

1,000 more cyclone shelters to be set up
Says state minister

UNB, Bhola

The government has taken steps to build 1,000 more cyclone shelters, said State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Enamur Rahman.

“Every time a natural disaster strikes, we find that we do not have as many shelters as we need. So, we have to turn many establishments into shelters,” the state minister told the media after visiting a Sitrang hit dam in Bhola’s Monpura on Friday.

After making landfall in Bhola on Monday, Sitrang carved a path of devastation across the country, snapping communications, power links and destroying homes.

At least 29 people died as the cyclone slammed into Bangladesh’s southern coast. Enamur said 220 new cyclone shelters have already been set up.

Schoolgirl killed in road crash

UNB, Cumilla

A ninth grader was killed after being hit by a truck in Muradnagar upazila of Cumilla on Dhaka-Chattogram highway yesterday.

The deceased was identified as Sadia Akter, 15, daughter of Saiful Islam of Gomata area.

The accident occurred around noon when Sadia was crossing the road, said Premdhan Mojumdar, in-charge of Eliatganj police outpost.

Locals blocked the highway after the accident, he said, adding that a tailback was created on both sides of the road for an hour.

Police seized the truck, he said.

Meanwhile in Kushtia, a man and his son were killed in a suspected hit-and-run accident on the Kushtia-Jhenaidah highway on Friday night.

The deceased were identified as Shahjahan Ali, 65, and his son Shamim Ahammed, 28. Both are residents of Mathpur village in Kushtia Sadar upazila.

Around 9.30pm, locals spotted their bodies lying on the roadside near Bittipara Lalon Filling Station and informed police, said Debabrata Roy, officer-in-charge of Kushtia Highway Police Station.

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Some workers were spotted cutting this hill, or whatever remains of it, in Shahbazzpur of Sylhet. The tractor parked beside is used to carry the soil away for sale. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

The hills keep vanishing

Rampant hill cutting continues in Moulvibazar under authority’s nose

MINTU DESHWARA

In Moulvibazar’s Barlekha upazila, the hills keep disappearing, and everyone knows why. With nothing to do, residents are watching their surroundings fall apart with each passing day.

Violating environmental laws, influential individuals are cutting hills without a care in the world. Law enforcers come to stop them but leave after making underhanded deals with the perpetrators, claim locals.

When this correspondent visited different areas, including South Shahbazzpur and North Shahbazzpur, he found the hills being cut indiscriminately.

According to the Environment Conservation (Amendment) Act 2010, hill cutting is a cognisable offence; no government, semi-government or autonomous organisation is allowed to cut or raze hills without permission from authorities concerned.

Locals say authorities sometimes conduct raids and sentence people to jail or slap fines. Many perpetrators receive news of such raids and stop their activities for a few days. Then they return to their usual business.

On October 21, two persons were fined a total of Tk 2 lakh for cutting hills in North Shahbazzpur. But that did not change the situation there.

According to locals, such “public demonstrations of law enforcement” cannot really stop hill cutting. The local administration has to be stricter.

On October 23, one Faizur Rahman Faizul in Soaratal village of South Shahbazzpur was cutting a hill, and a tractor of one Safar Uddin Sabur was taking the soil away.

Some of the workers there said they know about the prohibition. “We are day labourers. We came to earn our daily bread. The owner has dealt with the nearby police outpost. There will be no problem.”

On condition of anonymity, the workers said Sabur invested in illegal hill cutting.



Every day, the workers lift sand, and hill cutting mostly goes on in the morning. After evening, vehicles move the soil.

When asked whether the administration interferes, they said sometimes people from police and the land office meet the influentials and leave with money.

This correspondent found Sabur in the area. He said, “I’m not involved in hill cutting. Local Faizur Rahman is cutting his hill, so I gave my vehicle.”

Some locals and a UP member of South Shahbazzpur Union Parishad have accused Sub-inspector Masuk Ahmad, in-charge of Shahbazzpur Police Investigation Centre, for taking bribes from people involved in hill cutting.

Requesting anonymity, the UP members said, “Illegal hill cutting is not stopping because of some officials of the administration. Recently, SI Masuk seized a truck but did not take legal actions for unknown reasons.”

Denying all allegations, SI Masuk said, “If someone takes money by impersonating me,

I will not be able to do anything.” During the day, no hill gets cut, and authorities definitely take legal action if they come across violations, he added.

Shah Shaheda Akther, divisional coordinator of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, Sylhet unit, said unsustainable use of land and rampant hill cutting are two major reasons behind landslides in hilly areas.

Barlekha Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sunjit Kumar Chanda said, “Two people were fined Tk 2 lakh last Friday. Drives to stop hill cutting are continuing. No perpetrator will be spared.”

Contacted, Badrul Huda, assistant director of the Department of Environment in Moulvibazar, said they have found evidence of unlawful hill cutting.

“We have a zero-tolerance policy for hill cutting. Our higher officials assigned me recently to visit and monitor every location. We will take necessary action after investigating,” he added.

SQ Chowdhury’s residence besieged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

Heirs of freedom fighters under the banner of Muktiyoddha Sangsad Santan Command demonstrated in front of Salahuddin Quader Chowdhury’s residence in port city yesterday, protesting his son’s speech at a rally in Chattogram.

The organisation held the programme as Hummam Quader Chowdhury during a BNP rally at the port city’s Polo Ground on October 12 mentioned his father as “martyr”.

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BANGSHI RIVER IN SAVAR
250 structures knocked down



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Around 250 illegal structures on the bank Bangshi in Savar were demolished in an eviction drive conducted by Dhaka District Administration during the last two days.

The drive started at Namabazar on Friday, said Savar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Majaharul Islam, who led the drive as an executive magistrate.

“Around six to seven acres of land of the river have illegally been occupied by at least

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514 sacks of fertiliser seized



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A mobile court has seized around 514 sacks of fertiliser worth Tk 4.18 lakh while those were being smuggled from a dealer’s warehouse in Lalmonirhat.

On information, Abdullah Al Noman Sarkar, Sadar upazila assistant commissioner (land) and executive magistrate, conducted the drive in Pora Batertal under Mahendranagar union on Friday night.

The fertiliser dealer has been absconding since the incident, said Noman.

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Classroom or dump site?

Bridge construction materials left in school; students, locals suffer for delay in work

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Construction work of a bridge over a canal adjacent to Sultanabad Islamia Dakhil Madrasa in Patuakhali’s Baufal upazila began at the end of March.

Previously, there was a small steel bridge over the waterway, but it had to be replaced as it was dilapidated, said the authorities.

The project, which is under the Local Government Division (LGD), was supposed to end within six months. However, the bridge is yet to be completed.

As a result, locals are suffering in absence of any alternative pathway.

No vehicles could cross the canal in the last seven months, while a narrow, makeshift iron bridge was constructed for the purpose of crossing the waterway by foot.

Many accidents have occurred in the meantime, with people, children and elderly falling off the makeshift bridge, injuring themselves in the process, said locals.

What’s more baffling is that the contractors have dumped the construction materials at premises of the nearby madrasa during this time, hampering classroom activities. They have occupied two classrooms to keep



the materials.

According to Upazila Project Implementation Office (PIO) sources, the 15-metre bridge is being constructed at a cost of Tk 76.64 lakh.

Baufal upazila Jubo League President Md Shahjahan Siraj is working as the project’s sub-contractor.

Maulana Mosharef Hossain, in-charge of Sultanabad Islamia Dakhil Madrasa, said, “They have occupied

two classrooms of the madrasa to keep construction materials, without taking our permission.”

He also said at least 20 students fell into the canal while walking over the makeshift bridge.

Suman, a rickshaw-puller, said he is earning Tk 250 per day, Tk 400-500 less than usual, as the construction of the bridge is underway, because he cannot carry passengers to the other side.



Contacted, Siraj said an alternative way was constructed, but it got damaged.

About occupying the classrooms, he said, “I kept some construction materials in a classroom due to shortage of space. We will remove those soon.”

He, however, could not come up with an answer as to how long it will take to finish the construction of the bridge.

Project engineer Rajib Biswas, who is working under LGD, said the bridge’s work has been halted for the time being as the contractor did not set up the steel plates and pillars properly.

“They will start the work soon as per planning,” he added.

Contacted, UNO Al Amin said no one can keep construction materials in classrooms. “We will look into the issue right away.”

MEGHNA RIVER
Bodies of two missing students recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

The bodies of two madrasa students of Narsingdi were recovered yesterday after they went missing while taking bath in the Meghna river on Thursday.

The body of Ghalib (15) was found around 2:00pm and Shahidul Islam Mahfuz (17) from the river at Bobkashalipur in Alokabal union at 11:00am, said Abul Kashem Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Narsingdi Model Police Station. Ghalib is the son of Azizul Haque, a newspaper

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PRAYER TIMING
OCTOBER 30
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:50 12:45 4:00 5:32 7:15
JAMAAT 5:25 1:15 4:15 5:35 7:45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION