

## Sundarbans' fate

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the loss caused to it might be permanent, the officials warn.

The government in a bid to save the forest has already barred all activities there except fishing.

Restriction has been slapped on the collection of honey and woods from the fallen trees. But the move may fail if the affected are not rehabilitated when the relief distribution draws to an end.

"People are not turning to the Sundarbans now as there is a flow of relief," says a forest official asking not to be identified.

"But they will resort to the forest to earn a living and rebuild their houses and other structures after the ongoing relief phase is over."

"It will then be very difficult for us to protect the Sundarbans without adequate management and logistic support," he adds.

Sidr has not only affected the trees but also the food sources and grazing land for the wild animals.

"Each of the Royal Bengal Tiger maintains its own territory," says Kamal Uddin Ahmed, forest ranger of Sharankhola Range. "These territories are now all messed up. We've noticed these tigers randomly shifting from places to places."

Another forest official says, "We usually did not come across any tigers before. But now forest officials often report seeing tigers. We have to fire blank shots to shoo the tigers away to ensure that they don't enter the localities."

"The devastation has transformed the domains of the wildlife so much that they cannot recognise their own territory and food sources. But the forest has been saved and we believe it will regenerate again," another forest staff points out.

Assistant Conservator of the Sundarbans Bipul Das however believes it will take a lot of preparations and intensive management to help the forest regenerate.

"If the forest continues to be harmed, in future the people won't have its protection any more from cyclone or other natural disasters," Das observes.

"Rather the southwestern region will become more vulnerable to damage due to cyclones or tidal waves."

The 600,000-hectare Sundarbans offers more than 400,000 hectares of forest, while the remaining part includes water bodies.

About one-fourth of the 400,000 hectares of the forest has been affected by the cyclone. Had the Sundarbans not been where it is now, the devastation would have taken place in the localities with much higher intensity.

The Sundarbans is Bangladesh's guardian angel as long as storms and tidal waves are concerned. "No Sundarbans means the cyclone would have caused havoc intensely in Bagerhat, Khulna and even up to Dhaka; and thereby inflicted damage across Bangladesh," says Kamal Uddin.

Like many international experts, the forest officials and even some enlightened coastal people believe a cyclone like Sidr is the result of global warming. Such cyclones are likely to happen in future and therefore, the forest must be protected to ensure that the people are protected.

But such a task is too challenging for the forest department, which has the 'reputation' of being one of the most corrupt government agencies.

The forest officials themselves admit this. But they claim they need sufficient logistic support side by

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AP, Barquisimeto, Venezuela

side with uprooting corruption from the department.

They further say the department even cannot ensure proper monitoring and security of the Sundarbans due to insufficient logistic support, which includes short supply of fuel to run water vehicles.

Sidr has damaged many of the department's vessels. Some of its boats have been swept up to the land and the officials cannot bring those damaged boats down to water.

In addition, the forest department's own infrastructure has also been badly damaged, leaving many officials homeless.

Despite such a situation, the department has alerted all its officials about not letting anyone cut a tree or move out the fallen trees.

The department is putting number marks on the damaged trees for a proper damage assessment. The officials have been warned that if any tree is stolen, responsible ones, if found, will be suspended.

The huge responsibility of protecting the forest with inadequate logistic support may become impossible for the department to comply with if the affected people turn to the forest to save their own lives.

"We'll need stronger management to save this forest, or else theft of trees will sharply increase soon after the relief phase is over. We won't be able to handle that with the current human resources. And our failure will be the most unfortunate for the nation," quips a forest official.

## Khoka accuses

FROM PAGE 16  
"The ACC included on the list of my properties the 5 crore taka I have invested in the share market, which is not fair," Khoka complained.

The mayor of the capital went on to say, "I don't own any house at 89/9 RK Mission Road in the capital. The real fact is that the government acquired that house on a six katha of land while constructing a road there."

Khoka claimed that the ACC nonetheless included the non-existent house of his parents, which used to be there before demolition, on the list of his properties and thus misinformed the media.

Citing another example, the DCC mayor said, "A 120 decimal land at Sirajdikhan in Munshiganj was shown as my property but it's not right, as the land is yet to be divided among our family members."

About his 40 bank accounts, the mayor said only 12 to 15 of those are currently operational, the rest are either closed or do not have any money in them.

Khoka also claimed that the ACC did not follow the due process stipulated by the laws governing the commission, while ordering him to submit his wealth statement.

"In fact, the Anti-corruption Commission had come to a decision about me even before issuing the notice for me, which is neither fair nor proper," the mayor alleged.

"It is unfortunate that they have already prejudged that I own a huge amount of property disproportionate to my known sources of income," Khoka said adding, "The ACC have already decided that I have committed an offence."

The commission served notices to 12 people including the DCC mayor on Nov 18, asking them to submit their wealth statements.

## Pollution alarming

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air is the highest in winter.

The AQMP says the reason for this is climatic conditions as air pollution begins to worsen by the end of October and continues until the onset of rains.

Statistics recorded last winter through continuous air monitoring stations and satellite equipment show very high levels of PM in different parts of the city.

The PM10 concentration in Tejgaon last December was 354 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, while PM2.5 in the same area was 240 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, both more than double the level recommended by EPA.

Statistics indicate the situation was worse in January this year when the level of PM10 in Tejgaon rose to 428 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and PM2.5 to 303 mg/m<sup>3</sup>. In Tongi PM10 was recorded at 369 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and PM2.5 at 275 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and in Lalbagh the level was 350 mg/m<sup>3</sup> and at 232 mg/m<sup>3</sup> respectively.

These are all higher than average levels prevailing throughout the rest of the year. The same situation prevails in the port city of Chittagong.

The level of PM2.5 in Lalbagh last month was recorded at 171 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, which the AQMP categorises as hazardous to public health.

Both particulate matters 10 and 2.5 cause serious health hazards. The PM10 is usually present in the smoke created by burning of wood and can penetrate deep into the cardiovascular system. The PM2.5 generally arises from burning of fossil fuels and has a strong association with circulatory diseases.

According to experts at the

Department of Environment, faulty vehicles, brick kilns, dust from roads and construction sites and toxic fumes from industries are the sources of PM10 and PM2.5.

AQMP Director Dr Mohammad Nasiruddin suggests that faulty and unfit diesel-run vehicles be phased out and environment friendly technology be introduced.

He said diesel-run vehicles contribute about 60 percent of the particulate matters, while brick kilns account for another 25-30 percent.

These particulate matters may cause bronchial and kidney diseases and even lung cancer, he added.

National Institute of Diseases of Chest and Hospital (NIDCH) sources say the number of asthma and related patients increases during winter. City clinics and hospitals are already crammed with patients complaining of various respiratory problems.

Children, especially those under the age of one, are the worst sufferers of respiratory complications during winter.

According to information held by Rab, Masum killed a man called Sinha in Motijheel area about 15 years ago. He also killed a businessman at Purana Paltan Lane about five years ago and has murdered one Masum in the city.

The number of asthma and Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) patients has doubled in the last two weeks, with about 18 to 20 admissions every day," said Asif Mujtaba Mahmud, associate professor at NIDCH.

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## Malaysian

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requested his family to make the payment. Razak however could not immediately say how much his family had paid to Bashir.

Upon receiving complaints from Razak's family about the ordeal, Rab 3 asked Bashir to make arrangements for bringing Razak back home.

Bashir's brother Titu then provided a fake passport to Razak under the name of Motaleb. As Razak made an attempt to come home with that passport, he was arrested at the airport in Malaysia.

The authorities sent him to a detention camp where he was detained for four months in a miserable condition without adequate supply of foods and water. He had to share a single room with 70 to 80 detainees at the camp.

Around 700 Bangladeshis were also detained in that camp, Razak told The Daily Star adding that many other Bangladeshis are being detained in around 10 different detention camps in Malaysia.

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## Govt urged to back

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"The growth in the agriculture sector suffered due to several factors including recurrent floods, disruption in the distribution network of fertiliser, high price of diesel, shortages of electricity, and inadequate availability of quality seeds," it explains.

The BB says agriculture output target for FY08 is optimistic and "requires significant extra efforts in increasing food grains production, especially during the boro season and the remaining period of FY08."

Manufacturing sector productivity fell by one percent in the first quarter of FY08 compared to that in the first quarter of FY07 due to high oil prices and power shortages.

According to the BB estimates that take FY 2000-2001 as the base year, manufacturing sector had grown by 3.2 percent in the first quarter of FY07.

But Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) figures, with 1989-1990 as the base year, show manufacturing sector growth slowed down by 5 percentage point.

The BB figures show manufacturing grew by 1.6 percent in the first quarter of FY08 compared to 2.1 percent in the first quarter of FY07.

The central bank's preliminary estimates show that growth of jute, cotton, ready-made garments (RMGs) and leather sub-sectors fell by 2.8 percent in the first quarter of FY08 compared to that in the first quarter of FY07.

"We believe that all detained teachers were working for truth from their respective positions and they can not be involved in any anti-state activities," the memo says.

On Tuesday, Rajshahi court sentenced four RU teachers to two years' rigorous imprisonment for violating Emergency Power Rules by bringing out a silent procession on the RU campus on August 21.

The BB report however says production of chemical, petroleum and rubber products grew by 5.4 percent, while food, beverage and tobacco production rose by 2.6 percent in the first quarter.

In the remaining three quarters of FY08, the economy will rebound

## Filing of case

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participants has been questioned reasonably," Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Ruhul Amin said in the verdict.

The proceedings of the case, however, will not be illegal, nor will the accused be acquitted on the grounds that all participants were not accused in the case, the magistrate said.

In the judgment delivered last Tuesday, the court mentioned police officers' negligence in preserving case evidence, but said it will not create obstacles to proceeding with the case.

However, the court neither rebuked the police officers concerned nor recommended that the authorities take action for the failure.

The speedy trial court sentenced four Rajshahi University teachers to two years' rigorous imprisonment for violating the EPR by participating in a silent procession on August 21 in protest against the previous day's police attack on Dhaka University (DU) students. It acquitted two RU teachers of the charge.

The court examined submissions of both the sides and the case document. Magistrate Ruhul Amin said the defence counsels had argued that according to the prosecution witnesses' submission, it is

possible to identify 40 people from one photograph and 20 others from another. The case, which was filed on the basis of these photographs