

Corals on the decline at Saint Martin's

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

Rampant collection of corals as well as oyster and conch shells for sale as souvenirs by the traders forces the vast stock of marine resources beneath the sea at Saint Martin's Island to decline fast.

Lack of proper conservation is causing depletion of corals hampering growth of aquatic lives like conchs and seaweeds at the island.

Corals and aquatic lives of various colours and species immensely enriched the island and made it a conspicuous possession of the country attracting a good number of tourists every year since long.

But, rampant collection of corals for lack of proper care hampers growth and reproduction aquatic lives and forces the vast stock of marine resources at the island to decline.

Following this, corals, conch and oyster-shells from neighbouring Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and The Philippines to flood the local shops and tarnish the island's glory, sources said.

The corals and conchs arrayed in the shops on the sea beach at Saint Martin's and Patenga in Chittagong bears a testimony to the magnitude of

depletion of them, said the sources.

In this regard one Salamata, a coral and conch shell seller at Patenga, said they buy corals from crews of the ships at Chittagong port.

Besides, aquatic lives like crabs, rattle snake and turtles of different species, which were once abundant in and around the coral island, also can not be found that much now a day, said the researchers.

A survey conducted under National Conservation Strategy Project 1 of the Ministry of Forest and Environment in 1997-98 showed presence of 58 species of corals, including 21 dead species, 101 species of oysters and snails in the sea at Saint Martin.

But, by now the species of corals have come down to some 22 while those of oysters and snails to some 56, the researchers added.

Though endangered by pollution, the number of species of seaweeds remains unchanged at 140, including some 10 medicinal species.

A primary survey of "Geographical Information System" attributed the depletion of different species of aquatic lives at the island to the unplanned growth of tourism and consequent ecologi-

cal imbalance.

Sea cruising and disposal of garbage by the tourists destroy ecological balance through massive pollution and bio-diversity in the sea at Saint Martin's Island, the researchers said.

Besides, high-rise buildings are being developed on the seashore ignoring its environmental impacts and the visitors and the local people pollute the seawater through human excreta when crystal clear water is needed for reproduction and growth of different species of coral and seaweeds, they said.

They said no remarkable step or scientific measure was taken in the last five years for conservation of bio-diversity and reproduction and flourishing of aquatic lives.

Three projects were taken for the development of bio-diversity at Saint Martin, Sonadia and Teknaf on different occasions only to confine them to holding seminars and symposiums, sources said.

"Under such a project taken in 1993 for Saint Martin's is yet to be inaugurated," said a researcher preferring anonymity.

"Besides, in many cases projects have failed as people responsible for the work were appointed through nepotism and on political consideration," he

said.

The initiative for developing a marine park and eco-tourism at Sirdia and Uttarpara on the southwest of Saint Martin Island is yet to see progress.

"The corals and seaweeds of Saint Martin's Island are being endangered seriously," said Prof Mohammad Zafor of Institute of Marine Science of Chittagong University.

"Formation of even a single coral (from the skeletons of tiny animals known as polyps) takes some time when one out of every 10 tourists is seen carrying corals in hands at Saint Martin Island," he said.

He said Tsunami at Indonesia and Sri Lanka also affected the aquatic lives at Saint Martin's as well as in Cox's Bazar and Chittagong.

"Production of aquatic lives, particularly seaweeds, marked some decline in the last two years after the Tsunami," he added.

"Ecological balance and environment has to be developed and maintained for proper growth or reproduction of corals and seaweeds that contribute immensely to export and tourism sectors," said Prof Zafor.



Saint Martin's Island

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

Parents in frenzied race



Children in queue face first ever interview in life to get admitted to school in the port city while anxious guardians wait for their wards. The picture was taken from Saint Mary's School.

DWAIPAYAN BARUA

The parents are anxious when they prepare their wards to face the admission ordeals at different schools in the port city.

Nine government schools at secondary level have already started selling admission forms for some 2,000 seats since December 13 ahead of the new academic year.

The parents and guardians are in a frenzied race to get admitted their children to 15 schools for quality education. At least 25,000 children will vie for 3,000 seats in these educational institutions every year.

The number of schools, government, non-government, at primary and secondary level are around 720 and 150 respectively in the city, said the sources at Primary Education Office and Chittagong Education Board.

Around 50 English medium schools, including kindergarten, run in the city charging higher fees.

Of them, reputed schools like Ispahani Public School and College, Bawoa (Bangladesh Women Association) School and College, Silver Bells, Saint Mary's

School, Residential Model School and Ideal School enrol 700 children in KG- One or preparatory classes every year.

Seventy children are enrolled at Cantonment Public School and College in class four.

There is always a rush for admission to Ispahani Public and Colleges and Bawoa School that offer education up to Secondary School Certificate (SSC) and Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC).

The admission test for 100 seats in KG-One at Ispahani Public School will be held on December 22. It has started sale of admission forms on December 18 to close today while the last date for submission of forms is December 21.

Besides, about 2,000 children are enrolled at secondary level at government schools -- Collegiate School, Dr Khastagir Govt Girls High School, Chittagong Govt School, Govt Muslim High School, Nasirabad Govt Boys School, Nasirabad Govt Girls High School, Bakalia Govt Laboratory High School, Govt Mohsin High School and Govt City Girls High School.

Of them, Collegiate School, Nasirabad Girls School and Govt

Mohsin High School, however, will start admission of larger number of students in class five from the next academic year.

As such, a greater number of students will have the opportunity to get admission in class five in the government schools this year.

A total of 830 students will be enrolled in class five and 720 in class six in the government schools in the new academic year.

Sale of admission forms in these schools from class four to class nine will continue until December 24.

The parents and the guardians wait in long queues for admission forms for their children in these schools every day.

Collegiate School will sell forms for 120 seats for class five, 230 for class six and 40 for class nine while Khastagir School will sell forms for 230 seats for only class five.

Hasmat Jahan, headmistress of Khastagir school, said they have decided to enrol only in class five in four sections.

Nasirabad Boys and Nasirabad Girls schools will enrol 120 students each in both the class five and class six while Nasirabad Boys School 40 stu-

dents in class nine.

Muslim High School has 120 seats for class-five, 120 seats for class six and 40 for class nine while Mohsin High School has 50 seats for class five, 60 for class six and 40 for class nine for new enrollment.

Bakalia Laboratory School has 60 seats for class five and class six each while City Girls School will sell forms for 10 seats for classes from class four to class nine.

The admission tests of all these schools will be held for the same classes on the same day. The test for class nine will be held on January 7, for class six, class seven and class eight on January 8 while test for class four and class five will be held on January 9.

Mohammad Aziz Uddin, headmaster of Chittagong Collegiate School, said crisis in admission aggravates as the government has not established new high school in the port city for years with increase in admission seekers.

Zahidul Karim, an anxious guardian at Chittagong Collegiate School, said admission test for the same classes the same day will give his ward no scope to try other schools.

theweekthatwas

Free eye camp at Raozan

A three-day free eye camp and blood donation programme concluded at Raozan in the district on Saturday.

Raozan Club organised the programmes under the auspices of Bangladesh Medical Association, Chittagong chapter at Raozan College auditorium in cooperation with Lions Club of Chittagong Paradise, Lions Club of Chittagong Action City, Lions Blood Bank and Ibn Sina Pharmaceuticals.

Lion District 315 B-4 Governor Dr Sri Prakash Biswas inaugurated the programme as the chief guest.

Vice District Governor Mohammed Kabir Uddin Bhuiyan, Cabinet Secretary Mahabubul Haq Khan and Cabinet Treasurer Tapan Kanti Dutta were the special guests while Mian Iftekhar Anwar, Liyakat Ali Chowdhury, Pradip Das, Ali Akhter Chowdhury, Annanda Mohon Rakhit and Golam Mohammed attended the programmes.

A total of 130 poor patients received free medication and 22 bags of blood were collected from the donors.

Workshop on

disaster management

A daylong workshop on "Earthquake Disaster Management" was held in the port city on Monday.

Organisation of Art for Children (OAC) organised the workshop in cooperation with European Commission and ActionAid at the factory of Fashion Products Limited at Agrabad.

A total of 400 officials and workers of the garment factory participated in the workshop.

Communication Specialist of Bangladesh Disaster Management Bureau Syed Ashraf conducted the workshop. OAC Executive Director Nur-E-Akbar Chowdhury, ActionAid officials and factory management also joined the session.

Drama festival ends

A three-day drama festival titled "Nandikar Natta Manjuri" concluded in the port city on Saturday.

Nandikar, a drama group of Chittagong, organised the festival on the occasion of its 32nd anniversary at Theatre Institute, Chhattagram (TIC) auditorium.

The festival began through a colourful cultural programme in the evening. A discussion was also held there.

Mahabubul Hasan, Ahmed Iqbal Haider, Olak Ghosh and Dr Badul Alam took part in the discussion. Later, Drama Pappunya of Leo Tolstoy was staged where Olak Ghosh, Shantanu Das, Najma Khatun, Auranpa Ghosh, Mohammed Saifuddin and Parvez Ahmed performed.

Uphold Ctg heritage: Mayor

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury said languages, social rituals and varied lifestyles enriched the cultural heritage of Chittagong.

Addressing as the chief guest a cultural programme titled, "Loko Oitijer Natick Jatra" (Dramatic start of folk heritage) on Wednesday, he called for upholding the special feature and characteristics of this heritage.

Theatre Institute Chhattagram (TIC) organised the programme as part of its annual programme at its auditorium.

A total of 35 actors from different groups in Chittagong sang seven popular local songs, including 'chhodo chhodo dhew tuli' 'natin boroi kha' 'ara chatgaya nojowan, malika banur deshe re'.

Later, TIC honoured three renowned artists with wreaths. The artists are Hari Prassanna Pal, Abdul Gafur Halli and Shefali Ghosh. Nani Gopal Dutta received the flower on behalf of Shefali Ghosh.

Diagnostic centres fined

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) during its drive against illegal diagnostic centres and laboratories fined Tk 3.5 lakh and sealed four of them off on Sunday.

CCC Chief Revenue Officer Syeda Sarwar Jahan conducted the drive in cooperation with Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) and CCC officials.

The CCC team found Magnam Diagnostic Centre, Ultra Assay, Micro Lab, Lab 1, Central Lab, Metro

Diagnostic and Nirupam at different areas in the port city were conducting diagnosis using date expired reagent and chemicals without labels.

X-ray room, dark room and collection room were found dirty and unhygienic and unskilled lab technicians were working without apron and gloves.

Some of blank reports were found with advance signature of doctors, including one of Lab Aid in Dhaka.

The team fined Tk 1.2 lakh to Central Lab, Tk 40,000 to Metro Diagnostic Centre, Tk 60,000 to Ultra Assay, Tk 90,000 to Magnam Diagnostic Centre, Tk 20,000 each to Micro Lab and Lab 1. Lab rooms of Magnam, Lab 1, Micro Lab and Central diagnostic were sealed off during the drive.

Tea Traders' Assoc executives

Shantanu Biswas and MA Taher were elected president and vice-president of Tea Traders' Association of Bangladesh for 2006-2008 on Wednesday.

Ispahani Group of Industries Tea Department General Manager Santanu and Sharif T House Proprietor Taher

were elected unopposed. Other office-bearers are Syed Hossain, SM Salahuddin, Mohammed Idris, Shah Moynuddin Hasan and Sarwar Mohammed Yusuf from general buyer

group, Basirul Alam Chowdhury, Abdul Hannan Chowdhury and SS Iftekhar Ahmed from general seller group, M Saiful Islam from broker group, Ahmedur Rahman Selim from ware-

house group, Gourango Chandra Ghosh, Mohammed Subid Ali, Gourango Chandra Sikder and Pawl Mandal from associate members group.



Shantanu Biswas



MA Taher