



The Daily Star

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FARMERS LIKE VEGGIES

Bogra grows more greens for big profits

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ANTI-GRAFT YOGA GURU STRETCHES

Mass hunger strike unto death begins

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LI NA MAKES HISTORY

First female Asian wins Grand Slam

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Forests dip to 10pc

Environment day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's forest cover has shrunk to less than 10 percent of land mass with only 0.02 hectares of per capita forest land, one of the lowest in the world. According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics and Department of Forest, a total of 2.52 million hectares area -- nearly 17.4 percent of the land mass -- are forests, of which 1.52 million hectares are under direct control of the department.

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52 MILLS sawing reserve forests

Ruling-party men always lead the forest-gobbling

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

As many as 52 illegal sawmills have been set up inside the reserve forests in Sakhipur upazila in the last two and a half years thanks to alleged corruption by foresters and intervention by ruling party men.

This lucrative sawmill business within the reserve forests is a telltale sign of how it contributes to shrinking of the waning greens in the Madhupur Garh region.

According to the government rules, no sawmill can be set up within 10 kilometres of the reserved forests. Surprisingly, most of these illegal sawmills have been set up within only 100-200 metres of the offices of the bit officers of the Department of Forest.

A huge number of trees like shal, gajari, segun and akashmoni worth crores of taka are felled and sliced in these sawmills every day before being trafficked to different places.

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PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

A logging industry flourishes. Horse-drawn carts carry chopped-down trees of Sakhipur Reserve Forest to sawmills setup inside the forest. Inset, one of the sawmills inside the reserve forest.



Radical reform day's order

Wildlife expert Ali Reza wants a forest dept with purpose

EMRAN HOSSAIN

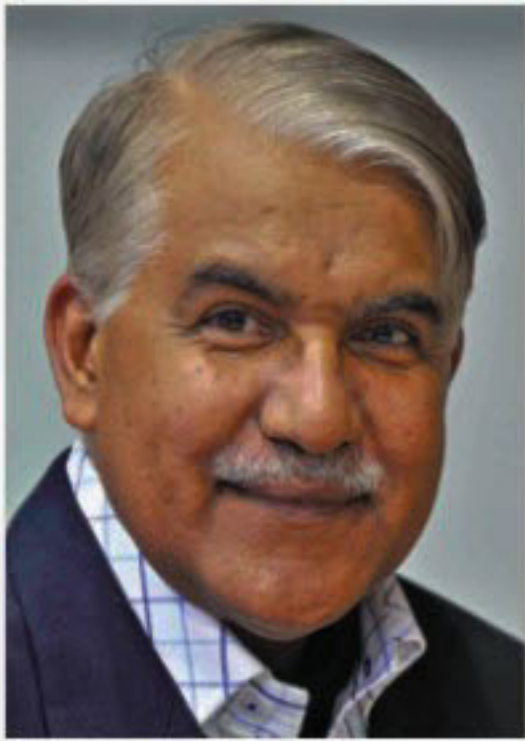
"You won't find mother trees in our forests. How would you?"

Renowned wildlife expert Ali Reza Khan paused for a moment. "Forest officers seem not to understand the value of natural greenery and feel reluctant in protecting the mother trees," he continued.

The Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh (WTB) honoured Dr Ali Reza Khan this year with Bangabandhu Award for Wildlife Conservation for his work and research on wildlife.

In an exclusive interview with The Daily Star, he said Bangladesh Forest Department is in desperate need of a

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Estimate raises eyebrows

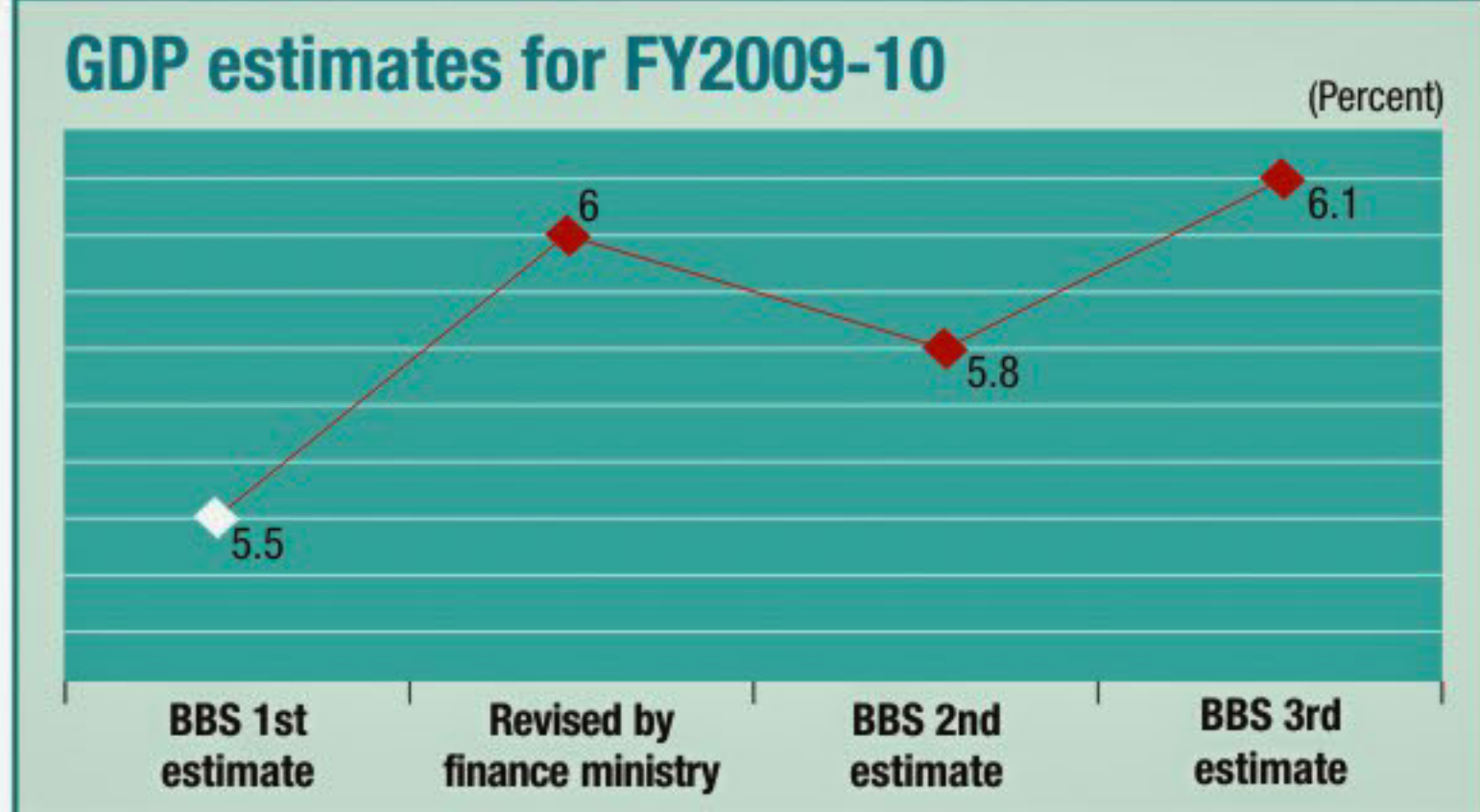
CPD sees GDP growth at 6.2-6.3pc, not at 6.7pc; fears weak projection may lead to weak policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Centre for Policy Dialogue yesterday questioned the provisional gross domestic product (GDP) growth estimate, which could misguide the policy makers, affect the credibility of the government and make people dub it as a political score.

Analysing the level of investment, the independent think-tank said the economy is likely to grow by 6.2-6.3 percent, not 6.7 percent as estimated by the Bureau of Bangladesh Statistics (BBS) for the outgoing fiscal year.

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have projected 6.2 percent and 6.3 percent growth rate, much lower than the



government estimate.

Rising macroeconomic risk, political instability and global risk also likely to put pressure on realising the forecast growth, said the

CPD.

"Stagnating gross investment level producing a spectacular 6.7 percent GDP growth may prompt us to term the phenomenon as

investment-less growth," the CPD said in its report on the state of the Bangladesh economy at its office.

Bangladesh's gross investment rate remains stagnant at less than 25 percent for the past several years. Two to four percent more investment is required to raise the GDP growth by one percent.

The CPD found higher GDP projection was made by showing an improved Incremental Capital Output Ratio, known as ICOR, which is used mainly in determining a country's level of production efficiency. The ICOR is a tool that assesses the marginal amount of investment-capital required for an

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RELATED STORIES IN STAR BUSINESS

Indian foreign secy due tomorrow

REZAUL KARIM

The foreign secretary of India will arrive in Dhaka tomorrow for high-level consultations to prepare the ground for Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's maiden visit to Bangladesh.

Manmohan Singh's visit, which the two neighbours hope will help resolve some of their long-standing issues, is expected to take place later this year. However, no exact dates have been fixed yet.

With Indian Foreign Secretary Nirupama Rao's visit, Dhaka and New Delhi will formally launch

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CONSTITUTION CHANGE Proposals almost ready

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parliamentary special committee is set to meet today at the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban to finalise its proposal and recommendations on the amendment of the constitution.

This is likely to be the final and concluding meeting.

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HARTAL PICKETS STRIKE EARLY

Commuters caught in chaos

10 buses burnt, several others damaged; 50 held in capital; 30 hurt in Rajshahi as BNP men clash with cops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hundreds of commuters remained stranded for hours in parts of the capital yesterday, as pickets attacked buses driving them out of streets on the eve of the opposition-called hartal.

Pro-hartal pickets set fire to 10 buses and a taxi cab in the city. They also damaged five more buses leav-

ing several commuters injured.

Police detained 50 people in connection with the incidents.

The ongoing chaos over fares added to the plight of commuters, as fewer buses ply the city roads following government drives to prevent transport operators from charging additional fares.

Several hundred people were seen

waiting for buses for hours in Farmgate, Bangla Motor, Malibagh, Mouchak, Nilkhet and Mirpur areas.

Meantime, 30 people were injured in Rajshahi in a clash between law enforcers and BNP activists, who brought out a procession in support of today's hartal.

In the capital, activists of

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Caretaker must stay, no scope for talks

Khaleda asks govt to quit, warns of non-stop agitation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Asking the government to step down immediately, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia said yesterday the caretaker government system must be kept in the constitution as it is, and



there is no scope for discussion in this regard with the government or in parliament.

She threatened to announce a tougher and non-stop agitation programme if the government does not quit

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Wildlife in jeopardy

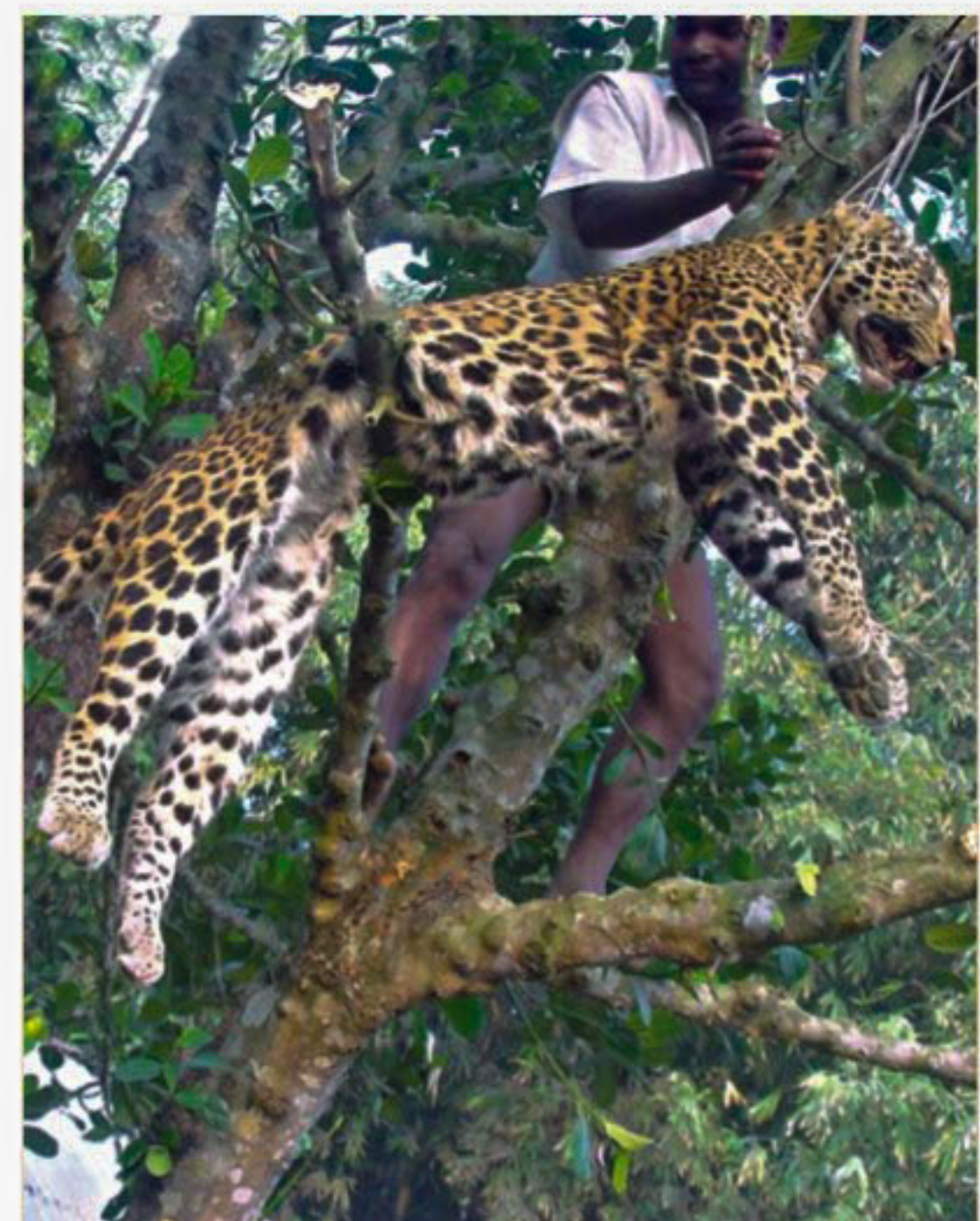
Hunger, death on offer as forests vanish fast

INAM AHMED

The number of phone calls we receive every day is amazing. People call to say fishing cats have been killed or captured. Jungle cat kittens found. Vultures lying sick. And of course, tigers have been killed.

If we put together all these pieces of information, we get a terrifying bigger picture of what has been happening to

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Habitat loss...The Indian Pangolin is losing its home fast and elephants and leopards are getting killed as they wander into settlements searching for food.

PHOTO: STAR