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# Plunderers feast on rainforest

Gang controls whole area to make money out of illegal logging

MORSHED ALI KHAN, back from Kalenga, Srimangal

Remoteness of Kalenga rainforest has prompted a local gang, with the backing of foresters, to terrorise villagers and plunder the age-old rainforest.

Sudden exposure of the situation in Kalenga by The Daily Star has driven this gang to impose restrictions on the sole private guesthouse of the area. According to sources in Kalenga, outsiders cannot rent the guesthouse without their "permission".

On our arrival, we asked for a forest guide but could not find anyone. The forest office sent to us one who, according to insiders, is an active member of the same band of criminals. Anyone in Kalenga denouncing the gang end up being assaulted and sued under the forest laws. The cases are framed by the gang members and are filed by the local forest

office. A young man of the village, who agreed to show us the house of Abdur Rashid, a victim of assault after he protested theft of trees, was chased in our presence on the main thoroughfare and badly roughed up. The young man's only fault was to cooperate with the press.

The goons, during our presence in Kalenga, held impromptu meetings with villagers warning them of dire consequences if they cooperated with the press. "People were warned that they would be evicted from their homes if they opened their mouth to anyone," said a resident insisting his name not be mentioned.

The free rein given to the gang in this remote forest area has resulted in hundreds of cases, mostly false, filed over the years charging innocent people with forest related offences. According to Chairman of the Ranigaon Union Nurul

Munim Chowdhury, most of these cases implicating hundreds of innocent people in his constituency are absolutely baseless.

"In my constituency I have hundreds of people being charged with violating forest laws but I never heard of anyone being convicted. Most of these cases are framed by the very goons who plunder the rainforest," said Nurul Munim Chowdhury, who has been the chairman of the area for nearly seven years.

"There are instances in which the foresters implicated several dead men in cases filed in connection with stealing trees from the forest. The whole process of forest related cases has become a laughing stock in our area," he said.

The former chairman of the same union Abu Saleh Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman also corroborated Nurul Munim Chowdhury's statement and said the

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SITAKUNDA

## Scrap trader arrested for tree plunder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police have arrested a scrap trader with alleged links to plundering of the forest along Sonaichhari coast under Sitakunda upazila.

Didarul Alam is one of the influential people allegedly involved in the destruction of the forest for setting up ship-breaking yards there, said sources.

Didarul, nephew of Chittagong City Corporation Councillor Manjurul Alam Manju, was arrested in his house at North Kattoli on Wednesday night.

Earlier, six hired day labourers, arrested in the case filed by the Department of Forest for plundering the forest, told police that Didarul and Zahur Member had engaged them in the job of felling trees.

Law enforcers raided the house of Mohammad Aslam

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## Traffic signal violators in city face music

Up to Tk 1,000 fine imposed; DCC set to demarcate lanes on 3 major roads

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The traffic police have started fining motorists for violating traffic light signals introduced in place of manual traffic control system since November 23.

Joint Commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (Traffic) Mohammad Shafiqur Rahman said, "We are fining motorists for violating electronic traffic light signals in a bid to develop a habit of observance of the traffic rules among the motorists."

He added as per the rules traffic sergeants fine Tk 500 against each vehicle violating light signals while Tk 1,000 if the mobile sergeants with yellow jackets impose it.

The DMP authorities will start a drive against the vehicles by fining each with Tk 1000 and suspending driver's licence for changing lanes illegally from December 8 -- after the completion of the ongoing campaign week on December 7.

As part of the campaign to introduce specific lanes for vehicular movement, the DMP would distribute leaflets and paste posters from Saturday, said Shafiqur Rahman, adding that the Dhaka City Corporation would start

demarcating the lanes on three major roads from last night (Thursday night).

The joint commissioner said there are only 2,846 personnel in the DMP traffic wing for the stretch of over 2,100 km of motorways across the city that makes the job very difficult and to some extent impossible.

The DMP has to deploy traffic police at over 500 points in the capital though in each shift they have only around 700 men.

Some 431 traffic sergeants discharge their duties of 600 officials, he said, adding that the DMP needs 1,200 more sergeants and 4,000 more constables but at present they have only 2,002 personnel.

DMP sources said around 250 ansar members are working in DMP as an aiding force to the traffic wing.

The sources said over 2.25 lakh vehicles including rickshaws and rickshaw vans ply the city streets. This huge number of vehicles is the main cause of nagging traffic congestion, as there are fewer traffic police to control them.

If vehicular movements are regulated with the auto system of traffic controlling, it will ease the present traffic jam to a great extent, said the

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A mentally retarded girl finds amusement in taking snaps during a programme at Dhanmondi's Rabindra Sarobar in the city yesterday to mark the International Day of Disabled Persons.

PHOTO: SHAFIQU ALAM

## GOVT SCHOOLS IN CITY Admission forms available from tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government schools in the capital will start selling admission forms tomorrow for the next academic year and forms will be available till December 17, said sources of Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE).

Apart from schools, forms will be available on DSHE website and in that case, students have to pay during submission of the forms at the schools. The price has been fixed at Tk 100 each.

Tension grew among parents and guardians of students in the run up to the admission process, which is about to begin for the 24 government high schools in the city.

Admission tests will be held on December 24, 26 and 27 and the admission process will be completed by the end of December while classes will start on January 1, DSHE sources said.

Like previous years, the schools have been divided into three groups--A, B and C--based on the geographic locations of the schools.

Group-A comprises Government Laboratory School, Mirpur Government High School, Motijheel Government Girls High School, Khilgaon Government High School, Islamia Government High School, Nawabpur Government High School, Mohammadpur Government High School, and New Government Girls High School. Admission test will be on December 24 for Group-A.

The admission test in schools of group-B will be held on December 26 and the schools are Motijheel Government Boys High School, Narinda Government High School, Government Muslim High School, Banglabazar Government Girls High School, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Government Boys High School,

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## Jailer lands in jail for assaulting prisoner

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A jailer was sent to Khagrachhari district jail after he surrendered before a court yesterday in connection with a case filed for assaulting a prisoner.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Abdullah Al Mamun of Khagrachhari Chief Judicial Magistrate Court rejected a bail prayer of Faridur Rahman Rubel and passed the order.

On March 19, 2008, Sultan Ahmed, an accused in an extortion case, filed the case with Chief Judicial Magistrate Court.

He was released recently on bail.

Advocate Md Nazrul Islam, the plaintiff of the case, stated that while being a jailer of

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Prayer Timing		
December 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	6-15	6-50
Juma	1-30	2-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-19	6-22
Esha	8-00	8-30

Source: Islamic Foundation

## SUICIDE BLAST

# 3 Somali ministers among 19 killed

AFP, Mogadishu

A suicide bomber killed 19 people including three Somali government ministers at a graduation ceremony for medical students in a Mogadishu hotel yesterday, officials said.

The blast is the most serious attack on the transitional federal government (TFG) since the launch of an al-Qaeda inspired Islamist

insurgency that has brought new strife to the Horn of Africa nation.

"A suicide bomber detonated an explosion inside Hotel Shamo ... during the graduation ceremony of medical students of the Banadir University resulting in the deaths of, so far, 19 civilians and injuries to several others," the African Union force in Somalia AMISON said.

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## Pak forces kill 17 militants

Bomb hits police check-post

AFP, Peshawar

Pakistani forces have killed 17 militants in operations across the northwest, as Peshawar city was once again struck by a bomb blast injuring four people yesterday, officials said.

Pakistan's military launched multiple offensives against Islamist insurgents this year, but the Taliban have retaliated with a fierce wave of attacks killing hundreds of people in the past two months alone.

In the third blast in as many days, a remotely-detegrated bomb hit a police checkpoint near a graveyard on the outskirts of northwest capital Peshawar.

"Three policemen and a passer-by were wounded in this

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### OnlinePoll

Do you think lane system and heavy fines with suspension of driving licences will help ease traffic congestion in the capital?

☒ Yes (67.4%)  
☐ No (30.1%)  
☐ No Comments (2.5%)

Total votes: 838

### TODAY'S POLL

Do you think the High Court's recent wholesale granting of bail to many people including 40 convicts sentenced for life in 90 criminal cases is justifiable?

Please cast your vote at [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net)

## ব্যস্ত মেয়েদের লড়াই

দেশের গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কর্পোরেট হাউজগুলোর মেয়েদের অংশগ্রহণে শুরু হতে যাচ্ছে

Meri Revive BUSHY এর EASY শো। দ্বন্দ্ব, আনন্দ, লড়াই আর উত্তেজনায় মুগ্ধমুগ্ধ হয়েছেন

এই কর্মব্যস্ত মেয়েরা আর জিততে চলেছেন চমককার সব পুরস্কার!

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