



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Large areas of traditional sal forest has been cleared for cultivation of banana and pineapple (the remains of trunks in the picture are of banana trees) in Beribaid area of Tangail's Madhupur upazila while the office of a local truck drivers association has been set up on a land of the forest at Jalchhatra Bazar in the same upazila.

PHOTO: MIRZASHAKIL, FOREST DEPARTMENT

# Tangail's traditional sal forest shrinking fast

Natural forest on 80,000 acres out of total 1,22,876 acres disappeared in decades as grabbing on

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

While the country prepares to observe International Day of Forests tomorrow, the pitiable condition of the traditional sal forests in Tangail district worries environmentalists and conscious citizens.

Once a large, dense forest and habitat of a variety of wildlife including tigers, peacocks and langurs, the natural forest now sees plantations of different fruits and vegetables like pineapple, banana, jujube, guava, mango, lemon, papaya, arum, turmeric, ginger etc, where harmful insecticides and chemicals are commonly used.

The vast forests continue to shrink due to years of indiscriminate grabbing by locals as well as influential outsiders who also constructed different structures including concrete ones on the grabbed forestlands, for strengthening their possession.

With the increase of population, the local grabbers extend their dwellings and croplands. The process has

continued for decades, foresters said.

Decades ago, the forests in Tangail were spread over 1,22,876 acres of land, including 45,565 acres in Madhupur; 47,220 acres in Sakhipur; 21,855 acres in Ghatail; 7,576 acres in Mirzapur; and 669 acres in Kalihati upazila, said Dr Jahirul Haque, divisional forest officer in Tangail.

Of it, 55,476 acres are reserved forests.

Besides, there are 17,436 acres of forests under Madhupur Garh region in adjacent Mymensingh.

Almost two thirds of the forests in Tangail, measuring around 80,000 acres of land, already disappeared due to indiscriminate tree looting and encroachment upon the forests, said sources at Tangail Forest Department.

The forest department in recent years recovered around 10,000 acres of forestlands, either through motivation or by force, while around 58,000 acres, out of the original 1,22,876 acres of forestlands, are still under the occupation of influential encroachers.

Meanwhile, the forest department

in the last two decades leased out around 40,000 acres of forestlands in the district under the social afforestation programme.

Forest department officials said locals, outsiders, politicians, public representatives as well as government officials are among the plunderers of the forest.

"The forests could not be saved due to various factors including shortage of necessary workforce and logistics and interference by influential people, and," said Jamal Hossain Talukder, assistant forest conservator (North) of Tangail Forest Department.

"When we go to recover any grabbed forest land, the vested interest groups take different techniques including raising the issue of the local ethnic communities. Phone calls also come from powerful quarters," he said.

"On several occasions, we attempted to recover the grabbed forest lands with the help of local administration but failed.

"A couple of years ago, a syndicate of 15 outsiders, most of them government officials, raised guava,

jujube and pineapple orchards after grabbing around 100 acres of forest lands at Pochachana village in Madhupur upazila.

"A firing range of Bangladesh Air Force was set up at Rasulpur in Madhupur upazila on 320 acres of forestland in 1978. They have extended the area and leased a portion of the land to locals for cultivation," he said.

The official also urged shifting all human habitations in the forest areas to outside.

Support from all concerned quarters is needed to recover the grabbed forest lands, said Dr Jahirul Haque, divisional forest officer in Tangail.

**VERSION OF LOCAL ETHNIC LEADERS AND FOREST DWELLERS**

Ajoy-a-Mre, a dweller of Madhupur forest and also president United Council of Indigenous Organisations of Greater Mymensingh, said the massive destruction of the forest started during 80s when the forest department started rubber plantation on the natural forest.

"Social afforestation programme

is one of the main reasons behind disappearing of a large area of the natural forest in the region. Many influential people as well as outsiders got the plots under social afforestation. This gave the outsiders opportunity to enter the forest and grab the lands after clearing natural forest.

"The authorities should give responsibility of taking care of the forests to the villagers, not any individual," said the leader belonging to Garo community.

Eugene Nokrek, president of Joishahi Adivasi Ummayon Parishad, said, "Local ethnic communities are not grabbers of the forest lands. Their forefathers started living in the area long before the Forest Act of 1927 was made."

A good number of people including 25,000 indigenous people live at 44 villages inside the Madhupur forest and the authorities should take into account their interest while making any plans regarding the forestlands, he added.

**OPINION OF ENVIRONMENTALISTS**

Somnath Lahiri, a senior researcher

of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association, blamed social afforestation as one of the main reasons behind rapid degradation of the natural forest.

Instead of preserving the natural vegetation, the forest officials have long been encouraging the people to plant alien acacia trees, he said.

The environmentalist emphasised creating 'Forest Villages' following models of India and Nepal to save the existing forests as well as reviving the natural forests with the participation of the local people.

"The mindless destruction of natural forest is not only destroying the biodiversity and ecological balance but also effecting climatic changes," said Prof Sirajul Islam of the Department of Environmental Science and Resource Management at Mawlana Bhasani Science and Technology University.

"A state-level decision as well as a crash programme, like the ongoing river recovery drive, is needed for stopping tree felling in the sal forest in Tangail. It will help to eventually revive the natural forest," he said.

## Mobile courts fine quarantine violators

STAR REPORT

Different mobile courts in eleven districts fined 17 returnees from foreign countries a total of Tk 1.45 lakhs for not abiding by the government-mandated home quarantine since Wednesday.

As a measure to contain the spread of coronavirus, the government has directed all passengers coming in from particular countries to remain in quarantine at their own homes.

The countries are Saudi Arabia, India, Singapore, South Africa, Lebanon and Canada.

The magistrates conducting the courts said many of the returnees from those countries have been increasing the risk of possible spread of the virus by not adhering to the directive.

Yesterday, at Reserve Bazar market in Rangamatú town, a mobile court fined a returnee from India Tk 5,000 and sent him to immediate home quarantine after the court found the man selling fish at the market.

Meanwhile, two returnees were fined Tk 5,000 and Tk 20,000 in Patuakhali, one returnee from Singapore Tk 10,000 in Tangail, one from India Tk 5,000 in Thakurgaon, two returnees Tk 5,000 and Tk 10,000 in Satkhira, three returnees Tk 10,000 each in Jhalakathi, one returnee from Saudi Arabia Tk 10,000 in Rajbari, one from Saudi Arabia Tk 10,000 in Jamalpur, one from South Africa Tk 10,000 and another from Lebanon Tk 5,000 in Manikganj, two from India Tk 5,000 and Tk 20,000 in Chapainawabganj, and one returnee from Canada was fined Tk 8,000 for violating the home quarantine directives.

A mobile court at Patuakhali river terminal made four people return to Dhaka after they arrived at the terminal around 6:30am, on their way to visit Kuakata seabeach.

Our reporters from corresponding districts contributed to the story.

## Youth shot dead by cousin

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A young man was shot dead by his cousin allegedly over a family feud in Rajbari's Pangsha upazila on Wednesday night.

The deceased was Kajol Biswas, 35 of Hatbon village.

Locals said there had been a feud between Robi and Kajol over different family issues.

Robi, who sold all his properties and went to India with his family members about a year ago, suddenly returned to the country on Wednesday.

Around 9:00pm, the duo along with some others were playing cards when Robi called Kajol out, took him to an adjacent orchard and shot him dead, police quoted locals as saying.



The Border Haat at no-man's land between Bangladesh and India on Kurigram border remains closed for the last one month, amid the outbreak of coronavirus. PHOTO: SDILIP ROY

## EMPLOYMENT NOTICE



If you are a dynamic and experienced professional with a drive for excellence and passion for growth, then the following positions are for you:

### MARKETING DIRECTOR

As the Marketing Director of Unilever Bangladesh Limited, the incumbent will join the Marketing team and will be responsible for the health and performance of respective categories/brands.

#### These responsibilities include:

- Lead cross functional teams to translate Category Strategy into an Internal Operating Plan.
- Lead the local category multifunctional teams (Marketing, Customer Marketing, Supply Chain, Finance, R&D) through different categories and brand planning process, delivery of plans and monitoring of category performance to implement appropriate planned changes.
- Responsible for building launch plans and customer sell-in and legal & regulatory issues.
- Responsible for ensuring market shares, category and brand turnover and Profit before Interest of respective categories.

#### The ideal candidate should have:

- 12+ years of experience in FMCG industry.
- BBA/MBA from a reputed National/International institute.
- Experience in a large multinational organization.
- All-round experience across categories and brands.
- Strong communication, stakeholder management and influencing skills.

### CHANNEL & CATEGORY DEVELOPMENT MANAGER

As a Channel & Category Development Manager, the incumbent will join the Customer Development team and will be responsible for definition and execution of overall category strategy as defined in Company's marketing plan.

#### These responsibilities include:

- Perform category analysis, provide input to Unilever category strategy, and produce brand sales strategies.
- Interpret category/channel strategy and determine product range and appropriateness by channel and store type.
- Manage new product introduction and supervise promotion planning and evaluation.
- Understand category performance and initiate remedial action as required.
- Contribute to ensuring product availability and visibility.
- Assist to develop customer management skills.
- Manage Trade Promotion budget relating to category.

#### The ideal candidate should have:

- 6-8 years of experience in FMCG industry.
- BBA / MBA from a reputed national/international institute.
- Experience in a multinational organization.
- All-round experience in FMCG Sales and Analytics.
- Strong communication and influencing skills.

### ADVANCE ANALYTICS LEAD/DATA SCIENTIST

As the Advance Analytics Lead/Data Scientist of Unilever Bangladesh Limited, the incumbent will be the change leader driving the use of data and analytics in all parts of the business.

#### These responsibilities include:

- Transform and enable better decision-making through the usage of advanced analytics.
- Connect and explore large datasets (both internal and external), help gather, analyze, and model data to solve complex business problems.
- Innovate potential future solutions and work with technology partners to build solutions and/or creative approaches to solve unique problems.
- Support the Unilever Bangladesh leadership team in evangelizing the use of Data Science in business decisions.
- Accelerate the organization journey to become fully data literate and digitally savvy.

#### The ideal candidate should have:

- 10+ years of experience in roles partnering technology/data related work area.
- Bachelors/Masters from a reputed national/international institute (BBA, Operations Research, Computer Science, IT, Statistics, Business Analytics or similar).
- Experience in CPG, Telecommunications, Retail, Consumer Durables, eCOMM preferred.
- Track record in building analytical solutions using quantitative and statistical approaches.
- Ability to communicate complex quantitative insights in a precise, and actionable manner.

Please forward your resume mentioning the position name before 4<sup>th</sup> April 2020 to [recruitment.ubl@unilever.com](mailto:recruitment.ubl@unilever.com) or send your resume Recruitment Manager, Unilever Bangladesh Limited, ZN Tower, Plot #2, Road # 8, Gulshan 1, Dhaka 1212.

The job offers a competitive remuneration & benefit package. The position is intended to be filled up at the earliest. Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.

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