



A worker is seen cutting down tree in Manchhara bit area in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar. The workers said that they were given the task of felling the trees by one Yusuf. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

Mindless tree felling continues under the nose of forest office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A section of tree looters has been continuing felling trees of social forestry under the nose of the local forest office in Manchhara bit area under Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar.

More than 50 beneficiaries of the social forestry have fallen victims to the mindless act of tree felling. A few people have been felling trees from the area for some days in collusion with the forest officer of the adjacent forest office, the locals alleged.

Visiting the spot, this correspondent saw clear evidence of massive tree felling and found seven to eight workers cutting down several acacia trees.

Meanwhile, the local forest department seized about 20

cubic feet of timber. However, the beneficiaries of social forestry have complained that the forest department has not taken any action against those involved yet.

Another beneficiary wishing not to be named said that this gang steals and cuts down trees with help of the forest department.

Workers Ershad (26), Yakub Ali (29) and Matin Mia (40) said, “We have come to cut down trees on a daily wage of Tk 600. A man named Yusuf Mia told us to cut down the trees.”

“We have informed the forest department several times about cutting down the trees but to no effect,” said the beneficiaries.

Md Abdul Matlib, a beneficiary, said that trees from the social forestry had never been cut down in Manchhara bit before the arrival

of the new ranger.

But since his arrival, trees from the bit have been being cut down regularly. And Yusuf, who is cutting down the trees now, is also close to the range officer, he claimed.

On the other hand, about 60 cubic feet of timber was seized whereas only 20 cubic feet have been mentioned in the seizure list, he added.

Another beneficiary Abdus Shahid Chinu said, “If there is no signal from the forest department, will you dare cut the mango tree just half a kilometre away from the forest department office?”

Asked about the matter, Yusuf Mia admitted that he was felling trees, “The land owners Najib Ali and Tahir Mia have sold the trees to me in exchange for money.”

Asked if he had taken any

permission from the forest department to cut down the trees, he said that he didn’t have any permission.

Najib Ali’s son Tajul Islam said “A part of the Manchhara bit is owned by us. The case is pending in the high court.”

“However, we did not sell the trees to anyone,” he added.

Md Riaz Uddin, Kulaura Range Officer, termed the allegations against him as baseless.

He said, “I don’t know anything about this. Legal action will be taken against those involved.”

GM Abu Bakkar Siddique, assistant conservator of the forest department in Moulvibazar, said, “I wasn’t aware of the matter until now. We will conduct an inquiry and take action if the allegations of tree looting are found to be true.”

Don’t need NID anymore

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“We have a strong network of community clinics. We have been engaging all the community clinics to reach more people. Rural people still have reluctance in getting the vaccine. So, the community clinics will make them aware of vaccination,” said Health Minister Zahid Maleque recently.

The country has around 13,200 community clinics, according to DGHS.

DGHS officials said they already vaccinated around 25 lakh people in a single day engaging the community clinics.

“We have taken a target of inoculating three crore people in a month. Hopefully, we can achieve more than that,” the minister said.

The government has set a target to jab 10 lakh doses daily from this month to ramp up the Covid-19 vaccination campaign, which has gathered some pace in recent months following smooth supply of vaccines.

Earlier, around five lakh people got vaccines on an average day.

Asked about the progress, DGHS official Shamsul said, “We have inoculated around 1.27 crore people in the last 15 days.”

He also hoped that they would be able to fulfil the goal of inoculating 80 percent of the targeted population by the end of April next year.

The country has so far received around nine crore vaccine doses of different brands from various sources, shows the DGHS data.

Around 5.1 crore people have got their first dose while around 3.3 crore people got both doses, shows the data. It is around 25 percent of the targeted population, aged 18 and above, got the double jabs.

The country has suffered frequent hiccups in its regular mass inoculation since it began in February due to a dearth of doses caused by a yawning gap between commitments and compliance in vaccine supply.

Bangladesh has been witnessing a gradual decline in the number of Covid deaths and infections over the last couple of months after the Delta variant of the coronavirus, detected in May, ravaged the country in June and July.

BOOSTER VACCINE

The government may roll out Covid-19 booster vaccine once the target of inoculating 80 percent of the population is reached, Health

Minister Maleque said yesterday.

“If there is a need for booster doses, we definitely will [make arrangements] ... We will think of covering the vulnerable population first. We will also follow what the other countries are doing,” he said at an event at the State Guest House where Saudi Arabia handed over 1.5 million AstraZeneca shots to Bangladesh.

The Gulf country gave the doses as a gift.

Meanwhile, the campaign to inoculate slum residents aged 18 and above started yesterday in the capital’s Korail.

The slum dwellers registered on-the-spot and received the shots.

At a vaccination centre in Palli Bandhu Ershad Bidyalyo in Korail, this newspaper saw the residents turning up with great enthusiasm.

The campaign will be expanded to more slums in Dhaka and other cities later.

Meanwhile, the health directorate yesterday reported that two Covid-19 patients died in 24 hours preceding 8:00am. After testing 20,764 individuals, the health directorate reported 213 new cases of Covid-19, marking a positivity rate of 1.03 percent.

Tangail MP

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Born in Postkumari village of Tangail’s Mirzapur upazila on July 12, 1956, Akabbar obtained MSS and BSS degrees from Dhaka University, according to the website of Bangladesh Parliament.

After his student life, he started business and then got involved with AL.

In his student life, he engaged in Bangladesh Chhatra League politics.

On October 23, Akabbar was hospitalised. Later, he was admitted to Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka, on November 11 and he breathed his last there around 2:00pm yesterday, said sources at the Parliament Secretariat.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, ministers, state ministers and leaders of various political parties expressed deep shock at the demise of the lawmaker.

In a condolence message, Hasina prayed for eternal peace of the departed soul and conveyed deep sympathy to the bereaved family.

Akabbar will be buried at his family graveyard today after his namaz-e-janaza at Sheikh Russel Mini Stadium in Mirzapur after Johr prayers.

Health ministry

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Gazipur and Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, the National Institute of Population Research and Training’s data on breast and cervical cancer screening programmes, and purchases and vehicle purchase of different training schools, according to the GD.

They also include documents of the Directorate of Nursing and Midwifery and the Directorate of Medical Education.

The health ministry formed a probe body, led by Md Shah Alam, additional secretary (administration) of the health education division, on October 30.

The Criminal Investigation Department of police has so far interrogated nine employees of the ministry and one contractor from Rajshahi, but they could not get any clue yet, a CID officials told The Daily Star recently.

Myanmar junta

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In a report on the 2020 polls, the Asian Network for Free Elections monitoring group had said it was “by and large, representative of the will of the people”.

‘DEEP CONCERN’

“The junta is using spurious claims of electoral fraud as a key justification for its coup,” International Crisis Group’s Myanmar senior advisor Richard Horsey told AFP.

What has been done to repeal

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Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) and Nari Pakkho submitted the petition as public interest litigation on November 14, seeking the cancellation of sections 155(4) and 146(3) of the act.

The HC, in the order, also added that the government may reconsider the amendment of section 146(3).

According to the section, “When a witness is cross-examined, he may, in addition to the questions hereinbefore referred to, be asked any questions which tend –to shake his credit, by injuring his character, although the answer to such questions might tend directly or indirectly to criminate him or might expose or tend directly or indirectly to expose him to a penalty or forfeiture.”

During hearing yesterday, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told the HC that the government has decided to repeal section 155(4) of the Evidence Act and has

already prepared a draft in this regard.

Petitioners’ lawyer Sara Hossain argued before the HC bench saying that rape victims are being harassed and discriminated against due to the two sections, which are contradictory to the constitution.

As the guardian of the constitution, the HC may issue a rule questioning the legality of the sections of the law, she said.

Sara Hossain also appreciated the government for its initiative to amend section 155(4) of the act.

Lawyers ZI Khan Panna, Sharmin Akther Sheuly and Shahinuzaman Shahin also appeared for the petitioners, while Deputy Attorney General Bepul Bagmar represented the state during the hearing.

On June 30, Law Minister Anisul Huq told parliament that the provision to question the character of a rape victim in the court will be removed from the Evidence Act and the government is working in this regard.

10 hurt as college dorm floor

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respective exam hall from hospital yesterday morning to sit for their tests.

Injured Md Ruman and eyewitnesses said that after all the students had come to the dormitory, a meeting was held around 11:00pm in room 107, after which 20-25 students went out on the ground floor verandah outside the room.

Right then, the concrete floor suddenly gave way, creating a hole in the ground. Many of the student fell into the hole, while others helped rescue the injured and took them to hospital.

Md Shah Alamgir, vice-principal of Patuakhali Government College, said, “A few days ago, the college grounds were filled with sand with a dredger, as a portion of the college’s field was low-lying and work was being done to raise the ground level. As there was water coming in through the pipes along with the sand, the soil, along with the water, may have moved from

the bottom of the building. The matter has been reported to the Department of Education Engineering.”

Md Hadiuzzaman Khan, executive engineer of Patuakhali zone for the Department of Education Engineering, said that the college grounds were filled with sand by dredgers.

“At that time, the water [that flowed in with the sand] was not removed. As a result, it started flowing through the bottom of the western pass of the building. At one stage, the sand beneath was removed and a large hole had formed.

“The ground floor of the building was paved with bricks. There was no way to understand that the space below is empty. When the students gathered above a part of the empty space, the floor caved in... We have already started the renovation work.”

The three-storey dormitory building was constructed by the education engineering department in 2008.

Form distribution starts

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schools against one form. The price of a form is Tk 110.

Admissions to all government and non-government secondary schools for the next academic session will be completed under a central lottery system.

The lottery for admission to government schools is likely to be held on December 15. For non-government schools, it may take place on December 19, a top DSHE official told The Daily Star wishing anonymity.

There are 20,849 secondary schools in the country and 679 of them are public schools.

DSHE Director (secondary) Belal Hossain yesterday said they announced the date of distribution and submission of admission forms.

He said they have directed field-level

officials to update information on how many seats were vacant at government and non-government schools between November 17 to 22.

The authorities opted for the lottery system to reduce the hassle and “irregularities” in the admission process of non-government schools, top DSHE officials told The Daily Star.

Schools admit fresh students in all classes based on availability of seats. They admit the bulk of students in classes-1 and -6.

Admissions to class-1 take place under a lottery system all over the country. Students get admitted to class-9 based on their results of Junior School Certificate (JSC) or Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) examinations.

Students seeking admission to other classes need to take admission tests.

Bangladesh govt criticises

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is replying to Yahya in the language of weapon as he started it on 25th of March, 1971 and they will continue to do so until total independence is achieved which is the declared policy of the Government of Bangladesh.”

US PRIEST KILLED

The Daily Telegraph of London reported today that American Roman Catholic Priest Father William P Evans was shot dead on November 13, 1971 at Bukshnagar, 17 miles south-west of Dhaka. The boatman who used to take the priest from Gola to the Mission told Clare Hollingworth, the correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, “We were boating down the river when military guards ordered them to report to the local commanding officer as the boat was searched. Father Evans was questioned and allowed to return to the boat. But for some unknown reason they took Father and me out of the boat and forced us to sit in a ditch. Although the commanding officer was satisfied about the identity of Father Evans the army began firing at close range.”

The Father was shot dead and his body thrown into the river.

ON THE WAR FRONT

Occupation troops attacked Mukti Bahini near Ulipur of Rangpur district today. Mukti Bahini repulsed it successfully. In his action 24 Pakistani troops were killed and ten were injured.

Mukti Bahini shelled Pakistani troops position in Chandla of Comilla district killing six enemy soldiers. They also destroyed 2 bunkers of the enemy.

Mukti Bahini attacked Pakistani troops at Bhomra today and killed 5 of the enemy.

Mukti Bahini encountered Pakistani troops in Badalpur area of Sunamganj today and killed 17 enemy soldiers. Mukti Bahini also captured two rifles during this operation.

Mukti Bahini raided Ishurdi police station and killed 11 West Pakistani Policemen. They recovered eight Rifles. They also destroyed telephone exchange and VIP guest house in the town.

The freedom fighters raided Fatikchhari Police Station and circle office today and captured 11 Policemen. They hoisted Bangladesh Flag on those government offices. During this raid freedom fighters captured large quantity of ammunitions.

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Khaleda has new health

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and shifted to CCU on Sunday, nearly a week after she was discharged from the same healthcare facility.

On October 12, she was admitted to the hospital as her temperature had started fluctuating.

Meanwhile, on Thursday, Khaleda’s family members applied to the Ministry of Home Affairs seeking permission to fly her abroad for better treatment.

In response, the government yesterday said it would consider the plea only if Khaleda files a fresh application after going back to jail.

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday told the parliament, “No fresh order can be given on a petition that has already been disposed of.

“The government will consider it if she [Khaleda] applies again after going back to jail.”

Khaleda was sent to jail on February 8, 2018, in a corruption case. She has been on a temporary release since March 25 last year.

She has long been suffering from arthritis, diabetes, and dental and eye problems.

In April, she had contracted coronavirus and initially received treatment at home. As complications cropped up, she was

admitted to the hospital on April 27.

Meanwhile, Khaleda’s family members said the government could send her abroad on its expenses as she was now “under the care of the government”.

It was for the fifth time the BNP chief’s family sought the government’s permission to take her abroad, the family member said.

The last time her family sought the government’s permission was in August this year. The government refused the plea saying there was no scope for a convict to avail such a scope.

In the parliament, BNP lawmakers Harunur Rashid and Rumeen Farhana pressed the authorities for permission.

Besides, at a programme, BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday urged the government to allow Khaleda to go abroad.

“We hope your good sense will prevail. Please allow Khaleda Zia on the humanitarian ground to go abroad for better treatment,” he said.

He made the remarks while addressing a doa mehfil that was offering prayers for the quick recovery of Khaleda on the party headquarters’ ground floor.

“If anything otherwise happens to Khaleda Zia, the government has to take all the responsibilities,” he said.

Bhasani’s 45th death anniv today

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also organise different programmes, including placing wreath at the grave of Bhashani, special prayers, food distribution and a doa mahfil at the central mosque on campus.

Different organisations have organized discussion, destitute feeding, blood donation programmes and photo exhibitions at Santosh.

Born in 1880 at Dhangara

of Sirajganj, Bhasani dedicated his entire life to establishing the rights of the oppressed and downtrodden.

Maulana Bhasani fought against the imperialism and oppression of Pakistani rulers. He led the historic Farakka Long March in 1976.

He was the founder of the Pakistan Awami Muslim League. He also formed a progressive political organisation called National Awami Party (NAP).

Bhasani played a significant role in the 1969 movement.

The brave and devoted leader worked relentlessly and spent almost his life for the oppressed masses, which earned him the title “Mazlum Jana Neta” (leader of the oppressed).

Bhasani’s commitment to Islam did not make him a fanatic. His belief in secular struggle for Bangladesh was unequivocal.

Bhasani passed away in 1976.

OC Pradeep threatened people

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in Cox’s Bazar.

In his deposition, Khairul said he came to know this information about Pradeep after talking to many people in the area during the probe.

Pradeep feared that Maj (ret’d) Sinha might disclose Pradeep’s misdeeds through his documentaries. That is why, Pradeep designed the plan to kill Maj (ret’d) Sinha and the killing mission was executed with the help of police inspector Liaqat Ali and others, said Khairul.

Pradeep filed two general diaries with Teknaf Police Station before and after Maj (ret’d) Sinha’s death. There were anomalies in the GDs. It proves that Pradeep was involved in the killing, Khairul added.

Judge Mohammad Ismail of Cox’s Bazar District and Sessions Judge’s Court yesterday recorded the statement, said the court’s Public Prosecutor Faridul Alam.

The court proceedings began around 10:20am and continued until 5:00pm. All 15 accused in the case were present in the court yesterday, he added.

A total of 65 witnesses have so far testified since August 23 when the court began the case’s formal trial.

According to the charge sheet, 83 people are witnesses to the incident.

On June 27, the court framed charges against 15 accused. Of them, 12 are police personnel, including Pradeep, Liaqat, sub-

inspector Md Shahjahan, and assistant sub-inspector Liton Mia, who were all suspended.

Sinha, 36, had been making travel documentaries for a YouTube channel called “Just Go”. He was returning to Cox’s Bazar from Teknaf on July 31 last year when he was killed in a police firing at a checkpoint of Armed Police Battalion (APBn) in Teknaf’s Shamlapur area.

Police claimed that they tried to search the vehicle, and Sinha pulled out a pistol, prompting them to shoot in self-defence. They also claimed that they had seized drugs from the vehicle.

On August 5 that year, Sinha’s elder sister Sharmin Shahriar Ferdous lodged the murder case.