

Madhupur forests disappearing fast

Country observes environment day today as felling, theft of trees continue unabated

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

The Madhupur forests have almost disappeared, thanks to encroachment, neglect in preservation, corruption by forest officials, nepotism in leasing forestland and discriminatory attitudes towards indigenous people for decades.

Once a large, dense forest and home of tigers, peacocks and langurs, Madhupur has now been reshaped with banana and pineapple orchards where harmful insecticide and chemicals are commonly used.

Besides the use of chemicals hampering natural environment and biodiversity, high-pitched noise of sawmills overwhelms the chirping of birds in the forests.

The country observes World Environment Day every year on this day while the vast forests continue to shrink due to years of indiscriminate grabbing by locals and influential people. Instead of preserving the natural vegetation, the forest officials have long been encouraging the people to plant alien acacia and eucalyptus trees.

According to the Tangail Forest Department, around 58,000 acres of forestland in the district is still in possession of the encroachers.

Of this grabbed land, around 20,000 acres lies in Madhupur, 19,500 acres in Sakhipur, 13,000 acres in Ghatail, 3,300 acres in Mirzapur and 150 acres in Kalihati upazilas.

The forests in Tangail once stretched over 122,876 acres of land in five upazilas, 45,565 acres of which was in Madhupur, 47,220 acres in Sakhipur, 21,855 acres in Ghatail, 7,576 acres in Mirzapur and 669 acres in Kalihati, forest sources say.

Of the total forests in the district, 55,476 acres is for the reserved forests, of which 38,232 acres is in Sakhipur, 7,225 acres in Mirzapur, 7,251 acres in Ghatail, 2,500 acres in Madhupur and 185 acres in



The picture, taken from Kallian in Sakhipur upazila of Tangail, itself tells the tale of widespread looting in once rich Madhupur forest.

Kalihati, the sources add. All these forests have shrunk due to indiscriminate cut and theft of trees and encroachment.

Almost two-thirds of the forests in Tangail amounting to around 80,000 acres have already disappeared due to mindless cut of trees in connivance with a section of corrupt officials, the sources allege.

The forest officials claim they could not take prompt action against the theft and encroachment on the forestland due to a shortage of workforce and logistics.

They add the influential individuals having strong political clout have grabbed a vast stretch of forests using false and forged documents.

"We are virtually helpless as about 4,500 forest related cases are pending with the courts," a forest official comments.

The sources, however,

claim a section of corrupt officials having links with powerful political quarters helped land grabbers encroach on the forests.

Wholesale felling of trees had earlier increased following establishment of a number of brickfields and sawmills, most of which were illegal, near the forests.

The forest department in the last 10 years also leased around 37,000 acres of forestland in the district under the social afforestation programme.

Forestland is supposed to be leased to the local landless and the poor under the programme. But allegations are rife that influential people and outsiders got most of the leaseholds of the land in exchange of hefty sums of bribe.

A clique of dishonest forest officials earned a huge amount of money from those leases, the sources allege.

Forest officials, however, deny the allegations.

Over 20,000 acres of forestlands out of 45,565 acres in Madhupur is still in possession of the encroachers.

Besides, rubber gardening started in the area in 1987 on 10,000 acres of forestland. Four gardens have been raised in Pirgachha, Chandpur, Santoshpur and Kamalapur in the upazila after clearing the forests.

Only 8,000 acres of land now covers what is left of the Madhupur forest.

Outsiders and local influential people grabbed the forestland, felled trees indiscriminately and set up different fruit orchards, say sources in the local administration.

They add the deforesters also constructed makeshift structures there to strengthen their position.

The forests in Sakhipur, Ghatail, Mirzapur and Kalihati

have undergone similar fate. Several markets also sprang up at different places in the district to sell stolen timber openly.

Stealing valuable trees from the forests and encroaching on the land continued unabated until the declaration of the state of emergency.

The forest department has so far recovered around 10,000 acres of land through motivation and use of force.

Interestingly, over half of that land was recovered between January and July in 2007.

Contacted, District Forest Officer Shah-e-Alam yesterday told The Daily Star the social afforestation programme continues on the recovered forestland in association with the local people.

Only the forest department cannot save the forests, he said, adding the residents of the forest areas need to be involved to create awareness among them to save the forests.

15 more sued for war crimes in two districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Fifteen more alleged collaborators of Pakistani occupation army have been sued for war crimes in 1971 in Sunamganj and Natore districts.

In Sunamganj, a case was yesterday filed with the Judicial Magistrate's Court against seven collaborators for killing an informant of freedom fighters at Balikandi village under Sadar upazila on the 13th of Bangla month Bhadra in 1378, reports our staff correspondent from Sylhet.

The accused are Malek Miah, Suruj Miah, Giasuddin, Suruj Miah (2), Abdul Haque and Abdullah of Sholaghar village and Iskandar Ali of Mainpur village under the upazila.

The complainant, Asia Khatun, in her case statement said the accused picked up her husband Siraj Miah from their house at around 8:00am, took him to a nearby place and killed him.

The magistrate asked the

officer-in-charge of Sunamganj Kotwali Police Station to place a report before the court after investigation.

A petition case was filed with the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court, Natore, on Wednesday accusing eight people of killing a villager in Sadar upazila in 1971.

Noorjahan Begam, wife of slain Roice Uddin Kazi of Haibatpur village, filed the case. The accused are Zinnat Ali, Abu Bakkar Siddique, Alauddin, Newaz Ali, Foyez Uddin, Bachchu, Abdul Kadir, and Mohammad Masum, according to a correspondent.

The complainant said the accused stormed in their house in the early hours of July 15, 1971, looted valuables and picked her husband. They took him to Gazirbeel under Natore Sadar upazila and shot him dead, she alleged.

After hearing, Magistrate Sarif Ahmed asked the officer-in-charge of Natore Police Station to accept the case as an FIR for investigation.

পাওয়ার গ্রীড কোম্পানী অব বাংলাদেশ লিঃ
POWER GRID COMPANY OF BANGLADESH LTD.
 (An Enterprise of Bangladesh Power Development Board)
 Institution of Engineers Bangladesh, New Bhaban (4th floor) 8/A Ramna, Dhaka-1000.

Memo No.: 01/PGCB/Sec(Procurement)/2009/2228 Date: June 02, 2009

RE-INVITATION FOR BIDS FOR THE DESIGN, SUPPLY, DELIVERY & INSTALLATION OF POWER TRANSFORMERS AND CURRENT TRANSFORMERS FOR 132KV GRID SYSTEM

Contract No. PGCB/GRID/09/01

- The Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Ltd. ("the Employer") invites sealed bids from eligible bidders for design, supply, delivery, installation, testing & commissioning of 9 (nine) nos. of 50/75MVA, 132/33kV power transformers and 27 (twenty seven) nos. of 132kV & 27 (twenty seven) nos. of 33kV current transformers at 132kV Grid System as defined in the bidding document (hereinafter referred to as "the Works") to be financed from the Employer's own fund. The Works include:
 - Design, supply, delivery, installation and testing & commissioning of nine (9) nos. of 50/75 MVA 132/33 kV Power transformers.
 - Design, supply, delivery, installation and testing & commissioning of 27 (twenty seven) nos. of 132kV & 27 (twenty seven) nos. of 33kV current transformers.

Details of the scope of work are specified in the bidding document.
- The Bidder must meet the following criteria:
 - The Bidders must have successfully completed supply, delivery, installation and testing & commissioning of at least one 110kV, 20MVA or higher capacity and higher voltage power transformer within the last 10 (ten) years as on the date of opening of technical proposal. or,
 - The Bidder (who is the manufacturer of power transformer) has the experience of manufacturing 50/75MVA, 110kV or higher capacity & higher voltage power transformer for the last 10 (ten) years as on the date of opening of technical proposal.
 - In case of Joint Venture, the partner in charge must have any of the above two criteria.
- The equipment under this Contract shall be procured from an ISO9001/ISO9002 or equivalent certified manufacturer who has designed, manufactured, type tested and supplied respective equipment of similar or higher specifications required by this bid for the last ten (10) years. The said equipment shall be in satisfactory service for a minimum of three (3) years as on the date of bid opening.
- The minimum Liquid Assets & Annual Turnover for the Bidder (or Joint Venture) shall not be less than the following:
 - Liquid Assets (average of last 3 years): US\$ 1.5 million
 - Annual Turnover (average of last 3 years): US\$ 8.0 million

The partner in charge in case of Joint Venture shall meet not less than 50% and each partner of the joint venture shall meet not less than 25% of the minimum criteria given above item 4(a) & 4(b).
- The Works under this contract shall be completed within 20 (twenty) months from the signing of the Contract.
- Bidders may obtain further information, inspect and purchase the bidding documents from Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Ltd. (PGCB), The Institution of Engineers Bangladesh Bhaban (4th floor), Ramna, Dhaka-1000. Tel: 9550514, 9558054, 9553663, 7169706.
- A complete set of bidding documents may be purchased by interested eligible bidders on submission of a written application to the Company Secretary, PGCB at the above address and upon payment of a nonrefundable fee of USD 50.00 (United States Dollar fifty only) or Tk. 3,500.00 (Taka three thousand five hundred only) in the form of Pay Order/ Demand Draft in favour of the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Ltd. The bidding document shall be available from 14th June, 2009.
- A single-stage two-envelope bidding procedure will be adopted. Bidders are to submit simultaneously two sealed envelopes, one containing the technical bid and one containing the price bid. Initially only the technical bids will be opened. The price bids will remain un-opened and will be kept in the custody of the Employer until the time of opening of the price bids.
- All bids must be accompanied by a Bid Security of US\$ 200,000 (United States dollar two hundred thousands only) or BDT 140,00,000 (Bangladesh Taka fourteen million only). The bid security must be included with the technical bid.
- Bids must be submitted to the Company Secretary, Power Grid Company of Bangladesh Ltd., The Institution of Engineers Bangladesh Bhaban (4th floor), IEB, Ramna, Dhaka-1000 at or before 11:30am Bangladesh Standard Time on August 05, 2009.
- The technical proposals will be opened immediately at 11:35am Bangladesh Standard Time on August 05, 2009 at the above address in the presence of bidders' representatives who choose to attend.
- In the comparison of bids, the Employer will grant a margin of preference to eligible goods manufactured in the Employer's country in accordance with the procedures outlined in the bidding documents.
- PGCB will not be responsible for any costs or expenses incurred by bidders in connection with the preparation or submit of bids including costs and expenses related to visits to the sites of installation of the Works.
- PGCB reserves the right to accept or to reject any or all bid(s) without assigning any reason thereof.

Md. Ashraf Hossain
 Company Secretary

SNIPPETS

Retired teacher murdered

A retired schoolteacher was murdered in Banskhali upazila yesterday. Makhon Lal Bhattacharya, 65, retired from Banskhali Adarsha High School around a year ago. Sources said, at least seven people attacked him when he was going to his home at Keyang Mohajanpara of Uttar Jaladi from the municipal area Wednesday night. The gang beat up and stabbed him. He was rushed to nearby health complex but succumbed to injury while being shifted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital yesterday. Later, police arrested six people in connection with the murder.

Sunamganj AL men clash

Twenty people were injured in a clash Wednesday night in Biswambharpur upazila of Sunamganj district between the rival factions of Awami League during a procession arranged in favour of the grand alliance candidate for Sunamganj-4 by-election. The by-election is scheduled for June 15. The seat went vacant after the death of Jatiya Party's Begum Momtaj Iqbal on April 17. Police and locals said, the clash ensued after AL's Biswambharpur upazila publicity secretary Abdur Rafique and upazila AL vice-president Ahmed Ali locked in an altercation over leading a procession at Chinakandi Bazar.

Clash at Khulna Polytech

Students of Khulna Polytechnic Institute vacated their hostels yesterday as the principal issued the order following Wednesday's fierce clash on the campus between two rival groups of Bangladesh Chhatra League. Saiful Islam, a second year student belonging to Sunon group was severely injured in the clash. He is now being treated at Khulna Medical College Hospital with fractures in hands and head injury. During the four-hour clash both the groups used hockey sticks, iron rods and brickbats.

Wife beaten to death

A woman was beaten to death allegedly by her husband at village Shibram of Barbari union in Lalmonirhat Sadar Wednesday night. Police recovered the body of Ayesha Begum, 23, yesterday and sent it to hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was lodged with Lalmonirhat Sadar police against Akbar Ali. Police and family sources said, Akbar Ali stole money for gambling and went out of home on Wednesday. When he returned, Ayesha rebuked him and protested gambling. At this, Akbar beat her mercilessly injuring critically. Ayesha died on way to hospital.

7 hurt in Natore clash

Seven people were injured, three of them by bullets in a clash yesterday between the supporters of two brothers over a disputed land at Chanchkoir bazar under Gurudaspur upazila. Police arrested municipality mayor Mashur Rahman alias Bablu and seized his revolver after the incident. Police and locals said, Bablu, also a local BNP leader, had a long-standing feud with his cousin Azad Shah over the land. Yesterday, Bablu and his men attacked the house of Azad and at one stage of clash opened fire, leaving seven injured. Police later arrested Bablu and seized his revolver.



Jhenidah Rab arrests three outlaws with arms, ammunition and bombs on Wednesday night.

DRIVE IN 10 SOUTH-WESTERN DISTRICTS 3 outlaws held, arms, bombs recovered

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Rab personnel arrested three underground operatives in Jhenidah Sadar upazila on Wednesday night and recovered firearms and bombs from their possession.

The arrestees are Nazim Uddin, regional leader of Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddha), and Asmat and Montu, cadres of the outlawed party.

Law enforcement agencies on June 1 launched a month-long drive in 10 districts of the South-Western region to arrest Islamist militants, armed cadres of outlawed organisations, drug and women traffickers and other listed hardened criminals, reports our staff correspondent from Khulna.

Sources in the intelligence agencies said there are about 2,500 listed Islamist militants and extremists in the south-western region as per the fresh list made recently.

Sixty-three police stations in the region have been asked to remain on high alert so that no criminal targeted for arrest can flee the country. Besides, interrogation cells and control rooms have been opened in each of the 10 districts for monitoring the drive.

A three-member team headed by Additional Police Super has been formed to interrogate the arrestees, the

Additional DIG said. Our Jhenidah correspondent reported that a team of Rab-6 arrested PBCP Nazim Uddin in front of Naldanga Bhusan Pilot School at around 11:00pm.

On his confessional statement, the elite force then arrested Asmat at Nagarathan bus stand and Montu at Tatultala Bazar.

After interrogation, the Rab personnel recovered five guns, 24 bullets and eight bombs from their possession.

During quizzing, PBCP leader Nazim confessed to killing Golam Kibria of Ashwasthali village on February 27, Enamul Haq of Suti Durgapur village on March 8 and Abdul Goni of Mirzapur village on April 16 this year.

Schoolboy drowns

A CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A schoolboy drowned yesterday in a pond at village Bongertari in the Angorpota-Dahogram enclave of Patgram upazila.

Firoz Ahmed, 8, was son of Motiur Rahman and a student of class four at Dahogram Government Primary School. Firoz drowned in the pond when he along with five other boys were taking bath in the morning, family sources said.