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Tea estate feasting on reserve forest

Keeps defying status quo from Ctg court; forest department watches helplessly

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

A tea estate in Chattogram has continuously been encroaching on one of the oldest and richest reserve forests in the country. Over the years, it has foiled forestation attempts and continuously damaged trees while expanding its territory.

Defying a court order, Halda Tea Valley has been ravaging the Ramgor-Sitakunda forest in Fatikchhari since the district administration leased 1,052-acre land to the estate in 2003 mentioning it as khas land.

The forest department officials say 134 acres of the leased-out land was within the reserve forest, and they sought amendment to the land record that shows it as khas land.

A Chattogram court in June 2017 imposed a status quo on the 845-acre area, which include 134 acres of the forest, following a case filed by the department, they added.

But the tea estate continued cutting trees and expanding its territory while the forest department is unable to take any action until the matter is resolved, in compliance with the court order.

The 845-acre comprises the three plots recorded as forestland in RS (Revisional Survey) in 1927-28.

Before this, these plots were recorded as reserve forest in a Calcutta gazette issued in 1893 by the then Assam-SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Defying a court order, an excavator, deployed by Halda Valley, clears trees at a hillock at Ramgor-Sitakunda forest in Chattogram's Fatikchhari upazila to make a road. The photo was taken last month.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

BUSINESS

Walton smartphones going to US

Walton is set to become the first Bangladeshi company to export locally-made smartphones to the US market, in yet another emblem of the country's might in high-tech manufacturing. The company will send the first consignment of smartphones with the 'Made in Bangladesh' label from its Gazipur plant on March 1, said SM Monjurul Alam, its managing director.

"The smartphones are bound for a renowned American brand and Walton is the 'original equipment manufacturer,'" he said, but didn't disclose the name of the US brand. "Walton always remains at the fore and keeps surprising us by hitting new milestones," Telecom Minister Mustafa Jabbar said.

STORY ON B1

7-yr-old raped, then murdered

STAR REPORTS

Police yesterday recovered the body of a seven-year-old girl, killed allegedly after rape, in Chapainawabganj. In addition, two men were sued yesterday in a rape incident in Gazipur and one accused of gangraping a minor was arrested in Khulna.

Two housewives were raped by their neighbours in separate incidents in Brahmanbaria and Habiganj since Sunday night.

Our Chapainawabganj correspondent reports Moslema Khatun Rima went out from her house, in Manik Hajirtola village under Char Bagdanga union, on Monday, but did not return. Locals found her dead body at a bamboo cluster behind MH Government Primary School, where she was a nursery student, yesterday morning and informed the police.

Police recovered the dead body from the spot at noon yesterday and sent it to Chapainawabganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy, said Mahub Alam Khan, additional superintendent of police (Sadar Circle).

It is primarily suspected that she was killed after rape, said the SI.

The victim's father Ruhul Amin said after returning from school at noon on Monday, Rima went out to play but did not return at her usual time. After

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FIRST YEAR OF BANGLADESH BANGABANDHU'S NATION-BUILDING CHALLENGES

Leadership to people



Rebecca Shelly, french litterateur and a member of a peace mission, calls on Bangabandhu on February 19, 1972.

FEBRUARY 19, 1972
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGABANDHU EMPOWERED TO REORGANISE AL Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman has been empowered by the working committee of Awami League to form a committee to reorganise the party to provide the people leadership. The working committee also sets up three subcommittees -- constitution subcommittee, disciplinary subcommittee, and manifesto and policy planning subcommittee.

In a resolution, the working committee urges the government to

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

MUJIB BORSHO No excess in celebrations

Hasina warns AL men

RASHIDUL HASAN and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last night asked her party leaders and activists not to go overboard with the observance of "Mujib Borsho", the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Speaking at a meeting of the Awami League Parliamentary Party at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban, she also asked them to stay away from installing any mural of Bangabandhu without the approval of the Bangabandhu Memorial Trust.

"I know what we had to go through after the killing of Bangabandhu. I also know about who played what role and who did what after his killing. So don't set up any mural of Bangabandhu without the permission of the Bangabandhu Memorial Trust."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

When Lundy met Herman



CNN ONLINE

Meet Herman and Lundy, recent cuddle buddies and rescue animals.

The two are an unlikely pair: Herman, a pigeon, suffered neurological damage more than a year ago. He can't fly. Little Lundy, a newborn chihuahua puppy, can't use his back legs.

But stick them together, and the two will snuggle up as though they were members of the same litter -- or nest.

The two met through the Mia Foundation, a rescue organization in Rochester, New York, that rehabilitates animals with birth defects and physical deformities. Sue Rogers, the nonprofit's founder, sends most of her rescues to foster homes around the US but keeps a few of them for school programs about bullying.

Their interspecies friendship has inspired scores of supporters to donate to the foundation. And the animals, Rogers said, make each other better.

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'Drug dealer' killed during 'gunfight'

Family says police picked him up almost a week ago

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A suspected drug peddler was killed in a "gunfight between two groups of criminals" in the district's Bochaganj upazila early yesterday.

The dead is Ayub Ali, 55, of Setabganj in the same upazila. Police said he was accused in 32 cases, including 10 for murders.

However, Ayub's family alleged that he was picked up by two policemen from

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PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 19

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:20 12:45 4:30 6:03 7:30
JAMAAT 5:55 1:15 4:45 6:07 8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Lamia to get her new school building

STAR REPORT

Her wish has been granted and she is going to have a new school building.

The authorities decided to construct the building after Lamia Akter, a fifth grader at Dakkhin Gazipur Government Primary School in Pirojpur Sadar upazila, wrote to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in June last year.

In the letter, Lamia said her school building was in a sorry state and it turned risky. She asked why some 128 children, including her, would have to attend classes in such a risky manner.

She also said the students had to clean their classrooms every day as dust fell from damaged walls and ceilings.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the letter and ran a report on it with the headline: "Pirojpur schoolgirl writes to PM for new school building".

Later, the Ministry

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Nurjahan, aged about 35, drives a battery-run rickshaw in the capital's Shaheed Minar area yesterday. A former owner of a leather goods factory, the woman had to close her small business after incurring a huge loss. She took up pulling a rickshaw to support her elderly parents. After losing several fingers in a road accident last year, she started driving this battery-run rickshaw which earns her about Tk 500 a day.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN SYRIA Air strikes hit hospitals, camps

Nearly a million fled Russia-backed regime offensive

REUTERS, Beirut/Geneva

Government air strikes have hit hospitals and displaced persons camps in northwest Syria and killed about 300 civilians as President Bashar al-Assad's forces press an assault against the last rebel stronghold, the United Nations said yesterday.

UN officials said relief agencies were overwhelmed by the humanitarian crisis as nearly one million civilians, most of them women and children, had fled towards the Turkish border in bitter winter conditions to escape the onslaught.

"Civilians fleeing the fighting are being squeezed into areas without safe shelter that are shrinking in size by the hour. And still they are bombed. They simply have nowhere to go," UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet said in a statement.

Syrian and Russian warplanes meanwhile kept up raids on the town of Darat Izza in Aleppo province yesterday, witnesses said, one day after two hospitals there were badly damaged.

At Al Kinana Hospital, blown-out walls and dust-covered medical cables and supplies were strewn about the hospital after two staff were wounded on Monday, witnesses said.

Appearing on national television on Monday, Assad said the rapid military gains presaged the eventual defeat of the nine-year-old insurgency against him although it could still take time. The rebel factions include Turkish-backed rebels and jihadist militants.

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