

## Illegal white stone extraction ravages Sylhet's Sadapathar tourist spot

- A Monitor Report

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Sylhet : Once a glittering natural attraction where sunlight danced on millions of white stones, the Sadapathar tourist spot in Bholaganj has now been reduced to a barren stretch of land. Locals blame rampant, politically backed stone looting for the devastation-and accuse authorities of turning a blind eye.

According to residents, the plunder escalated after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League government in the August 5, 2024, mass uprising. While the High Court had earlier imposed a ban on stone extraction in the area to safeguard the environment, opportunistic groups allegedly exploited the post-political-change law-and-order vacuum to strip the site of stones valued at several hundred crores of taka.

Witnesses claim that the operation has enjoyed both political patronage

and administrative inaction. Environmentalists say enforcement efforts have been weak and short-lived. Following recent visits by national advisers on environment and mineral resources, the administration briefly removed stone-crushing machinery from the area. However, residents say the looting resumed within days.

For now, however, Sadapathar-once a jewel of Sylhet's natural heritage-stands stripped of the beauty that drew thousands of visitors each day.