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Trick works for forest gobblers

They take out bark, put salt and copper sulphate into roots to get trees dead; then none sees wrong in felling them

PINAKI ROY

They usually don't fell green trees. It raises questions. Instead, they take out the bark of the Garjan and put salt and copper sulphate into the roots. No immediate harm is done. After three months the trees are dead and there's nothing wrong in felling a dead tree!

A few hundred trees were felled using such tricks in Medhacachhapia reserve forest in Cox's Bazar, one of the 'protected' forests in the country.

The forest officials and local people are trading the blame for this. The locals think without the help of the officials no-one could enter the forest and take out the bark.

But for the owner of Nahar Tea Garden in Moulvibazar, it is a different case. The Department of Forest itself permitted him to

fell over 3,500 trees.

For the last one month the timber trader who bought the trees from Nahar Tea Garden is cutting hundreds of trees. They are ignoring repeated urges by environmentalists and Khasia people, who cannot grow betel leaves, their main crop and main way to earn a living, without the trees.

By the time the Supreme Court on Sunday imposed a stay for one week on felling trees, the timber trader had already cut down 2,000 trees around the Khasia settlements. The trees are not timber to the Khasia people, who traditionally live on growing betel plants that climb up on these forest trees.

In Kuakata, the forest department has cut down 6,465 trees planted on both sides of the Patuakhali-Kuakata road as the Roads and

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PLUNDERERS GET INNOVATIVE!!! A photo shows still-standing Garjan trees in Medhacachhapia reserve forest in Cox's Bazar. Barks have been taken out and chemical put around the roots to confirm their death. Finally, plunderers will chop down the dead trees. Hundreds of those age-old trees have been felled using the technique.

PHOTO: STAR

510 trainee BDR men dismissed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Rifles authorities have dismissed 510 riflemen who were on training during last year's BDR mutiny on charge of carrying firearms and shooting on the second day of the mutiny.

Official sources say the 510 soldiers were recruited in the 76th batch before the February 25-26 mutiny and posted at different battalions. During the mutiny they were on a common training at Rifles Training Centre and School in Chittagong.

The soldiers were discharged from service in phases and the BDR investigations launched after the bloody mutiny found their involvement in the mutiny.

The sources add 528 soldiers were recruited in the 76th batch, but 18 of them were sacked before the Pilkhana

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Opposition absent from JS session

All notices of opposition MPs rejected

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP-led opposition lawmakers did not return to the House yesterday protesting Sunday's remarks of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Opposition lawmakers--from BNP, Jamaat-e-Islami and Bangladesh Jatiya Party--did not clearly state whether they would again opt for boycotting the House proceedings. They, however, said if the atmosphere is not improved for them, they might start boycotting the House proceedings.

After the BNP lawmakers opposed a bill on salary hike

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Legality of Ershad regime challenged

HC gives govt 4 weeks to explain why his takeover, actions not illegal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the government to explain within four weeks why the seventh amendment to the constitution, which legitimises HM Ershad's takeover and the acts under his military rule, should not be adjudged illegal.

The bench of Justice Md Mamtaz Uddin Ahmed and Justice Naima Haider came up with the rule after hearing a writ petition. Siddique Ahmed, who was convicted of murder and sentenced to life in prison by a martial law court in Chittagong in 1986, filed the petition on January 24.

The seventh amendment ratified the proclamation of martial law and other regulations, orders and instructions by Ershad between March 24, 1982, and November 10, 1986.

Ershad, then chief of army staff, declared himself chief martial law administrator and imposed martial law on March 24, 1982.

During hearing yesterday, Additional Attorney General MK

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US consulate, rally attacked in Pakistan

45 killed, around 100 hurt

AFP, Peshawar

Militants armed with guns, grenades and suicide car bombs targeted the US consulate in Pakistan's north-western capital yesterday and hit a political rally, killing 45 people.

The attacks in quick succession were among the deadliest so far this year in Pakistan, where insecurity has raised concerns in the US as Washington steps up the fight in Afghanistan and against al-Qaeda.

Pakistan's Taliban claimed responsibility for the consulate attack, claiming it was to avenge a US drone war targeting top militants in Pakistan's border areas with Afghanistan, and threatened further assaults on Americans.

The ability of heavily-armed militants to get

so close to the US mission and other military installations, such as the provincial headquarters of Pakistan's premier spy agency, will likely rattle the US and Pakistani governments.

At least four militants armed with explosives and two cars rigged into bombs targeted the heavily guarded US consulate in Peshawar, a city of 2.5 million on the edge of Pakistan's lawless tribal belt, setting off multiple explosions.

The United States condemned the "terrorist" attack, saying at least two Pakistani security guards employed by the consulate were killed and a number of others were seriously wounded.

"The coordinated attack involved a vehicle suicide bomb and terrorists attempting to

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Reckless bus kills Rab man

Truck crushes cop to death

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A speeding bus yesterday killed a Rab member and injured a sub-inspector of police on Airport Road at the capital's Banani area.

Meanwhile, a policeman was run over by a truck on Dhaka-Bogra highway at Ghurka Beltola area in Raiganj upazila of Sirajganj yesterday around noon.

In the Dhaka incident, deceased Sub-inspector (SI) Shahinur Islam was a member of the intelligence wing of Rapid Action Battalion while injured Mohammad Parvez Islam an SI of Uttara Police Station.

Witnesses said the victims were on a motorbike when the bus hit them from behind around 7:45am.

SI Kamrul Hossain of Gulshan Police Station said Shahinur succumbed to his injuries on the way to a nearby hospital while Parvez was released after first-aid.

Commanding Officer (CO) of Rab-1 Lt Col Rashidul Alam told

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7 boys picked up from girls' school area

Freed on undertaking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the first day of the special drive to stop harassment of schoolgirls, police yesterday picked up seven teenage boys from the capital's Lalbagh area on suspicion.

Hours after taking the suspects in custody, police released them on undertakings from their guardians.

On Saturday, student of class-VIII Umme Kulsum Elora committed suicide in the face of regular torment and harassment by a local bully.

In the wake of such premature deaths due to teasing, the government decided to deploy police at girls' schools from yesterday.

Deputy Commissioner M Khurshid Hossain of Lalbagh division told The Daily Star that the boys were picked up from Agrani Girls' School and College and Azimpur Government Staff Quarters areas as their movement seemed suspicious.

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LIGHT AND DARK: While one side of a street has electricity, the area across the street is in the dark. The situation changes every few hours as the areas rarely enjoy electricity together. The photo was taken in the capital's Kakrail on Sunday around 10:30pm.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Fire at Ghorasal Power Plant, 1 unit shut

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 210-megawatt capacity power-generation unit of the Ghorasal thermal power plant at Palash upazila of Narsingdi was shut down yesterday following a fire accident that left a security guard severely injured.

Injured Solaiman, 30, was rushed to Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

The fire originated around 2:00pm after a cable from the power grid fell on the ground. A 320KV power-substation was also partially damaged, sources said.

A team of fire fighters from Palash fire brigade brought the situation under control after half an hour effort.

The Power Development Board (PDB) officials said they are working to repair the unit and hoped that it would become operational within a day or two.

"The closure would not appreciate the country-wide load shedding if we could divert the allocated gas of this plant to other power plants."

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Atmosphere not suitable for by-polls

BNP complains to EC

UNB, Dhaka

Opposition BNP has lodged complaints with the Election Commission that the atmosphere prevailing in Bholah-3 constituency is not suitable for an election, as local BNP workers remain scared following threats from the ruling party men.

A three-member delegation of BNP led by its standing committee member Nazrul

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BNP out to destabilise country, oust govt

Hasina alleges at JS; says opposition trying to save war criminals

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in parliament yesterday accused the opposition BNP of trying to destabilise the country for protecting the people involved in crimes against humanity in 1971.

"I think their aim is to oust the government so that they can save those criminals," she said while speaking at the concluding ceremony of the fourth session of this parliament.

She alleged that the opposition is engaged in different activities to deteriorate law and order and increase prices of essentials in order to destabilise the country.

Hasina, also leader of the House, said the opposition is carrying out propaganda against the government.

"The opposition leader [Khaleda Zia] suddenly appeared [in the House] and claimed that Bangladeshi workers in Saudi Arabia will be

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Khoka sued for 'sedition'

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Mayor and BNP Vice-Chairman Sadeque Hossain Khoka was sued yesterday for sedition over his remarks terming late president Ziaur Rahman the proclaimer of independence and the country's first president.

After the hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate AKM Emdadul Haque recorded the statement of the complainant and decided to give the order today after scrutinizing the law regarding the sedition case.

Earlier Siddiqur Rahman, a

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Dangerous dentist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Interns of a dental college in the city's Malibagh allegedly use slum children for experiments to obtain certificates.

Rapid Action Battalion personnel yesterday arrested doctor Md Mostafiz of City Dental College after an intern of the college plucked two teeth of a seven-year-old girl.

Captain Md Shariat Ullah of Rab-3 told The Daily Star that intern Kaniz Fatema plucked the teeth of neighbouring slum girl Sanchita without informing her parents.

Sanchita is a daughter of rickshaw-puller Asad Ali of the city's Mirrertek.

Asad Ali told The Daily Star that around 11:30am some people picked up Sanchita and two other children of the slum from their school asking about the condition of their teeth.

He claimed that his daughter did not have any bad teeth.

"Kaniz Fatema enticed Sanchita into going with her with a packet of biryani around 1:30pm and plucked two of her teeth as a part of an experiment," said the Rab captain, adding that the

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18 GOVT HOUSES HC rejects Shah Alam's plea against graft case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday rejected a writ petition of Bashundhara Group Chairman Ahmed Akbar Sobhan alias Shah Alam challenging the legality of the proceedings against him in a graft case filed by ACC.

The HC bench of Justice Md Imman Ali and Justice Obaidul

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