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# Unique Kuakata beach at stake

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

With the monsoon coming, around four kilometres of Kuakata beach in Patuakhali stands the risk of crumbling into the Bay of Bengal, fear locals.

They say that a big chunk of the stretch, if not the whole, along with a few thousand Jhau trees (Casuarina equisetifolia) is feared to be devoured by the sea if protective measures are not taken immediately.

Last year, a combination of high tides and strong winds washed away over 50 feet of sand and the earth underneath the stretch from Gangamati to Khajura.

Many of the locals, like businessman Abu Saleh, say that it is a recurrent phenomenon taking place from May to October.

The problem, they say, lies in the fact that the beach is eroding faster than the rate at which it is naturally replenished.

Blaming the local authorities for not trying to protect the coastline, Abbas Uddin Akon, a resident of the area, said immediate actions should be taken to protect it from further erosion.

Although Kolapara Upazila Land Office had no records of the shoreline erosion, the locals say that over the years the loss has resulted in an altered coastal landscape.

During the monsoon every year, seawater floods a seaside eco-park, around three kilometres east of Kuakata Zero Point, intruding into one of its five freshwater lakes. A walkway and five concrete benches for visitors have already been washed away.

Around 1,000 Jhau trees were uprooted by the tides last year while another 9,000 lie in the danger zone.

At the zero point, numerous stumps and roots serve as a reminder of the erosion affecting the coconut plantation there over the last five years.

The Firms and Firms, which looks after the plantation, say they lost over 50 coconut trees last year alone. They now have around 2,500 trees, only a sixth of what they had started off with in the 60s.

Between the Jhau and coconut gardens lies a two-kilometre long reserve forest. Forest officials say some 100

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Stumps of Casuarina trees lie on Kuakata beach. The coastline is changing every year due to erosion by sea tides during the monsoon and the authorities are doing little to protect the unique tourist attraction.

PHOTO: STAR



**Good dream**

Govt takes up Tk 853cr project for ultra-poor women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has undertaken a new project called "SWAPNO" through which the extremely poor women in rural areas will be able to materialise their dreams of coming out of the poverty trap.

Under the project, a woman will get a daily wage of Tk 200 for work from which she could save Tk 25,000 in one and a half years for taking an initiative to create self-employment.

In a meeting at the planning ministry yesterday, the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecnec) approved a Tk 853 crore project for these poor women. The UNDP would finance 75 percent of the project cost as a grant.

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**PRAYER TIMING**

MAY 27

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-40 8-00

JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-45 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## FORBES LIST

Hasina 59th most powerful woman in world

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has been ranked 59th among the world's 100 most powerful women on the Forbes list.

As in the previous year, German Chancellor Angela Merkel topped the list followed by US presidential hopeful Hillary Clinton.

Hasina is the only politician from South Asia to be on the list released yesterday by the US-based magazine. She was ranked 47th last year.

The magazine mentioned that Hasina was sworn into office for her second straight stint as the prime minister of Bangladesh in January last year.

As of January this year, the AL could hold councils of around 55 district units out of total 74 in the last two years though it aimed to complete all the councils by December last year. Now the party wants to do it by December this year.

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HILLARY SNAPS AT

MERKEL HEELS -- PAGE 8



## DISTRICT COMMITTEES

# Selection, not election

AL's grassroots denied popular choices

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

Old faces rule the grassroots committees of the ruling Awami League, blocking way for the young minds to come to the fore.

In a council, the office bearers of a committee are mostly picked through selection, not by popular choice. This, more often than not, prevents new faces from making it to the leadership tier, a key purpose of holding councils according to the AL constitution.

Then again, the committees hardly have all its members. Usually, the presidents and the general secretaries are chosen in the council and they are given the task to pick the rest of the committee members.

Months and weeks go by but the full-fledged committee remains elusive, to the frustrations of the grassroots leaders and activists.

Grievances from such practices sometimes lead to the formation of rebel committees, triggering factional feuds and eventually weakening the organisational strength.

However, AL top leaders speak in favour of the existing trends and say these are done to avoid unwarranted situations.

### SAME OLD FACES

The AL could hold councils of around 55 district units out of total 74 in the last two years though it aimed to complete all the councils by December last year. Now the party wants to do it by December this year.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

## Driverless trucks



BBC ONLINE

Sleepiness and stress are perennial risks for the long distance lorry driver, and accidents are sadly too frequent.

However, a radical new driverless truck being trialled by Daimler may offer a solution.

Earlier this month, the automotive giant was granted the first licence ever to test such a vehicle on a public highway by the US state of Nevada.

Using a combination of GPS, radar and video cameras, the Freightliner Inspiration can drive

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

## INDIA SIZZLES IN HEATWAVE

# Toll reaches 800; Delhi roads melt

AFP, Hyderabad

At least 800 people have died in a major heatwave that has swept across India, melting roads in New Delhi as temperatures neared 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit).

Hospitals were on alert to treat victims of heatstroke and authorities advised people to stay indoors, with no end in sight to the searing conditions.

India's Meteorological Department said it had issued heat warnings to several states where temperatures were forecast to top 45 degrees Celsius over the next few days.

"As of now, we don't predict any respite from the extreme heatwave for the next few

days," said spokesman BP Yadav.

Hundreds of people -- mainly from the poorest sections of society -- die at the height of summer every year across the country, while tens of thousands suffer power cuts from an overburdened electricity grid.

Streets were deserted in Hyderabad, capital of the worst-hit state of Andhra Pradesh in southern India where 551 people have died in the last week.

"The state government has taken up education programmes through television and other media to tell people not to venture into the outside without a cap, to drink water and other measures," said P T U I S i



PHOTO: ANURUP KANTT DAS

Garbage spills onto a road in East Madarbari area of Chittagong yesterday. The city mayor elected through April 28 polls had said his first priority would be to keep the city clean and ensure proper waste management. But residents of this area allege that the cleaning is not done every day.

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