landless woman, whose husband is a rickshaw puller, was made a scapegoat,” he said, adding that he already submitted his report in this regard with the director of DoE in Sylhet division.

However, Assistant Commissioner (Land) Nazratun Naem of Kulaura upazila had a different view over the matter. She said when they visited the site of the partially razed hillock, next to the school in Islamnagar of Bhatara union, no workers were found in the act.

When asked why in her report, filed following the field visit, she implicated

Begun Begum and her husband for the destruction of the hill, Nazratun said Begun Begum and her husband’s name were mentioned by locals as the persons responsible for the illegal act.

Besides, she could not find any proof of UP Chairman Syed AKM Nazrul Islam’s involvement in the crime during her visit, she also claimed.

Contacted, UP chairman Syed AKM Nazrul Islam said the hill was his private property and he did not obtain any prior permission from the authorities concerned before flattening 33 decimals of it for constructing a primary school and a mosque.

The same piece of land has already been handed over via registered deed to the Directorate of Primary Education, he added.

According to locals, several others -- including Motin Mia, Nurai Mia, Siraj Mia

and Nizam Mia -- are also doing brisk business by selling earth from hillocks belonging to the government and they all have blessings of the UP chairman.

Refuting the allegation, Motin Mia said he owns a registered hillock and he allowed local ward member Shamim Ahmed to extract earth from it for repair work of a road.

Contacted, Director of DoE in Sylhet Division Mohammad Emran Hossain said under no circumstances can any hill be cut and appropriate legal action will be taken against those who violate environmental laws.

With regards to the hill cutting in Bhatara union, he said they initially issued notices for UP Chairman Syed AKM Nazrul Islam, Begun Begum, Motin Mia, Nurai Mia, Siraj Mia, Nizam Mia and Shukur Mia.



Waive charges, save

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But different aeronautical, non-aeronautical and other charges, imposed by the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab), continue to remain much higher than those in the neighboring countries, he said.

The MD also said the sector was facing several other obstacles, including delays in the import of spare parts of aircraft and several customs-related problems.

He then demanded that the Caab and the ministry concerned take necessary measures immediately to remove those obstacles, which were standing in the way of the sector’s recovery.

“Due to various efforts in the last 20 years, the aviation sector has reached its present state. This sector has now been hit hard by the Covid-19 and it will not survive without policy and other support from the government,” he pointed out.

Mofizur further demanded that the government spare them from paying different charges for now considering the sorry state of their business amid the pandemic. “Allow us time to pay the current charges. We will pay all those charges as arrears when the situation becomes normal. We will be able to survive if these things are done.”

Abdullah Al Mamun, managing director of US-Bangla Airlines, said although the flights on different international routes remained suspended for over a year, the airlines were bound to pay a huge amount of money to Caab in different charges.

He said local airlines were in a very sorry state at present.

While explaining about the issue, he said US-Bangla Airlines, one of the leading private airlines of the country, has lost 70 percent of its capacity on international routes and 54 percent on the domestic routes.

“Before the Covid-19, we used to operate 36 flights per day. The number now stands at only 18, Mamun said, “Under these circumstances, it’s impossible for us to survive.”

He said so far 10 private airlines have shut down over the years. “We are not sure how long we will be able to survive if you have to continue giving huge amounts in subsidies. Maybe someday, we too have to walk down that path [closing down business] if things don’t change,” he said.

Mamun said they had been demanding waiver in aeronautical, non-aeronautical and different other charges for the last seven to eight years. But the authorities concerned are yet to pay heed to their demand.

He also said they have to pay Tk 7 to 8 crore in aeronautical charges per month, which is a huge burden on them. “We will be able to survive if those charges are waived for now.”

Kazi Wahidul Alam, an aviation expert, too said it would be hard for the country’s airlines to survive without policy and revenue support of the government.

“Many famous airlines have become bankrupt due to the Covid-19 impact and our private airlines will not be able to survive if the government does not readjust the fuel price and aeronautical, non-aeronautical charges, he said.

Biman Managing Director and CEO Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal said Biman has lost 43 percent capacity, causing it huge losses. “Recently we have purchased three brand new aircraft. Besides, five state-of-the-art technology equipped aircraft are also lying idle. But we have to pay back loan money and spend for the maintenance costs.”

State Minister for Civil Aviation M Mahbub Ali said the aviation sector was passing through a very bad time at present due to the Covid-19.

“But the government must stand beside the airlines and will do whatever necessary so that the airlines can survive,” he said.

Secretary of civil aviation ministry Md Mokammel Hossain said the government would give the highest priority on giving incentives to the sector so that it could move forward.

Hoping that the aviation sector will revive again, Caab Chairman Air Vice Marshal M Mafidur Rahman said he would discuss lowering various charges with the stakeholders.

Venusian Radio!

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The probe detected a natural radio signal that revealed the spacecraft had flown through the planet’s upper atmosphere, coming just 517 miles of the surface.

Fixed but not enforced

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days, he said. “Now it seems that it was just a show of its ‘routine work’.”

This correspondent spoke to more than a dozen consumers in different districts, including Dhaka, Cumilla and Jamalpur.

All of them said that they had paid higher prices than the one fixed by the commission. They held the commission responsible for its failure to implement the new price.

Addressing a press conference on April 29, BERC Chairman Abdul Jalil, while announcing the new price at a virtual press conference, said that they learnt from various sources that new prices were not being implemented at the retail level.

He also said that the commission will take action based on specific allegations against the distributors for selling gas at higher prices.

Multiple retailers, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star that they couldn’t sell LPG at the government rate as they had to buy from operators at higher prices.

Mohammad Maqbul-E-Elahi Chowdhury, member (gas) of the BERC, said it was not possible to implement the price by the commission alone. Here, cooperation of all -- media, consumer associations, political parties and government agencies -- will be required to implement the price.

“It will take time to fully implement [the new price]. We are collecting the list of dealers. We have sought cooperation from the government. I will send a letter to the government again after this [Eid] holiday. We will also send a letter to every DC [deputy commissioner] in this regard,” he said.

Prof Shamsul Alam, energy adviser at the Consumers’ Association of Bangladesh, said BERC has the authority of pricing as well as the power to take action against those who do not comply with its order.

Pakistan’s sinking economy

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economic aid to Pakistan totaled more than \$4.5-billion over the last 20 years and had been running at \$200 million a year. A new loan of at least \$70 million for commodity imports was still under US administration’s review.

The dispatch of Ahmed was said to reflect the growing financial strains caused by the government’s use of troops to crush a move for political autonomy in Bangladesh.

Ahmed was reported planning to ask the World Bank, IMF, the United States and other foreign creditors for permission to pay the \$60 million due on May 1 in rupees, with payment in hard currency postponed for at least six months. Pakistan’s total foreign debt was said to exceed \$4 billion.

Financial sources in the US pointed out that while Pakistan repeatedly averted devaluation over the last year, the government, during the same period, ordered \$100 million in foreign arms, including 30 French Mirage jet fighters.

REHMAN SOBHAN IN US SEEKING PUBLIC SUPPORT

Bangladesh’s leading economist and publicist Rehman Sobhan recently arrived in the US to seek public support for an early end to hostilities and for Pakistani negotiations with the Awami League for Bangladesh’s independence, reported the New York Times.

His efforts to see officials in the White House, State Department, aid agencies or

Under Section 43 of the BERC Act, the commission can impose fines or imprisonment or both.

Moreover, those who do not comply with the order are also guilty of criminal offences and corruption for taking extra money from consumers. So, legal action must be taken against those who do not obey this order, he said.

He said BERC has been inactive and had not fixed the LPG price for long. At one stage, the court took into cognizance the allegation of inaction against the BERC and ordered it to set the price.

It, however, did not set the price. Later, they set the price after a contempt of court issue was issued against them, Alam said.

“So, their reluctance and inaction have been seen during pricing in the past. We are now in doubt as to whether it is the reflection of their previous inaction in the implementation of the new price,” he said.

Azam J Chowdhury, president of the LPG Operators’ Association of Bangladesh, said the price fixed by the BERC was too low for them.

For example, the total margin of a distributor and dealer is Tk 50 each, but the BERC has fixed it at Tk 25 or Tk 20 respectively, he said. “How is it possible for a distributor to deliver a cylinder to any part of the country for only TK 25?”

“If an MRP is set, the seller is obliged to sell at that price. But why is the MRP not sustained? Because the BERC has set an arbitrary price, which is not acceptable for us. So, we, as a responsible organisation, have had several meetings with them to revise the price.”

He also said that the consumers will get LPG at low prices if the government gives a subsidy to environment-friendly fuels like LMG and others.

other branches of the administration had been turned down, added the report.

Nonetheless, according to the newspaper, Rehman had been in contact with influential legislators including Senator Edward M Kennedy, Democrat of Massachusetts, and he was scheduled to confer with Senator JW Fulbright, Democrat of Arkansas, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, as well as with staff aides.

Quoting a highly informed source the New York Times wrote: “The Punjab seem to be going for the White House and the Bengalis for the Senate.”

TAGORE’S BIRTHDAY OBSERVED AT BANGLADESH MISSION
Rabindranath Tagore’s 110th birth anniversary was celebrated against the stirring background of the freedom struggle at Bangladesh Mission in Kolkata today. The ceremony was a big draw for the people who were eager to get their first glimpse of several notable Bangladeshi artists. An exhibition on the liberation movement was also opened. Hossain Ali, the high commissioner, issued a statement expressing his respect for the poet. Bangladeshi actress Kabori also spoke about the events in Bangladesh at the ceremony. The function synchronized with the inauguration of the Bangladesh Coordination and Relief office.

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Ex-MP sent

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Senior Judicial Magistrate Ayesha Begum of Brahmanbaria Chief Judicial Magistrate’s Court sent him to jail.

AB Siddique, an office assistant of the land office, filed the case with Brahmanbaria Sadar Model Police Station on April 1.

Between 100 and 120 unnamed individuals were accused in the case.

CID Inspector Qutbul Alam, who is investigating the case, said a petition to place him on a five-day remand was submitted before the court.

The court is yet to set a date for hearing the petition.

Holy Shab-e-Qadr

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Sheikh Hasina greeted the countrymen and the Muslim Ummah across the world on the occasion.

Tomorrow will be a public holiday.

Newspapers have published special articles while state-run Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and private television channels are telecasting special programmes highlighting the significance of Lailatul Qadr.

Daily deaths top

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imposed a total shutdown. The rest are under a partial shutdown.

Meanwhile, India’s drug regulator on Friday approved for emergency use a new drug called 2-deoxy-D-glucose after clinical trials showed it aided the recovery of hospitalized patients and reduced dependence on supplemental oxygen.

The drug was jointly developed by India’s state-run Defence Research and Development Organisation and Hyderabad-based Dr.Reddy’s Laboratories Ltd.

Considering the situation, India yesterday relaxed rules to get services from hospitals.

Six hurt as oil carrying lorry explodes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

At least six people were injured when an oil carrying lorry exploded while it was being repaired by the road in Parbatipur upazila yesterday.

The injured -- Mozammel Babu, 40, Niranjan Roy, 20, Sajal Chandra Roy, 13, Shamsul Haque, 40, Rezaul Karim, 40, and Habibur Rahman -- are now undergoing treatment at Dinajpur M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital, Officer in Charge of Parbatipur Police Station Mokhlesur Rahman said.

According to witnesses, the lorry went to Parbatipur to take petroleum, but the way its driver parked the lorry at Haldabari area of the upazila to repair it around 1:00pm.

During the repair work, the oil tank of the lorry suddenly exploded and part of the tank went off and hit a pickup van, leaving six people, including the driver and helper of the van, badly injured.

Later, locals rescued the injured and took them to Parbatipur Upazila Health Complex, where all the six critically injured persons were referred to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital.

Elderly couple murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

An elderly couple were found murdered in Bagatipara upazila yesterday.

The deceased are Amir Ali, 70, and his wife Aleka Begum, 65, of Jamnagar village.

Police said unidentified criminals might have hacked the couple, who used to sleep at the veranda of their house, to death on Friday night.

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Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of goods	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	577344	Supply and Installation of IP Camera, Router, Server, Rack, One line UPS, NVR and other network accessories for Campus Networking	25/05/2021 1:00pm	25/05/2021 2:00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks’ branches up to **24/05/2021, 4:00pm**. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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