

Govt agency razes hill to repair road

Agri Research Station in Khagrachhari denies allegation; DoE seeks explanation

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

The Hill Agricultural Research Station in Khagrachhari has allegedly razed part of a hill in Sadar upazila without obtaining permission from the Department of Environment (DoE).

The DoE, having found evidence of hill cutting by the government agency, has sent a letter seeking an explanation.

Officials of the research station have denied the allegation, claiming they only removed soil from the slope of the hill that had collapsed last year.

"I visited the spot and observed that a portion of a hill has been razed illegally. I then wrote to the Hill Agricultural Research Station asking for its response over razing the hill without DoE permission," said



Mohammed Hasan, assistant director of DoE in Khagrachhari.

Under the Bangladesh Environment Preservation Act 1995, amended in 2000, razing a hill without DoE approval is illegal. First-time violators may face up to two years in prison, a fine of Tk 2 lakh, or both. Repeat offenders may be sentenced to up to 10 years or fined Tk 10 lakh, or both.

A visit to the site inside the research station's grounds found that a road had been repaired near the hill, while a portion of the hill had been razed and the soil used for land filling inside the station.

Altaf Hossain, chief scientific officer of the research station, said they only removed soil from the site to repair an internal road.

"Soil from the hill had collapsed on the road, hampering our activities. We only cleared the soil to repair the road. We did not cut the hill for any other purpose," he said.

He said they had been planting trees for years to protect hills from destruction.

"We are working to restore barren hills by planting trees, so this is a misunderstanding. We are working to resolve it," he said.

Srirup Mazumder, assistant director of DoE (Chattogram region), said steps would be taken after receiving field reports from the district office.

"No one can raze hills without permission. We have to take action as per the law," he said.

Officials of 25 cadres to stage work stoppage today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Inter-Cadre Discrimination Elimination Council yesterday announced a protest programme against the suspension of several officials from various government cadres over their social media activities.

They have decided to observe a full-day work abstention today.

Besides, from 10:30am to 11:30am, officials will stand in front of their offices wearing black badges and holding banners, the organisation said in a press release signed by its Coordinator Mohammad Omar Faruq Dewan.

The statement alleged that 13 officials from different cadres had been suspended for minor reasons, such as Facebook posts, while no action was taken against members of the administration cadre for similar activities.

"The administration cadre has exploited the discriminatory state system to suppress officials from the 25 other cadres," the organisation claimed.

Currently, 26 different cadres serve in government positions, with the administration cadre reportedly enjoying the most privileges.

This has long been a source of discontent among officials from the other cadres, the statement added.



A dried up Dharla in Phulbari upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

KURIGRAM, LALMONIRHAT

Fishers in peril as major rivers dry up

S DHILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The major rivers in Kurigram and Lalmonirhat districts, including Brahmaputra, Teesta, Dudhkumar, Gangadhar and Dharla, are drying up, pushing fishermen into crisis.

With the dwindling water flow, smaller tributaries, canals, and beels are also drying up, further worsening the situation. The two districts are home to 26 rivers – five major ones and 21 smaller ones – along with 125 beels.

As a result, fishermen who have relied on these waterbodies for generations are being forced to abandon their profession. Many are now working as rickshaw pullers, farm workers, and day labourers to survive.

"Earlier, the water levels would drop during the dry season, but we could still catch fish till January. Now, the rivers and waterbodies start drying up from early November. Our boats are idle, and there are no fish to catch. We are struggling to make ends meet," said Supen Chandra Das, 55, a fisherman from Jorgach village on a Brahmaputra shoal in Kurigram.

Sudan Chandra Das, 50, from Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat, said he has been fishing in the Ratnai river his entire life. "This

year, the river dried up, leaving me with no income. Now, I buy fish from local farms and sell them in the market, but the earnings are barely enough to feed my family," he said.

Shiben Chandra Das, 50, from Chakirpashar village in Kurigram, has switched to driving a rented battery-run rickshaw in town. "I invested Tk 1 lakh in nets this year, but I haven't even earned half of it back," he said.

According to the Department of Fisheries, Kurigram has 26,200 fishermen families, while Lalmonirhat has 6,400.

"Fishermen lease government waterbodies, but most have dried up. Some registered fishers receive support under the safety net programme, but many are being forced to change professions," said Mukhtadir Khan, fisheries officer in Kurigram.

Rakibul Hasan, executive engineer of Water Development Board in Kurigram, said, "The major rivers are trans-boundary rivers. They have been drying up during dry season over the past few years due to lack of water from upstream and silt accumulation in riverbeds."

"There are 21 small rivers connected to the major rivers. If the rivers are dredged, the water flow will improve during dry season," he said.

BGB to breed and train its

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Following the inauguration, Lt Col AKM Manjur Elahi, director of the K-9 unit and training centre, said, "Currently, the dogs are deployed in 30 battalions across the country. These dogs will mainly operate at border control points and areas to detect and prevent smuggling of narcotics and explosives."

The inauguration also marked the beginning of operations for the Guard Police Battalion as a separate unit.

This battalion will primarily focus on three major tasks: traffic control, investigation and inquiry into internal incidents and accidents, and VIP and VVIP security and protocol.

Md Iftikhar Hossain, director of the Guard Police Battalion, said the newly-inaugurated Ukhia Battalion will be responsible for protecting the southeastern border and preventing human trafficking and drug smuggling.

Adviser Jahangir Alam said four battalions have been integrated into the force alongside the 64 BGB (Ukhia) Battalion.

He also pointed out that the area remains a major route for drug trafficking, alongside the ongoing Rohingya issue. "If needed, more battalions will be added in the future to ensure border security," he said.

He said the establishment of the Ukhia Battalion (64 BGB) would address border security imbalances by ensuring better patrols and surveillance.

This unit will also play a vital role in preventing Rohingya infiltration and combating drug smuggling in Teknaf and Ukhia, he said.

DB for 'all-out action' against criminals

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aiding their activities," he said.

"Alongside DB, other security forces, including the Bangladesh Army, are actively engaged. We are providing intelligence support, which will be further strengthened."

He said the law and order situation is improving and will continue to do so.

"If anyone is secretly picked up or searched by individuals in plainclothes claiming to be DB personnel, please inform us. Also, share any information about potential sabotage," he urged.

Despite the ongoing "Operation Devil Hunt," crimes like mugging and robbery continue to occur.

To enhance security, the Law and Order Core Committee, on February 25, took nine initiatives, including operations in crime-prone areas by a joint task force of the army, police, and BGB.

1,304 ARRESTED IN 5 DAYS IN DHAKA

The DMP and other law enforcement agencies arrested 283 suspected criminals, including robbers and muggers, in a crackdown against criminals in the capital from 12:01am to 11:59pm on Friday, said a DMP release.

With the latest arrests, the total number of arrests in the DMP area over the past five days stands at 1,304.

The DMP also operated 65 check posts at key locations, while APBn ran 20 alongside them. Additionally, 14 CTTC, 12 ATU, and 10 patrol teams of the DMP and Rab were deployed in crime-

prone areas, to maintain public safety and law and order across the metropolitan.

Besides, law enforcers arrested 1,231 people, including 569 as part of "Operation Devil Hunt," in the last 24 hours till yesterday afternoon, according to the Police Headquarters.

With these latest arrests, the total number of people arrested since the operation began on February 8 has risen to 12,500.

The interim government launched the operation on February 8 to restore law and order.

An analysis of reports from several districts by this newspaper found that many of the arrestees in the operation are members of the Awami League and its affiliated organisations, facing charges in cases filed after the fall of the Hasina-led government on August 5.

268 instances

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(16 cases), YouTube (38 cases), Instagram (21 cases), and Threads (three cases).

Mainstream media outlets also disseminated 10 fake news. The report said the trend of false narratives about Bangladesh in Indian mainstream and social media continued in February.

Nine instances of misinformation about Bangladesh were found in Indian media, while three cases originated from Indian social media. In February, Rumor Scanner identified 20 instances of communal misinformation, with half traced back to Indian social media accounts.

There were 16 incidents related to the activities of interim government, and a vast majority of them were negative.

Additionally, 16 fake news targeted the chief adviser. Several other advisers were also targeted. Three also targeted the press secretary.

There were 16 instances of misinformation about the Awami League, each portraying the party positively. Chhatra League, was the subject of nine fake news, most of which were in their favour. Party president Sheikh Hasina was mentioned in 12 cases.

BNP, along with its chairperson Khaleda Zia and Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, each saw six instances of misinformation about them, all negative.

Similarly, Jamaat-e-Islami was the target of 13 misinformation cases, while its leader faced three, all negative. Islami Chhatra Shibir was targeted in 16 cases, with a majority being negative.

Misinformation also targeted state forces, with seven false reports about the army, five about the police, and two involving the air force.

The Student Against Discrimination was the subject of 10 fake news in February.

On February 5, protests erupted in Dhanmondi 32 against the announcement of a speech by Sheikh Hasina. Rumor Scanner detected 11 fake news related to the incident – the highest number for a single event last month.

Reports of rising crime, including robberies and snatchings, have also fueled misinformation, with outdated footage, misleading context, and foreign clips being circulated.

A grim reminder, but little action taken

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In Dhanmondi alone, at least four buildings hosting multiple buffet restaurants had no visible emergency exits. Some had only hidden staircases or inaccessible fire extinguishers, while many relied solely on lift access, with no clear escape routes.

Dr Adil Mohammed Khan, president of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, condemned the ongoing negligence.

"Fire incidents spur temporary action, but long-term enforcement is absent. Many residential buildings now house restaurants without proper safety assessments. This is a collective failure of Rajuk, the city corporations, the fire service, and other authorities."

Lt Col Mohammad Tajul Islam Chowdhury, director of fire service (operations and maintenance), said, "Our observations indicate

that most restaurants, particularly in high-rise buildings, do not comply with fire safety regulations. Our field-level investigation is actively gathering information and evidence on these violations. Simultaneously, we are working to initiate mobile court operations to enforce fire safety."

"Since we do not have our own magistrate, we are unable to carry out as many operations as we would like. Nevertheless, we hope to launch mobile court operations soon," he added.

PROBE YET TO CONCLUDE
A year on, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has yet to complete its probe. Eight people, including restaurant staff, were arrested but are now out on bail.

Officials suggest structural flaws contributed to the rapid spread of the fire, with 95 percent of fire safety regulations violated

during construction and operation.

Anichur Rahman, special superintendent (Dhaka metro south) of CID, said, "This is an unprecedented case requiring meticulous examination. Forty-six lives were lost, making it a significant incident. We do not want to make mistakes."

He said the investigation would be completed soon and pledged an "objective, transparent, and accurate report."

Fire service reports reveal severe safety lapses, including unauthorised restaurant operations, a lack of emergency exits, and dangerously positioned gas cylinders. The blaze started with an electrical short circuit at the ground floor tea shop, "Chumuk".

Prof Kamruzzaman Majumder, who was trapped in the fire with his children, criticised the

delay in the investigation. "Even after such a horrific incident, no one has been held responsible. Those who built, approved, and operated this unsafe structure must be brought to justice."

Meanwhile, Green Cozy Cottage remains in ruins. Once guarded by police, it now stands unprotected, its furnishings looted. To prevent further intrusion, the building's owners have erected tin barriers and deployed private security personnel.

Dr MA Alim, one of the building's stakeholders, said legal proceedings had stalled action. "Once we resume operations, we plan to establish a fund from monthly service charges to provide educational scholarships for the children of those who lost their lives," he said.

For the families of the 46 victims, however, justice remains the ultimate demand.

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ADMISSION TO PLAYGROUP & NURSERY

Forms for admission to Playgroup and Nursery for the academic session 2025-26 are available in the College Office. Forms will be available upto 20 March 2025 during working days between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm.

Age limit:

Playgroup : Between 3 and 4 years of age (as on 01 July 2025)

Nursery : Between 4 and 5 years of age (as on 01 July 2025)

Last date of submission: **20 March 2025**

Requirements: Following documents must be submitted with the admission forms:

- Two copies of passport sized coloured photograph of the candidate.
- A copy of appropriate birth certificate of the candidate issued by the People's Republic of Bangladesh. (No change of Birth Certificate will be accepted later)
- Report card of last academic year (if any) for admission in Nursery.

Note: On the day of interview presence of father and mother is mandatory. Date of interview will be informed later. For further information please contact: 01949800800, 01705953257, 55060039-42, Ext 0/110

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Reference No : tsc/dhamrai/tender/24-25/73

Date : 23-02-2025

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of goods.

SL. No.	Tender ID, Package No	Procurement Nature Title	Type Method	Tender Last Selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing and Opening (Date & Time)
1	1079863 tsc/dhamrai/tender/24-25/73 Date: 23-02-2025	Goods Supply of Engineering Equipment's	NCT OTM	06 April, 2025 17:00	07 April, 2025 13:00
2	1079856 tsc/dhamrai/tender/24-25/73 Date: 23-02-2025	Goods Supply of Raw Materials	NCT OTM	06 April, 2025 17:00	07 April, 2025 12:45
3	1079644 tsc/dhamrai/tender/24-25/73 Date: 23-02-2025	Goods Supply of Others Stationary	NCT OTM	06 April, 2025 17:00	07 April, 2025 12:30
4	1079592 tsc/dhamrai/tender/24-25/73 Date: 23-02-2025	Goods Supply of Furniture	NCT TM	06 April, 2025 17:00	07 April, 2025 12:15
5	1079452 tsc/dhamrai/tender/24-25/73 Date: 23-02-2025	Goods Supply of Laptop	NCT OTM	06 April, 2025 17:00	07 April, 2025 12:00

This is online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted to submit e-Tender. Registration in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the national e-GP system portal and from e-GP helpdesk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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