

RADIO SILENCE IN KHULNA

Arson attack on Aug 5 leaves Betar centre in ruins

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

In the heart of Khulna, the Bangladesh Betar centre stood as a beacon of community, culture, and information. Established in 1970, it quickly became a cherished institution, bridging gaps between rural life and broader societal developments.

But on the afternoon of August 5, this vibrant hub was devastated by an arson attack that left it in ruins, silencing its broadcasts and disrupting the lives of countless listeners and staff.

A LIFELONG CONNECTION TO RADIO

For Proshad Roy, a farmer from Khalashibunia in Batiaghata upazila, Khulna Betar was more than just a radio station. Since the age of 12, Roy has been an avid listener, following in the footsteps of a family tradition that began with Santosh Radio of India.

This radio tradition has been a cornerstone of Roy's life, offering him and many others vital information on agricultural practices and local affairs.

"I've always been a regular listener to Khulna Betar. Programmes like 'Hridoye Bangladesh,' which delves into our Liberation War history, and 'Unstoppable Agrajatra Bangladesh,' which highlights regional development, have been crucial for my understanding of our community and country," Roy said.

A DEVASTATING BLOW

On August 5, after the fall of Sheikh Hasina, a group of people attacked the centre.

They ransacked the centre, setting fire to the reception room, artists' lounge, research room, officers' lounge, and multiple studios. The fire consumed over 39 rooms, reducing everything from office furniture to musical instruments to ashes. The looting and vandalism left the centre unrecognisable and halted all broadcasting operations.

Sudip Kumar Kundu, an announcer at the station, said, "I was on duty with my colleagues when the attack occurred. We managed to escape, but all our belongings

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



Nabiganj's vanishing hills

Illegal razing puts locals at risk, raises environmental concerns

MINTU DESHWARA, *Moulvibazar*

Unabated hill cutting by unscrupulous syndicates has become a serious concern in Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj.

Local communities residing at the base of the hills are also living amid the escalating risk of landslides.

Visiting the upazila's Debpara, Ghaznaipur, Paniumda unions, and the hilly areas of Dinarpur Pargana recently, this correspondent observed that a number of hills are being razed, ignoring a 2017 High Court order to preserve the hills in the district that directed the authorities concerned to take steps to this end.

Locals alleged that soil is being extracted from the razed hills and sold to different companies at high prices.

A contractor named Sohel Mia from Bahubal upazila has been cutting a hill owned by Abdur Rahim of Shatak village on Janata Bazar-Moulvibazar road in Ghaznaipur union, putting residents adjacent to the hill at risk.

The contractor has deployed excavators

and trucks to extract soil and transport it to Athangiri in Moulvibazar Sadar upazila.

Contacted, Sohel Mia said Abdur Rahim, owner of the hill, is razing it to build a house at its base. He, however, could not show any documents

Poribesh Andolon's Habiganj unit, said, "Not only in Nabiganj upazila, but also Bahubal, Chunarughat, and Madhabpur upazilas have been witnessing hill razing over the years, causing irreparable damage to the environment and biodiversity."

Tofazzal called for urgent action to protect the environment and hold those negligent in

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supporting his claim.

Oli Mia, Mubed Mia, Pabel Ahmed, and Aminur Rahman, residents of Shatak village, said they formally complained to the Nabiganj UNO, requesting immediate administrative intervention to halt the illegal hill cutting.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary and central executive member of Bangladesh

their duties accountable.

Contacted, Shaheen Delwar, assistant commissioner (Land) in Nabiganj upazila, attributed the matter to the ongoing situation of unrest. He suggested contacting the army for further assistance.

"We are aware of the matter. A patrol team has already visited the site. The owner did not have permission from the DC in this regard... We are looking into the issue," said Major SM Tanvir Islam, commander of Nabiganj camp.



PHOTO: STAR

Despite a High Court ban, unabated hill cutting continues in Nabiganj upazila of Habiganj. Locals say some unscrupulous syndicates are involved in this illegal activity. Meanwhile, people residing at the base of the hills are also living amid the escalating risk of landslides.

Three more die of dengue

UNB, *Dhaka*

Three more deaths were reported from dengue in 24 hours till yesterday morning, raising the number of fatalities from the mosquito-borne disease in Bangladesh to 74 this year.

During the period, 228 more patients were hospitalised with viral fever, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Some 881 patients are receiving treatment in different hospitals across the country.

A total of 8,930 dengue cases have been reported since January 1, 2024.

Last year, 1,705 people lost their lives due to dengue, making it the deadliest year on record.

The DGHS recorded 3,21,179 dengue cases and 3,18,749 recoveries last year.



155 AL activists sued for attacking student protest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Moulvibazar*

A case has been filed against 155 Awami League leaders and activists, including two former lawmakers, and 200 other unidentified individuals in connection with an attack on an anti-discrimination student movement in Moulvibazar on August 4.

Abdul Qadir Talukder, a coordinator of the student movement, filed the complaint with Moulvibazar Police Station on Wednesday night. Officer-in-Charge KM Nazrul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to Abdul Qadir, the incident occurred when general students, as part of a central programme, took out a procession in the district town on August 4.

Awami League, Jubo League, and Chhatra League leaders and activists, allegedly acting on instructions from former lawmakers Zillur Rahman and Neshar Ahmad, intercepted the procession.

3 organisers hurt in BCL attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Three coordinators of the anti-discriminatory student movement were injured in an attack by Chhatra League activists in Tangail's Mirzapur upazila yesterday.

The injured were: Md Mujahid, 18; Imon Siddique, 23; and Md Zakir, 24.

The incident took place on the premises of Shaheed Bhabani Prasad Saha Government College around 12:15pm.

Some students under the banner of the Anti-discriminatory Student Movement were on the field since 10:00am in the morning. Later, a group of 15-20 BCL men swooped on them and left the three coordinators injured.

The students detained one BCL activist during the attack and later handed him to over to Mirzapur Police Station.

"We are trying to nab other culprits involved in the attack," said Salah Uddin, officer-in-charge of the police station.

Five hurt in BNP infighting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

At least five people were injured as two rival groups of BNP clashed over previous enmity in Koroitola area of Pabna's Ishwardi upazila yesterday.

The incident took place at around 12:30pm when a group of pro-BNP men and Swachhchasebak Dal activists brought out a procession in the area and a group of Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal men suddenly attacked them, ensuing a clash.

Of the five injured, Md Sajal, an activist of Swachhchasebak Dal, was later admitted to the upazila health complex in critical condition.

During the clash, a few motorbikes and shops of pro-BNP men were vandalised in the area.

Police are investigating the incident, said Md Monirul Islam, OC of Ishwardi Police Station.

Mother, son die as covered-van hits bike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cumilla*

A mother and her son were killed and her husband was injured as a motorbike carrying them was hit by a covered-van in Cumilla yesterday.

The incident occurred on Dhaka-Chattogram highway in Sadar South upazila around 1:30pm, said police.

The deceased were identified as Mariam Akter Mitu, 20, of Chaudagram upazila, and her one-year-old son Alvi.

During the incident, the motorbike was crossing the highway near the upazila headquarters, said Iqbal Bahar, officer-in-charge of Mainamati Highway Police Station.

The injured Yeasin, who was driving the motorbike, was admitted to Cumilla Sadar South Upazila Health Complex.

The OC said the bodies were handed over to their family after the legal process.