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Tree looting on as authorities turn blind eye

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A man felling a live roadside tree in broad daylight at Nizpara point of Lalmonirhat-Mohendranagar road in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila on Friday morning. PHOTO: STAR

Illegal tree felling goes on unabated in different areas of Lalmonirhat district, but the authorities are yet to take any legal action against the culprits.

At least 30 mahogany and rain trees beside Amtola-Noyarhat Road and Lalmonirhat- Burir Bazar Road under Mohendranagar union of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila were felled alleged by some ruling party men in the last four days.

Union parishad (UP) Chairman Abdus Sonahan Mondol, who was informed by locals about the tree felling on Thursday, said he brought the matter to the notice of law enforcers, but they refrained from taking any legal action due to unknown reasons.

“As an unidentified gang threatened to kill me, I didn’t dare to file any case against the persons responsible for cutting down the roadside tress in my union,” the UP chairman said, adding that illegal felling of roadside trees continues in the upazila, but local administration keeps mum.

In Kaliganj upazila, around 200 trees beside Kamlabari- Jorasetu Road and Sonapukur-Chandrapur Road in Chalbala union were cut down in the last two weeks. Rashed Miah, a sawmill owner in Tusbandar area of the upazila said he got a bid to fell 142 trees beside the two

roads from Chalbala Diganta Federation, a local NGO, a month ago.

“My labourers cut down the trees in presence of the federation members, UP members and local elite,” Rashed said. He refuted the allegation of felling additional 58 trees.

Contacted, Chalbala Diganata Federation President Ashraf Ali Montu said they planted the roadside trees eight years ago on an agreement signed with the district council. “After taking permission from the district council, 142 roadside trees worth Tk 3.40 lakh were sold to legal bidder Rashed Miah,” Ashraf added.

District Council officials said felling of roadside trees without prior permission of the divisional forest officer is a criminal offence. Officials of Chalbala Diganta Federation submitted an application to the district council, seeking permission to sell the trees at an auction but the council authority didn’t approve it.

Meanwhile, a section of the ruling Awami League (AL) men felled around 500 roadside trees at 20 villages in five upazilas of the district in the first two weeks of this month allegedly in collusion with a few district council officials.

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