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Wiping out the future

Regeneration of Rema-Kalinga forest threatened as saplings being felled by villagers

INAM AHMED

In the first light of day, they stream out of the forest, one by one. They push their bicycles hard over muddy tracks, the tyres flatten under illegal loads. Each bicycle carries firewood tied to the handlebar and on the carrier at the back. Slowly the men walk towards Chunarughat.

This is a new threat that the unique forest of Rema-Kalinga is facing every day, diminishing the future of this semi-evergreen forest of more than 12,000 acres, the largest of its kind in Bangladesh.

This forest, about 14 kilometres long

and two and a half kilometres wide, at Moulvibazar, has been ravaged in different ways. Illegal loggers chopped off its tall trees. Walk through the forest in any direction, and you will see obvious signs of theft -- big stumps lie bare -- but sometimes also covered with branches and leaves to hide the crime.

Then came the skin thieves -- they peeled the skins off Hargoza trees and sold them as ingredients for mosquito repellent in Chunarughat. The trees ultimately died.

They came and caught the hill mynas and parakeets to sell them on illegal markets in Kataban of the capital.

And now they are back again. This time their main target are smaller trees, saplings included, too young to be used as timber but good as firewood.

As we walked through the forest, we saw the signs of wholesale razing of trees all around. In a span of two days, we heard sounds of trees being felled by thieves thrice. Plants with trunks four to six inches in diameters had been chopped down.

A truly mindless affair, but not to those who did it. As the forest department had upped its vigil on illegal loggers, the marauders adopted a new strategy. They

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158 officials made joint secretaries

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a major reshuffle in the civil administration, the government yesterday promoted 158 deputy secretaries or in equivalent posts to the rank of joint secretaries.

Meanwhile, 43 government officials, who were on deputation as deputy commissioners and additional secretaries, were reinstated to their previous posts, said a notification issued by the establishment ministry last evening.

Around 210 officials, who joined the service in 1986, have been deprived of their promotion, sources said.

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Nine killed in bus collision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A head-on collision between two buses on Dhaka-Tangail Highway at Kabirpur in Ashulia left nine passengers dead and 35 others injured yesterday evening.

Meanwhile, 12 people died in separate road accidents in Gazipur, Chittagong, Munshiganj and Bogra districts yesterday.

Witnesses and police said the collision took place between a Dhaka-bound Borak Paribahan from Tangail and a Pabna-bound Meem Paribahan from Dhaka on the highway around 6:30pm.

Four of the deceased were identified as Fazlur Rahman, 30, a sewing supervisor of AKM Knitwear Factory at Savar, Anna Begum 45, Rahin Sharif, 35, and Rafiqul Islam, 26, of Tangail district.

The cause of the accident could not be known immediately. The injured passengers were rushed to different local hospitals and clinics.

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RELATED STORIES ON PAGE 5, 16

ARMS HAUL CASE CID seeks 90 more days for probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The Criminal Investigation Department here yesterday sought 90 more days for further investigation into the sensational Chittagong arms haul case.

Investigation Officer (IO) of the case Md Moniruzzaman, also a senior ASP of CID, submitted a petition to the court of Acting Metropolitan Sessions Judge Golam Haider through the Public Prosecutor (PP) Kamal Uddin seeking time extension.

The court would hear the

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ARMED FORCES DAY Khaleda skips Senakunja function

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia did not go to the reception party organised by the Armed Forces Division to mark the Armed Forces Day-2010.

Breaking a decade-long tradition, Khaleda along with invited former army officials, who became BNP leaders later on, decided not to show up at the reception held at the Senakunja yesterday.

Sources in BNP said following the recent events regarding Khaleda's cantonment house, party's top leaders and former army-officials-turned BNP leaders dissuaded their party chief

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The signboard, inset, warns people not to dump garbage or sewage into the DND canal in Demra since the water is treated and piped to houses. The photo shows the canal filled with garbage and water hyacinth.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

BNP expels Huda Deposed for recent comments

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national standing committee of main opposition BNP yesterday expelled Vice-chairman Barrister Nazmul Huda from the party for breaking organisational discipline.

The decision was made at a meeting of the standing committee chaired by BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia in the party's Gulshan office.

At one stage of the meeting Joint Secretary General Ruhul Kabir Rizvi came out and told reporters in a briefing that Huda had just been expelled from the party for his recent "anti-organisational remarks" to the media.

"He was expelled from all posts of the party including primary membership according to the provision 5/ga of the party's constitution, for doing things against the interest of the party. He will be served a letter tonight," Rizvi said.

Huda had been cautioned by the party about his remarks to the media but he continued to make such comments, Rizvi added.

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