

Govt to develop Dhopachari forest as tourist destination

BSS, Chittagong

The government has taken an initiative for the development of the forest at Dhopachari in Chandanaish which possesses the country's biggest teak garden and known as the Sundarbans of Chittagong.

Work on a project to develop a botanical garden and a modern tourist spot in this economically potential forest is going on. The forest department has already prepared a project summary in this regard.

The project, involving an estimated cost of Tk 6 crore, is now awaiting approval of the ministry for environment and forest.

On implementation of

the project, the Dhopachari forest would be able to contribute to the national economy and forest resources worth thousands of crores of taka would remain protected.

Chittagong Divisional Forest Officer Shafiqul Alam Chowdhury told BSS that there were several initiatives in the past to develop the Dhopachari forest since the country's independence. But those were not implemented. Now this initiative is underway to be implemented, he said.

As per the project summary, there will be an observation tower, a 4,000-meter artificial lake, two modern guesthouses, tourist map, and modern ropeway in the

forest.

There is no proposal in the project for development of Chittagong-Cox's Bazar road. But the river route would be made more attractive and there would be high-speed engine boats to attract the tourists, the forest officer said.

Dhopachari is a hilly area at the eastern end of Chandanaish upazila. It is surrounded by Bandarban, Rangunia and Satkania upazilas. There are numerous natural lakes, streams, and hills and cliffs covered with millions of trees. There are also various medicinal plants in this forest of unique beauty.

According to the forest officials, the biggest teak garden in the country is

situated in this Dhopachari.

Dhopachari Union Council Chairman Delwar Hossain said, though late, the government has taken the initiative to develop the forest. "We welcome this positive initiative of the government," he added.

Power Div to present 'generation roadmap' on Sept 15

BSS, Dhaka

The Power Division will present the power 'generation roadmap' of the government to the money lending agencies and media people at a meeting on September 15.

"We are going to present our power generation roadmap in the meeting to apprise stakeholders, development partners and the media about the government initiatives and future plans," Mohammad Abul Kalam Azad, secretary of the Power Division, told BSS yesterday.

He said the present government has taken up a mega programme under which around 7,000 MW of electricity would be added to the national grid by the year 2014. According to the Power Development Board (PDB), it has taken up some short term, mid term and long term plans to boost the power sector that was neglected for the last seven years.

"We could add some 3,500 MW which is already in pipeline, we will present the initiative to the stakeholders in the meeting," the power division secretary said.

According to the PDB, the country would need 9,000 MW of electricity by 2014 and if it could successfully complete the installation work of the proposed coal based power plants, the gap between generation and supply would stand at 1,500 MW per day.

The PDB can now produce 3,800 MW to 4,000 MW.

"We need three billion US dollars to install 1,500 MW coal power, 2,000 MW coal fired power plants and 800 MW gas fired power plants in public sector. Of them, coal based and public sector's plants would be installed under IPP and PPP," Alamgir Kabir, the acting chairman of PDB, said.

2 revolvers seized, 2 held

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab)-1 members seized two revolvers from a house at Arichpur in Tongi early yesterday and arrested two people in this connection.

The arrestees were identified as Shah Alam, 27, and Shahin, 25.

Acting on a tip-off, Rab members raided the house of one Ali Akbar at South Arichpur at around 2:00am and seized the arms.

They were later handed over to Tongi Police Station.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina exchanges pleasantries with judges, foreign diplomats and donors at an iftar party at Dhaka Sheraton Hotel in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Comprehensive plan for capacity building of BSTI

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI), a state-run watchdog agency for monitoring food items and manufacturing products, has embarked on an inclusive plan to build up its capacity by introducing laboratories equipped with modern calibrated tools.

A number of specialised laboratories would be set up in different parts of the country apart from infrastructural

development as the BSTI is now implementing four projects involving around Tk 86 crore.

Under a modernisation project, works on setting up two more world-standard laboratories - one in Sylhet and another in Barisal - are nearing completion and it will come to an end by next year, Director General of BSTI AK Fazlul Ahad told BSS correspondent in an exclusive interview.

He said the key purpose of these ongoing projects is to

strengthen the existing foods and goods certification system by harmonising the international-standard and expanding export volume in world market by increasing demand for local goods.

In view of flawless access of local goods to the global market, he said, the BSTI, has, of late, transformed the central Metrology Laboratory into a National Metrology Institute (NMI) comprising five small-scale laboratories.

About strengthening of the on-going anti-adulteration drives, the BSTI director general said the drive has been strengthened after the present government's efforts on the mobile court ordinance that came into effect in July that empowered the mobile court magistrates for exercising power under 80 laws with a provision of instant penalty.

Asked whether the current anti-adulteration drive launched especially in the month of fasting would be continued, he said adding, the BSTI is conducting mobile courts led by only 12 magistrates who were engaged after requests to the Dhaka district administration and the Ministry of Establishment.

He, however, said that he is hopeful about continuation of the drive in view of ensuring consumers rights.

The population of the metropolis is on rise and at the same time the demand for food is also increasing, but it is unfortunate that the BSTI has no adequate manpower to cope with the situation, Fazlul Ahad said adding this is a major hurdle to oversee the monitoring activities.

The BSTI chief said the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is not performing its job of smashing adulterated foods being seized by BSTI mobile courts from unscrupulous businessmen. The DCC is designated and supposed to do so instead of the BSTI, he said.



Garment workers gather in front of Tex Tech Company Ltd at Banani Chairmanbari in the city yesterday demanding payment of their salary arrears and Eid bonus as the owner has shut down the factory without paying their salaries.

Non-tariff barriers

FROM PAGE 1

Economists and businessmen reacted to this cautiously.

India will get some connectivity with its northeastern states, starting with Tripura, as Dhaka has agreed to let India use the Ashuganj river port for goods transport to Tripura.

Despite being India's neighbour, only 1 percent of the country's imports are from Bangladesh whereas nearly 20 percent of Bangladesh's imports come from India. Bangladesh blamed non-tariff barriers (NTBs) and a large negative list of products imposed by India for its poor export figure.

Amid this one-sided business, trade experts and businessmen are in doubt whether the Indian offer of connectivity with Nepal and Bhutan would work or not.

Abdul Hafiz Chowdhury said Bangladesh's trade with Nepal and Bhutan did not work because of NTBs imposed by India.

"We have to take clearance from seven agencies of India for trading with Bhutan. Moreover, the transit point in India is not developed, which pushes the cost up," he said, adding that loading and unloading of goods from trucks also consume huge time.

Mir Nasir Hossain said, "We could not utilise the connectivity with Nepal and Bhutan effectively because of time limitation on Indian soil and restriction on trucks' movement."

Prof Mustafizur Rahman said, "Withdrawal of NTBs is vital to boost intra-regional trade." He said only a comprehensive plan could address the issue of NTBs and other tariff-related problems.

Although the proposed connectivity with Nepal and Bhutan is nothing new, this time it has come from India as a formal proposal, the trade expert said. "Bangladesh will have the chance to revive the Mongla Port if it is really connected with Nepal and Bhutan," he added.

Abdul Hafiz said the mindset of India has to change for mutual cooperation. Citing the example of duty-free export of eight million readymade garment products to India, he said, "It takes almost 18 percent duty to export those garment products."

Mustafa K Mujeer said besides removal of NTBs, huge investment in infrastructure is needed to utilise this connectivity for mutual economic benefit. Involvement of Bhutan and Nepal in the process is also necessary, he added.

The experts stressed the need for the connectivity, which could revive the Mongla Port.

"Bhutan, Nepal and seven northeastern states of India are fully land locked. These countries have no outlet and only Bangladesh can provide that outlet," said Dr Rahamatullah, former director (transport) of UN ESCAP.

On designating Ashuganj as a new port of call under the Inland Water Transit and Trade Agreement, he said it would enhance bilateral trade. He pointed out that currently there are four ports for use under the agreement.

Mir Nasir, however, said by allowing India on river routes up to Ashuganj, Bangladesh might lose its market opportunity in the seven northeastern Indian states. "Now India can easily carry its goods from Ashuganj to Agartala and other states through the proposed railway link," he said.

Abdul Hafiz echoed the view.

Mustafizur Rahman said, "It will be an advantage for India if it can transport goods from Ashuganj to its territories."

The foreign minister level meeting also agreed to reopen the Sabroom-Ramgarh trade point and the land route at Demagiri-Tegamukh on the Mizoram border for bilateral trade. India has also offered Bangladesh to provide 100 MW electricity.

Manzur Ahmed, a trade expert and an adviser of FBCCI, urged the government to sit with businessmen and experts before taking decisions on those issues.

Previously on April 2, 1976, Bangladesh and Nepal signed a transit agreement without incorporating any provision for using the territory and ports and routes for entry and exit for Nepalese vehicles, which made the agreement almost non-functional.

A trade agreement between Bangladesh and Bhutan was also signed in 1980, but in the absence of a passage through Indian territory, the agreement could not be implemented. Later, a protocol on trade and transit agreement with India allowing passage through its territory made the trading between the two close neighbours possible.

Although South Asian countries formed the Saarc two and a half decades ago, integration between the countries is one of the poorest in the world. Intra-regional trade is still limited to 5 percent. Experts quite often blamed political mindset for this poor integration.

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