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Living in fear of eviction

72 Khasi families in Moulvibazar may lose their land to tea garden

MINTU DESHWARA and PINAKI ROY

Around 72 Khasi families of the Jhimai Punjee in Moulvibazar's Kulaura upazila are living in fear of eviction from the land they have been living on for years following the Jhimai Tea Garden authorities' move to set up demarcation pillars with the help of upazila administration.

On April 11, the tea garden officials along with Kulaura upazila nirbahi officer went to the Jhimai Punjee to install over 100 demarcation pillars.

The punjee people protested it and an altercation ensued. The authorities installed only three pillars and left.

Cultivation of betel leaf is the main source of income for the Khasi families living in the punjee.

Sources said there are around 2,100 trees in the area where Khasi people live as they traditionally conserve woods for cultivating betel leaves in the forest.

The tea garden management had recently got government permission for cutting 2,096 trees down in the leasing area, the sources said.

However, felling of trees would not only threaten the Khasis' existence, it would also affect the environment, right activists and green campaigners said.

Rana Surong, headman of the Jhimai Punjee, claimed that they had been living on government khas land. But the district administration was working in favour of the tea estate management and trying to evict them from the land where they had been living for generations, he added.

The tea garden manager Jakir Hossain, however, refuted the allegation. He claimed that the land belonged to them; rather the indigenous people had grabbed it.

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A girl hugging a tree in Jhimai Punjee of Kulaura in Moulvibazar. A dispute between a local tea garden and the adivasi community there over the ownership of land could rob the locals of their livelihoods. The photo was taken a week ago.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF MINTU DESHWARA

VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICA

Shops of many Bangladeshis under attack

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 100 Bangladeshi expatriates were injured and around 100 of their shops looted in an attack by local miscreants in Johannesburg and Durban in South Africa early yesterday.

Mizan, a Bangladeshi expatriate, claimed that four Bangladeshis were killed in the attack.

The Daily Star, however, could not verify his claim immediately.

"Some armed men hurriedly barged into my shop in Johannesburg and looted valuables worth Tk 10 lakh. They also beat me and some of my colleagues," Mizan told this correspondent from Johannesburg last night around 1:00 am

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CITY CORPORATION ELECTIONS 2015

Candidates want more power for mayor

14 DNCC mayor hopefuls face questions from people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several mayor aspirants of Dhaka North City Corporation yesterday agreed that not every problem of the city dwellers could be solved since the mayor post lacks the adequate authority.

They made the observation at the programme "Face the people" jointly organised by Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan) and Nagorik Adhikar Sangrakkhan Forum at a convention centre in Gulshan.

Fourteen out of the 16 mayor candidates of the DNCC were there and they were given a 21-point

demand on behalf of voters.

The organisers gave each candidate five minutes to speak and they faced one question each from an audience afterwards.

After going through the demands, BNP-blessed runner Tabith Awal said most of the issues mentioned were beyond the authority of the mayor. He said he would be with the people on issues that the mayor's office cannot solve.

"Our citizens have forgotten about their rights.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 5

Khaleda to take part in campaign on Apr 25-26

RASHIDUL HASAN and PRABIR BARUA CHOWDHURY

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will conduct two days' extensive campaign in the capital next week for her party-backed mayoral and councilor candidates, insiders said.

"She [Khaleda] is likely to campaign in Dhaka North City Corporation areas on April 25 and in Dhaka South the following day," said Mahfuz Ullah, a steering committee member of pro-BNP citizen platform Adarsha Dhaka Andolan.

Khaleda, however, will not visit Chittagong as the party and the citizen body think it will hamper the last-minute campaigning of M Manjur

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PHOTO: COURTESY OF MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS

A new bridge and a new rail line beside the old ones between Laksham and Chinki Astana. The double-line is expected cut travel time to and from Chittagong by 30 minutes. The photo was taken in January.

Dhaka-Ctg train trip gets faster

61km double tracks built, train frequency to double once entire 321km route upgraded

HASAN JAHI TUSHER

Train journeys to and from Chittagong are to be faster as a 61-kilometre double-line, between Laksham and Chinki Astana, and the remodelled Chittagong Railway Station yard is set to open today.

According to officials of the railways ministry, the travel time between Dhaka and Chittagong would be 30 minutes shorter due to the new line.

From today, 153km of the 321km Dhaka-Chittagong route would be

double-line.

The number of trains running between the capital and the port city would increase up to 70 with this boost in line capacity. Now, 36 trains run between Dhaka and Chittagong.

The officials believe trains would be able to maintain schedules better since they would travel up to 100kmph on the new line.

Though the new double line is meter gauge, it has the provision for transformation into dual gauge, on which broad gauge and meter gauge

trains can ply.

The double line was installed as part of a sub-project of Dhaka-Chittagong Railway Development Project aimed at increasing frequency and establishing faster railway connectivity between the two cities.

Construction of the Tk 1,749-crore Laksham-Chinki Astana double line started on November 2, 2011, and completed on March 31, 2015.

Eight major bridges, 45 culverts, four new station buildings, 13 new

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HAJEE DANESH UNIVERSITY

Probe on into killing of two students

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The authorities of Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) yesterday formed a five-member probe committee to investigate Thursday's clash that left two activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League dead on the HSTU campus.

The probe committee, led by Prof Anis Khan, dean of the Agriculture Faculty of the university, was asked to submit its report within two working days.

Besides, the university authorities have decided to continue regular academic activities, including classes and examinations.

ATM Shafiqul Islam, proctor of the HSTU, said

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Benetton to pay \$1.1m into Rana Plaza trust fund

AFP, Rome

Italian fashion retailer Benetton announced yesterday that it would pay \$1.1 million into an international fund to compensate victims of the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh two years ago in which 1,138 people died.

Benetton, which initially denied using any firms located in the nine-storey factory complex which workers and local journalists had warned was unsafe before it collapsed with thousands of people inside, said it was donating double the amount advised by experts.

"We have decided to go further to demonstrate very clearly how deeply we care," Benetton Group chief executive Marco Airoldi said in a statement.

Benetton commissioned experts at consulting firm PwC to estimate how much it should contribute to an international compensation fund based on the level of its commercial association with the Rana Plaza, which collapsed on April 24, 2013.

Benetton said the experts, using a report prepared by the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO), concluded it should contribute \$500,000 of the \$30 million the Rana Plaza Trust Fund is seeking to raise.

"Whilst there is no real redress for the tragic loss of life we hope that this robust and clear mechanism for calculating

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Man shot dead in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Unidentified criminals shot dead a man in Chittagong city's Bakalia Miah Khan Nagar area yesterday.

The dead is Nasir Uddin, 42, son of Sultan Ahmed of the same area.

Two criminals went near Miah Khan Nagar Mojaherul Ullum Madrasa on a CNG-run autorickshaw around 3:00pm,

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Dolphin turns pink when gets emotional

MAIL ONLINE

Stunning images have surfaced of an elusive albino dolphin that can change colour from white to pink when it is emotional.

The rare mammal has been making waves at the Taiji Whale Museum in southern Japan, where it has drawn huge and fascinated crowds.

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