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## Grabbers feast on beaches

MORSHED ALI KHAN

Influential people continue to plunder the "ecologically critical" beaches in Cox's Bazar, Teknaf and Kuakata by setting up structures there in the name of promoting tourism.

Over 90 percent of the 100-kilometre stretch of the beach from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf has been taken over by influential individuals or big entrepreneurs for setting up shrimp hatcheries and other installations, said Cox's Bazar district administration sources.

The 17-kilometre long beach in Kuakata that experienced rapid erosion has also been subjected to indiscriminate grabbing.

Real estate developers and influential locals have put up signboards along the beach from Kauachar in the east to Andhar Manik in the west claiming ownership of hundreds of acres of beach area.

Cox's Bazar administration sources said the demand for hotels, restaurants and shops in the beach area rose sharply in the mid-90s. The previous Awami League government first came up with a plan to allocate 100 acres of beach area to facilitate tourism in Cox's Bazar.

But the Department of Environment (DoE) disapproved the plan saying the Environment Protection Act 1995 classifies the area as "ecologically critical" and forbids any human intervention. The DoE recommendation compelled the then government to shelve the plan.

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## SEA BEACH TOO INHERITED, OWNED!



A signboard put up on Kalatoli sea beach in Cox's Bazar says Khadiza Begum inherited a strip of land on the "ecologically critical" beach. Sirajuddoula Helali, husband of Khadiza Begum, told The Daily Star yesterday over phone that his father-in-law purchased the strip of land around 40 years back. But he failed to clarify how his father-in-law bought land on the "ecologically critical" beach. Sirajuddoula said he would have to go through land documents for an explanation. He earlier built a wooden structure there but it was washed away. Now he plans to build a similar structure on the same spot, Sirajuddoula added. Another picture (inset) shows a wooden structure built on the beach to serve as an eatery for tourists.

## TEKNAF TREE PLUNDER No action yet from forest dept

A CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The forest department is taking time to go for legal action against the plunderers of over 30,000 Jhau (tamarisk) trees on Teknaf beach of Cox's Bazar.

The officials of the department, who played the role of silent spectators during the mass destruction of the coastal green, are now saying they would have to wait for instructions from the high-ups before taking any legal recourse against the plunderers.

Sources said seashore villages on a long stretch of Teknaf beach are getting exposed to threats of a possible dam collapse after indiscriminate felling of the trees that worked as natural wall in the past during any tidal surge or cyclone in the coastal area.

As a section of local influentials felled thousands of trees in last seven days leaving the Teknaf beach area barren, sea waves are hitting directly the nearby protection dam of Water Development

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## Lawmakers' desire to be municipality adviser over

House passes local govt bill, rejects JS body's recommendation; city corporation bill faces same prospect

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The House yesterday passed the Local Government (municipality) bill rejecting a parliamentary body's recommendation for making the MPs advisers to the municipalities in their respective constituencies.

The parliament also dropped a provision from the original bill dissolving two deputy mayoral posts in each municipality.

The parliamentary standing committee on LGRD and cooperatives ministry in its scrutiny report made the recommendation for making lawmakers advisers to the municipalities concerned.

The House is likely to reject the committee's another recommendation for making lawmakers, who were elected in the constituencies in the metropolises, advisers to city corporations, as the government high-ups are now against it, sources say.

Parliament is likely to pass the Local Government (city corporations) bill after the Eid. The current session, which is supposed to be prorogued today, would have some more workdays after the Eid.

The session however is likely to be adjourned today.

Ruling Awami League (AL) lawmaker Mozammel Huq, who yesterday placed proposals in parliament to reject the committee's recommendation, has submitted amendment proposals to reject the parliamentary body's suggestions on the city corporation bill.

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Students of Surya Sen Hall of Dhaka University have been fighting against bed bugs for long. A self-help attempt is seen since the authorities concerned turned a deaf ear to this problem, which has been bugging the students. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## 2 die in 'shootouts' with Rab, cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two alleged criminals, including an outlawed party leader, were killed yesterday in separate "shootouts" with the law enforcers in Mohammadpur area of the capital and Kushtia.

They are Abu Bakkar Roni alias Lal Roni, 25, an accomplice of top terror Imon, and Samir Uddin, 38, a commander of outlawed Gono Bahini.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab conducted a drive in Mohammadpur area to arrest criminals. Sensing the presence of law enforcers, the criminals opened fire on the Rab personnel in front of Chandrima Real Estate at around 1:30am. A gunfight ensued as the team retaliated.

After the incident, Roni was found dead on the spot while his cohorts managed to flee the scene.

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## JAIL KILLING CASE Appeal against acquittal of 6

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday filed separate appeals with the Supreme Court (SC) against the High Court (HC) verdict that acquitted six former military men of charges in the jail killing case.

Advocate-on-record for the attorney general's office Mushfiqur Rahman filed the leave-to-appeal petitions on behalf of the government with the appeal section of the SC in the morning.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star that his office would take an initiative for hearing appeals at the SC after disposal of long pending Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman assassination case.

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## TAX EVASION CASES NBR rejects Falu's plea

Bashundhara appeal under consideration

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has rejected an application of former BNP lawmaker Mosaddek Ali Falu to settle a tax evasion case filed against him while an appeal of Bashundhara Industrial Complex Ltd is under consideration.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith yesterday informed parliament about it during the question answer hour.

He said a total of 73 people were sued on charge of tax evasion under sections 165 and 166 of the Income Tax Ordinance 1984 during the tenure of past caretaker government.

Muhith however refused to disclose the list of the people

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## BDR men turn up at hospital after quizzing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) members were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday after they were allegedly tortured by the members of Task Force for Interrogation (TFI) cell during questioning into the BDR mutiny case.

The ailing BDR members are Reazul Islam, 22, of Battalion-5 in Khagrachhari, and Mohammad Arifat, 24, of Battalion-13 in Dhaka.

Both the jawans were present at BDR Headquarters during the mutiny on February 25-26.

DMCH sources said

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## AL men beat up contractor for his bid

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Police foiled an attempt by some ruling party men of Rangpur to force a contractor to withdraw his tender documents from deputy commissioner's office here yesterday.

Md Mansur Ali, one of the proprietors of the construction firm FSD Joint Venture of Rajshahi, alleged that some Jubo League and Awami League leaders beat him up at Mohanagar Hotel in the town

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## Sugar sold at all-time high

Refiner, trader blame each other

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sugar sold at all-time high prices for the third consecutive day yesterday with the middle and lower-middle class people queuing longer than ever at the mobile fair-price points.

The refiners and traders continue blaming each other amid government's failure in checking the price due to lack of sugar imports and poor open marker operation.

"It is painful buying sugar at such high price. The difference between the present retail market and fair-price centre rate is about Tk 20 which forced me to stand in the queue," said an official of a private firm Abul Hashem.

Hashem was seen waiting in the queue, along with many others, for sugar at Tk 42 at the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) Karwan Bazar outlet. He said this long wait saved him some money, which he could spend on other purposes.

On Monday, retail price of sugar stood at Tk 60-64, though the wholesale market rate dropped by Tk 1 per kg because another refiner S Alam entered the market with a capacity of supplying about 1,200 metric tonnes of sugar a day.

Refiners said there is no shortfall in the market, claiming that they are supplying about 4,000 tonnes of sugar at Tk 39 a kg from

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## Wrong policy blamed for price hike

JS body criticises caretaker, BNP govts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary body yesterday blamed the last caretaker and BNP governments for their "wrong policy" of allowing private companies to import sugar instead of state owned corporation.

The parliamentary standing committee on industries ministry also observed that the last caretaker government's policy of permitting export of sugar was a massive mistake when the country is in serious deficit of the essential item.

It also said the past BNP government allowed different private companies to import sugar while the caretaker government only Deshbandhu Sugar Mill,

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