

COX’S BAZAR 3 Rohingyas killed in landslide

They were hired by local traders to cut hills illegally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cox’s Bazar*

Three Rohingya refugees, who were buried alive while illegally cutting hills in Ukhiya of Cox’s Bazar, were hired by local soil traders at lower wages.

According to locals and forest department sources, two locals of Muhuripara village in the upazila, have been selling soil and sand by illegally cutting hills of the Forest Department for a long time.

The duo appointed the Rohingyas to cut the hills at lower wages, they alleged.

SM Sarwar Alam, divisional forest officer of South Forest Division in Cox’s Bazar, said preparations were underway to file a case on behalf of the forest department in this regard.



The dead are Syed Akbar, Zahid Hossain and Nur Kabir.

They were buried alive under a huge chunk of soil while cutting hills in Muhuripara area of Sadar Rajapalong union between 3:30am and 4:00am, said Officer-in-Charge of Ukhiya Police Station Sheikh Mohammad Ali.

Soon after the incident, other workers took the body of a victim inside the Rohingya camp, which was later recovered by police.

Police and fire fighters in Ukhiya also conducted a search at the scene and recovered two more bodies. The bodies were sent to Cox’s Bazar Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Police are investigating the incident and process is underway to file a case in this connection, said the OC.



Devotees take Astami Snan, the holy bath in the Old Brahmaputra, in Narayanganj’s Langanbandh yesterday. The pilgrims believe that the bath in the river will please Brahma and they will be relieved of their sins.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

PUBLIC HOSPITAL DOCTORS They’re to see patients after hours from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

From today, doctors at 51 public hospitals will see patients after their working hours taking fees.

The healthcare facilities include 11 district hospitals and 40 upazila health complexes.

For this, the Directorate General of Health Services instructed the chiefs of these hospitals to prepare at a meeting on Tuesday afternoon.

However, majority of the chiefs said they may not be able to start the service from today, a DGHS official, who was present at the meeting, told this newspaper, preferring anonymity.

“We have been instructed verbally, but did not receive any order in writing yet,” Anisur Rahman, superintendent of Sunamganj Sadar Hospital, told this

correspondent last night.

He said they would not be able to start the service today.

“Because we have shortages of manpower and logistics. In fact, we have been struggling to keep the outdoor service smooth during office hours.”

Besides Sunamganj Sadar Hospital, 10 other district hospitals are Manikganj, Rajbari, Feni, Cox’s Bazar, Khagrachhari, Jamalpur, Jhenaidah, Thakurgaon, Bhola, and Kurigram, according to the DGHS draft list obtained by The Daily Star.

The upazila health complexes include Savar and Keraniganj (Dhaka), Araihaaz (Narayanganj), Madhupur (Tangail), Bhairab (Kishoreganj), Boalmari (Faridpur), Tungipara (Gopalganj), Bhedarganj (Shariatpur), Senbagh, Begumganj (Noakhali), Patiya (Chattogram),

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Sultana’s death in Rab custody won’t impact US-Bangla ties Says foreign minister

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said that the death of Sultana Jesmine in Rab custody won’t impact the US- Bangladesh relations.

“This type of incident can happen suddenly. You can see such accidents happening in the US almost every day,” he said.

The minister made the remarks at the foreign ministry while responding to journalists’ queries regarding the death of Sultana.

“Just this week, children were killed in a mass shooting in the US. Is

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Editors, journos, rights bodies voice concern

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undersigned by its President Mahfuz Anam and General Secretary Dewan Hanif Mahmud.

Journalists, lawyers, human rights activists, civil society members, and even several ministers and lawmakers have been expressing concern and suggesting amendments to the act, it says.

The Editors’ Council also has been opposing the law from the very beginning.

Law Minister Anisul Huq recently hinted at amending the act to prevent its misuse. Even after this, journalists and free thinkers are continuously being harassed and repressed through the use of this act, reads the press release.

“An aggrieved person can file a complaint and a case with the Press Council regarding any news. Instead, cases are being filed under DSA,” it states.

For the sake of independent journalism and a safe environment for journalism, the Editors’ Council demands amendments to DSA immediately and the withdrawal of cases against all journalists, including Shams.

In a separate statement, Editors Guild Bangladesh expressed deep concern over the detention of Shams.

“It is everyone’s duty to ensure a safe environment for the work of free and independent media,” reads the statement signed by Mozammel Babu, president of Editors Guild and editor-in-chief of Ekattor TV.

“If the Prothom Alo publishes any news going against the ethics of journalism, the aggrieved party can seek redress at the Press Council. The matter should be settled through the Press Council,” it said.

Dip Azad, secretary general of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ), also thinks the issue could have been taken to the Press Council instead of detaining the journalist and filing a case against him.

“Our opposition to the use of Digital Security Act against journalists will remain unchanged,” he told The Daily Star last night.

“At the same time, we think Prothom Alo should have issued a clear explanation for its work that went against the ethics of journalism.”

A CID team from Dhaka picked up Shams from his home in Ambagan area near the Jahangirnagar University campus early yesterday after a Jubo League leader filed the DSA case.

It drew condemnations from different political, social and right organisations, who demanded his release immediately.

Meanwhile, 30 eminent citizens yesterday expressed concern over the picking up of journalist Shams.

In a statement, they said the reporter had been untraced for about 10 hours after he was picked up.

“Detaining a person at night without a warrant is unthinkable in a civilised country. We are dismayed at such harassment of citizens during the month of independence,” added the statement.

They demanded unconditional release of Shams and repeal of the DSA.

Among the signatories to the statement are former Dhaka University VC Prof Anwarullah Chowdhury, photographer Shahidul Alam, writer and economist Prof Anu Muhammad and Supreme Court lawyer Sara Hossain.

At a protest programme, President of CPB’s south unit Shamsuzzaman Hira said the quote in the news report in question reflects the view of every common people of the country.

“We took part in the Liberation War. The country is yet to achieve economic emancipation though we got a map and a flag. The struggle for freedom is still going on,” he said.

Rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra said the conduct with the journalist was very repulsive and unacceptable.

“Such an act [DSA] is a huge barrier to independent journalism and professional duty,” it said, adding that picking up a journalist in the middle of the night is unacceptable.

“The practice of denying the detention of Shams is unthinkable,” reads the press release signed by ASK Executive Director Nur Khan.

Founding President of Foundation for Human Rights Culture Advocate Sultana Kamal said the human rights activists have long been demanding that it is not appropriate for law enforcers to pick up anyone when they are in plainclothes because it gives them scope to conceal their identities.

“The state agencies must have transparency while discharging duties,” she said in a press release.

Rastro Songskar Andolon said the government does not dare counter the report logically by producing evidence. Demanding his immediate release, it asked the government to repeal DSA.

Agriculture still main job generator

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It is a similar story in the services sector: its share of employment declined to 37.65 percent from 39 percent in 2016-17, when the labour force survey was last carried out by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

“This is not a good sign,” said Ahsan H Mansur, executive director of the Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh.

In 2022, the total number of employed in the manufacturing sector stands at 1.21 crore, down from 1.24 crore in 2016-17.

This is somewhat puzzling because industry, particularly manufacturing, was the fastest growing sector during the same period, said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank’s Dhaka office.

“How can the absolute number employed decline when production in the sector is growing at nearly double-digit rates? Automation may be one explanation, but has it happened to an extent that would fully explain the decline in industrial employment?”

Skill shortage can explain slower employment growth, not decline in employment, Hussain said.

“When there is no employment option, you go back to farming. The strategy is you migrate from agriculture to industries or services, esp. industries. This shows that the manufacturing growth could not be maintained,” said Mansur, also a former economist of the International Monetary Fund.

The total employed by the

agriculture sector increased from 2.47 crore in 2016-17 to 3.22 crore in 2022.

“When more worker is employed in agriculture, the output per worker declines. When labour productivity is not increasing, it is alarming for economic growth,” Mansur said, adding that insufficient investment could be the reason for the lack of industrial job creation.

Meanwhile, the total number of employed has increased from 6.08 crore to 7.08 crore in the six years.

“All of the increases in employment seem to have happened in agriculture and services where job quality is a major issue. The share of agriculture in GDP has been declining at a time when employment expanded by over 70 lakh. This fact deserves deeper analysis,” Hussain said.

The total number of unemployed has declined from 27 lakh to 26.3 lakh. Subsequently, the unemployment rate has come down to 3.6 percent from 4.2 percent.

“These are nonsensical statistics. Our problem is underemployment as the poor have to work to survive in a country like Bangladesh,” Mansur said.

The definition of unemployment is the one used by the International Labour Organisation.

“That definition applies to advanced economies. What is relevant is the unemployment among the educated. The unemployment there is 24-25 percent,” said Mansur, also the chairman of Brac Bank.

However, the survey brought

some good news: female labour force participation increased in the six years.

In 2016-17, 1.86 crore women were employed. That number increased to 2.5 crore in 2022.

“Labour force growth came entirely from a remarkable increase in female participation rate by over 6 percentage points,” Hussain said.

In 2016-17, the female labour force participation rate was 36.3 percent, which increased to 42.68 percent in 2022.

“This is necessary. It is no longer possible to run a house on one income. This has positive socioeconomic implications,” Mansur added.

Female labour force participation in urban areas declined significantly: from 31 percent in 2016-17 to 23.6 percent in 2022, Hussain said.

“There appears to have been a reverse migration of female labour from urban to rural areas,” he said.

Off-farm activities have increased in recent times, said Planning Minister MA Mannan at the launch of the survey.

Activities that are related to crops and livestock but occur outside of the field such as processing, packaging and other forms of value addition are termed off-farm activities.

This perhaps explains the increase in female labour force participation in rural areas.

Female labour force participation rate in rural areas increased from 38.6 percent to 50.89 percent in 2022.

Mannan went on to cite a survey

by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies that found the poverty rate declined from 20 percent to 16 percent during the pandemic to further his point.

“We did not go for a hard lockdown — our roads were always open. We swiftly ensured a stimulus package. As a result, Bangladesh fared better than other countries with the pandemic,” he added.

During the pandemic, many returned to villages and took up farming, said Shamsul Alam, the state minister of planning.

There has been a structural change in the agricultural sector, with a variety of crop options and plenty of incentives.

“So the jump in rural jobs is not unrealistic,” he said.

In 2016-17, 4.39 crore people were employed in rural areas. In 2022, that number stood at 5.31 crore.

In contrast, urban employment increased from 1.69 crore to 1.77 crore in 2022.

Alam, however, called for increasing blue-collar jobs.

Garment factories account for up to 80 percent of manufacturing jobs and employment generation in those plants is stagnating.

“Manufacturing jobs must increase but that can’t happen overnight,” he added.

BBS is considering publishing the labour force survey, which was first done in 1980, every quarter, said Shahnaz Arefin, secretary of the statistics and informatics division.

Man jailed over rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

A Patuakhali court yesterday sent a man to jail in connection with the rape of a woman in the district’s Kalapara upazila.

The victim filed a case against Riaz, 30, of the same upazila, with Kalapara Police Station on Tuesday night.

According to the case statement, Riaz entered the victim’s house and raped her on Monday night when she was alone at her home. Hearing her scream, locals rushed to the spot and rescued her.

On information, police arrested the accused and placed him before the court, said Jasim, officer-in-charge of Kalapara Police Station.

The court then sent him to jail, he added.

The victim was sent to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital for medical tests.

Chinese crewman goes missing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

A Chinese crewman has remained missing for more than 28 hours after accidentally falling into the sea at the outer anchorage of Chattogram port on Tuesday afternoon.

The missing crewman is Zhang Mingyan, 42, chief engineer of the China flagged vessel MV Kang Huan, port officials confirmed.

The accident occurred when 16 crewmen of the vessel, anchored at the outer anchorage, were conducting lifeboat drill, said Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) Secretary Md Omar Faruk.

The lifeboat suddenly got unlocked from the davit hook and fell into the sea around 3:10pm, he said, adding that 15 crewmen were rescued immediately.

CPA and Bangladesh Coast Guard initiated a rescue operation but the missing crewman could not be found till filing of the report at 8:30pm yesterday.

3 held for helping Rohingyas get Bangladeshi NIDs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Ctg*

Three members of a forgery gang were arrested yesterday in the capital’s Agargaon area for helping Rohingya refugees obtain Bangladeshi national identity cards (NIDs) and birth certificates.

A team of Detective Branch of Chattogram Metropolitan Police arrested them.

The arrestees are Razu Sheikh, 32, Mahmudul Riad, 24, and Nayan Sheikh, 21.

Police also recovered three fake NIDs and five birth certificates from their possession.