



A mangrove forest in death throes

Shrimp farmers, land grabbers denuding an island in Cox's Bazar

MUAZZEM HOSSAIN SHAKIL, Cox's Bazar

A large mangrove is in its death throes because of the greed of shrimp farmers.

A land grabber syndicate has been annihilating the mangrove forest in Goldia Island of Cox's Bazar. Embankments are being constructed all over the island in order to make shrimp farms.

When The Daily Star correspond-

ent visited the area on February 15, approximately 200 workers were seen engaged in chopping down the mangrove forest, moving the timber somewhere else and building embankments for shrimp farms.

Kashem Majhi, a labour leader, told The Daily Star that he had been leading 100 labourers to chop down the mangrove forest for the last 10 days. Syedul Haque Shikder of Moheshkhali hired the labourers

through him to clear the forest in the island.

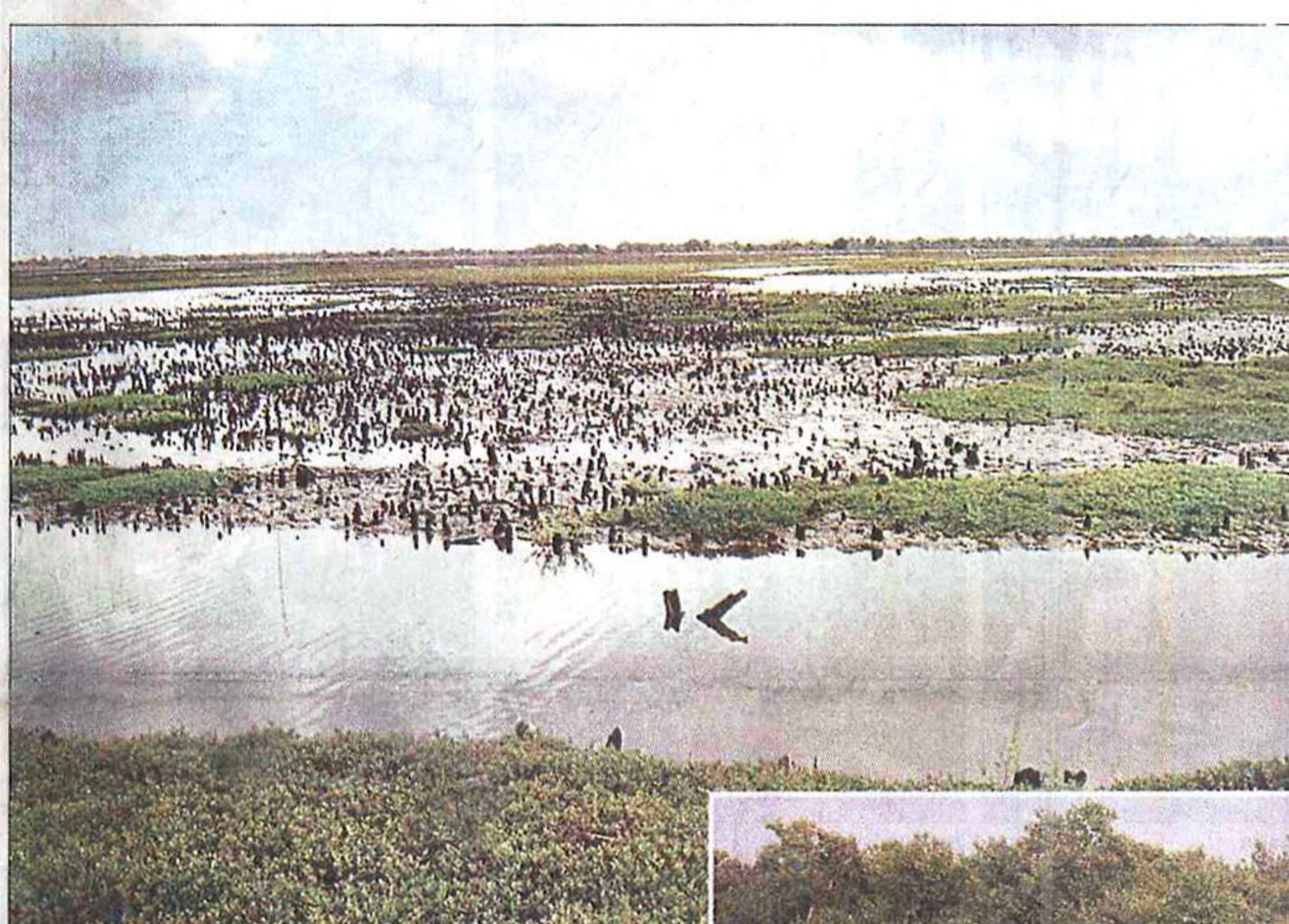
Bashi Majhi said he has been constructing embankments for shrimp farms along with some 100 workers for the last seven days. He also said Syedul was having the embankments built.

Shaplapur Forest Office In-charge MA Samad, whose office is just half a kilometre away from Goldia, said when he along with his forest guards went to Goldia Island,

the goons of Syedul Haque chased them away from the island. Samad contacted Syedul over cellphone to enquire about the matter and he was told that Syedul took lease of the island and he would show him all relevant documents. But, Syedul never showed up with the documents and continued his destruction of the island's forest.

Samad said according to cadastral survey the land between the

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A vast tract of mangrove forest in Goldia Island of Cox's Bazar has turned completely barren as shrimp farmers chopped down the trees to construct embankments all over the island. The inset shows two persons rowing a boat loaded with logs of trees collected from the mangrove forest.

PHOTO: STAR

2.5 lakh sacks of rotten dates, more relief goods seized

STAR REPORT

Joint forces during their nationwide drives yesterday recovered various goods including 2,50,000 sacks of spoilt dates, 600 litres of adulterated coconut oil and 250 pieces of corrugated iron (CI) sheets for relief from houses of BNP and Jatiya Party (JP) leaders.

They arrested eight people including a sub assistant agriculture officer.

TANGAIL

The army-led joint forces seized around 2,50,000 sacks (per bag 15 kg to 30 kg) of spoilt dates from a cold storage at Mirzapur upazila in Tangail and arrested three employees of the cold storage, reports our correspondent.

The arrestees are identified as cold storage employees Shyamal Chandra Banik, the manager, Abdul Kader, the supervisor, and Kajal Kumar Ghosh, the accountant, police and other sources confirmed.

Manager of the cold storage Shyamal Chandra Banik said Tareque M Mazumdar, owner of AL Manara Overseas Ltd at Mohakhali in Dhaka, brought 1,25,900 sacks of

dates from Chittagong and stored those in the cold storage in August 2004.

The owners of the dates had collected dates from the cold storage several times before especially in Ramadan and changed the expiration dates printed on the sacks, he said.

Asit Kumar Sarkar is chairman of AL Manara Overseas Ltd while Jatish Sarkar, Dewan Omar Faruque, Jharna Hossain, Abdur Rashid, Uttam Kumar Sen and Chandan Biswas are directors of the company, Shyamal added.

RANGPUR

The forces recovered two hundred fifteen pieces CI sheets for relief from the possession of union council (UP) chairmen and a JP leader at different areas under Pirkhan upazila yesterday.

The joint forces raided Pirkhan sadar union council chairman Sajidur Rahman's house and recovered 135 pieces of CI sheets, reports our correspondent.

Sajidur Rahman, however, managed to flee the house before the joint forces arrived.

Earlier, the joint forces raided a

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3 killed in gunfight over salt bed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Three including a schoolboy were killed and 23 others injured during an hour-long gunfight between two rival groups over ownership of 20 acres of salt bed at a Cox's Bazar village yesterday.

The dead were identified as Rezaul Karim, 12, a class five student, Nasir Uddin, 29, and Kazal, 30.

According to sources, there was a longstanding dispute between two neighbours - Jamal Uddin and Bachchu Mia - over ownership of the land at Moynadiya village under Pekuya upazila of the district.

The clash erupted when about 35 armed men led by Bachchu Mia attacked labourers, who work for Jamal Uddin, at about 10:30am, sources added.

Both sides exchanged about 100 rounds of gunfire killing three people on the spot and injuring 23 others including women and children, police officer Saifuddin Shaheen said.

Among the critically injured, Amir Ali, Nazrul, Machod and Sitaz were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital and another was given first aid at Pekuya Health Complex.

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BNP ex-MP Wadud's BMW seized

Investigators raked through his Khagrachhari house

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A special taskforce seized former BNP lawmaker Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan's BMW car worth about Tk 3 crore from a garage of his close aide and local BNP leader Mohammad Mahfuzin Khagrachhari yesterday.

Comprising members of the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), the taskforce raided the house of Mahfuzin at Kalabagan at about 1:00pm and seized the expensive vehicle, police sources said.

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PHOTO: STAR

The Tk 3 crore BMW car of former BNP lawmaker Abdul Wadud Bhuiyan seized yesterday by a special taskforce at Khagrachhari.

Export hampered as ship owners tussle over cargo

RAFIQ HASAN

The persisting tussle between foreign and local ship owners is greatly hampering exports making thousands of tonnes of cargo stockpiled at the ports.

Around, 21,000 tonnes of raw

jute to be exported to Pakistan piled up at Mongla port recently due to conflicts between the two groups of ship owners, according to sources.

Foreign flag carrier ships have to take a waiver (no objection certificate) from Bangladesh government

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Lafarge Surma Cement Ltd.

A company of Lafarge and Birla

PHOTO: STAR

before loading any export cargo as the flag vessel protection ordinance 1982 gives priority to local ships to carry goods from the country.

Local ships take advantage of this and create obstacles to foreign

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BNP worried as graft cries sharpen against Khaleda, Tarique

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

The BNP high command is trying to revitalise leaders and workers, who have virtually lost morals having seen the magnitude of corruption by a number of powerful leaders of the party and its front organisation.

Sources said party leaders' worry is also growing with corruption allegations against party chief Khaleda Zia and her son Tarique Rahman getting stronger day by day.

This will cause among the leaders and workers a serious loss of confidence in the party leadership, they said.

A few BNP leaders said they now think it would be better to be in the opposition through an election at the quickest possible time rather than delaying the next parliamentary elections which could create more problem for the party.

Sources said these leaders do not even have any objection if the BNP high command agrees to talk with their political opponent to avoid any possible disaster.

Party sources said although the BNP high-ups fear more leaders will be arrested on corruption charges, they are trying to inject courage into party men to face the situation with patience and courage.

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Prof Yunus launches his party today

UNB, Dhaka

Nobel laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus formally launches his political party today before leaving for UAE on a four-day visit.

According to a close aide of Yunus, the Nobel laureate will formally announce the name of his party, its objectives and philosophy through another open letter to the people.

He will make the formal declaration of his party at Zia International Airport at 7:00pm.

In UAE, the Nobel peace prize winner will address an International Students Conference as keynote speaker. He will return home on February 26.

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PHOTO: STAR

The Central Shaheed Minar pavement is all covered with flowers laid by people paying homage to the Language Movement heroes yesterday.

Amar Ekushey observed with reverence

Ekushey brings love to border

A CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Hundreds of Bangla speaking people from Bangladesh and West Bengal of India had a get together on the no man's land at Benapole border yesterday on the occasion of International Mother Language Day.

Individuals and cultural and social organisations from the two countries jointly observed the day there.

Singers from both the countries sang patriotic folk songs and the national anthems of the two countries.

They hugged each other and exchanged sweets and flowers among themselves.

Elated with fraternal emotion, many of the participants started to cry with joy during the event.

They observed a minute of silence in honour of the martyrs of the language movement.

Members of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Border Security Forces (BSF) of India exchanged greetings and wished for peaceful environment on the border on the occasion of the day.

Bibhas Chowdhury, a CPM leader, led cultural activists of

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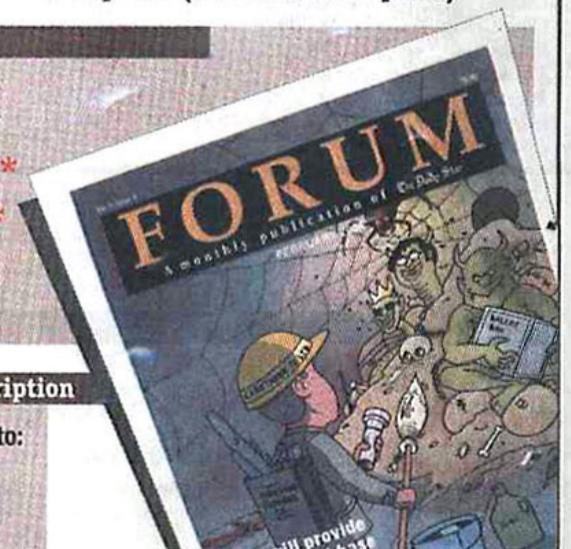
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