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KATHALBARI SWAMP

A little paradise in Sylhet

MINTU DESHWARA, *back from Kanaighat*

Straight out of a postcard, the Kathalbari swamp is an unexplored natural heritage.

Situated in the heart of Sylhet, it is a mere 20 minute drive from the town, on the way to the hilly tourist destination of Jafang.

Although the swamp remained mostly undiscovered till late, the number of local tourists visiting the spot is on the rise.

Swamps are often dominated by trees. They are often named for the type of trees that grow in them. In this instance, it has been named for the abundance of jackfruit trees or 'kathal gach'.

The Kathalbari swamp is quite unique in other characteristics as well.

One of the most distinctive features of this swamp is the 30 odd, small hills that are inundated in water. Tourists are seen taking idyllic boat rides from one hill to another and many are shocked to get down from the hills to enjoy the scenic beauty.

Spanning an area of one square kilometer, the swamp is fed with rainwater for almost 10 months a year as the region receives the highest amount of rainfall in the country. Although hot and humid, the peace and tranquillity is what attracts tourists.

The swamp forest is considered the best place to view aquatic trees and animals, like the fishing cat. Other than the jackfruit trees, mango, lychee, java plum, pineapple and bay leaf trees are also plentiful in the area.

Abdul Hye Al-Hadi, chief executive of Save the Heritage and Environment, a rights based organisation, said the spot is a distinctive blend of hills and water that does not resemble other swamps.

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Tourists on boats near the island, *inset*, on Kathalbari Haor in Sylhet's Kanaighat upazila. The island has become a tourist attraction and is just a 20-minute drive from Sylhet city.

PHOTO:
SHEIKH NASIR

'Four cops beaten by
Savar mob'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Four policemen of Dhamrai were reportedly beaten by a mob as they allegedly attempted to stop a concert organised early yesterday at Vaticchar village of Singar in Manikganj, an area beyond Dhamrai police's jurisdiction.

Locals said Ansar Ali, a resident of the area, organised the concert on the bank of the Bangshi River that drew around 4,000 people on the occasion of his son's marriage.

The four policemen – assistant sub-inspectors Masud Rana and Md. Hossain and two constables – got there around midnight and asked the organisers if they had approval for the concert.

The organisers could not show any government approval.

Bangla daily the Prothom Alo reported that the policemen then demanded money from the organisers. When the organisers refused to give any money, the policemen disconnected the speakers.

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Workers Party for polls under incumbent govt

Offers 14 recommendations during talks with EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Workers Party of Bangladesh yesterday recommended holding the next general elections under the incumbent Awami League government.

The party named a 14-point recommendation to the Election Commission to conduct the polls in a free and fair way.

Led by its President Rashed Khan Menon, Workers Party handed the recommendations to the EC during a two-hour dialogue with the commission in the city's Nirbhaban Bhawan.

Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda, four election commissioners and other top EC officials were present.

The EC on August 24 had opened the dialogue with 40 registered political parties to know their opinion about the next parliamentary elections, likely to be held late next year or early in 2019.

In a written proposal, Workers Party said the polls-time government, led by

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Spain moves to end Catalan autonomy

PM Rajoy demands clarification on 'suspended' independence declaration

REUTERS, Madrid/barcelona

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy yesterday took the first step towards suspending Catalonia's political autonomy and ruling the region directly to thwart a push for independence.

He demands that the regional government clarify whether it now considered itself independent following a speech by Catalan president Carles Puigdemont on Tuesday night.

This requirement is a necessary step before triggering Article 155 of the constitution, which would allow Madrid to suspend the region's political autonomy.

Rajoy's move could deepen the confrontation between Madrid and Catalonia but it also signals a way out of Spain's biggest political crisis since a failed military coup in 1981.

The prime minister would be likely to call a snap regional election after activating the constitutional mechanism allowing him to do so.

Puigdemont made a symbolic declaration of independence from Spain on Tuesday night but then immediately suspended it and called for talks with the Madrid government.

"The cabinet has agreed this morning to formally request the Catalan government to confirm whether it has declared the independence of Catalonia, regardless of the deliberate confusion created over its implementation," Rajoy said in a televised address after a cabinet meeting to consider

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Mariano Rajoy

Harassed,
girl 'kills
herself'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A schoolgirl has "taken her life" in Ashulia of Savar, on the outskirts of the capital, after allegedly being stalked by two youths.

On information, police recovered the body of Shila Akter, daughter of Awlad Hossain, from home on Tuesday night, said Abdul Awal, officer-in-charge of Ashulia Police Station.

Quoting the victim's family, the police official said Shila, a class-X student, returned home from school around 1:00pm on Tuesday. Sometime later, family members saw her body hanging from a ceiling fan of her bedroom through a window as the room was locked from inside. They entered the room and also found a suicide note there.

Police later recovered the

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Last privately-owned
Da Vinci to go on sale



AFP, New York

The last Leonardo Da Vinci painting still in the hands of a private collector will go under the hammer next month in New York, the Christie's auction house said, estimating its worth at \$100 million.

Dating from around 1500, "Salvator Mundi" – which depicts Jesus Christ as the world's savior – was long believed to be a copy of an original by the Italian master, until it was eventually certified as authentic.

Fewer than 20 works by Da Vinci, whose art was already highly sought after during his lifetime,

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Pope Francis to arrive on Nov 30

UNB, Dhaka

Pope Francis will arrive in Dhaka on November 30 on a three-day visit to Bangladesh.

On Tuesday, the Vatican has formally released the schedule of Pope Francis' apostolic visit to Myamar and Bangladesh.

He will be visiting Bangladesh at the invitations of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Catholic Archbishop of Dhaka Cardinal Patrick D'Rosario.

Two invitations, including one from the host government, are needed for the Pope to visit a country.

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BNP briefs
diplomats
about CJ's
leave

UNB, Dhaka

The BNP yesterday briefed foreign diplomats stationed in Dhaka about the country's latest situation and some other issues relating to the Supreme Court's verdict on the 16th amendment and Chief Justice Surenra Kumar's one-month leave.

BNP Spokesperson Md. Moudud Ahmed apprised the diplomats of the party's observations on the issues at a closed-door meeting at a city hotel.

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The government has taken steps to stop vehicles like this locally made tractor trailer incapable of doing 60kmph off the highways.

Low speed vehicles are often involved in fatal crashes on highways. The photo was taken at Nagar Jajpur of Tangail yesterday.

BRTA to get slow vehicles off highways

TIJU SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The government has asked Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) to keep vehicles that are incapable of doing 60km per hour off the highways.

The directive is to be implemented when low speed vehicles such as locally made three-wheelers Nosinom and Karimon are ubiquitous on the highways ignoring a ban and law.

Low speed vehicles and the fast ones on the same road remains one of the main causes for crashes that claim many lives every year, experts say.

BRTA will start executing the directive in a day or two, Nur Mohammad Mazamder, director (enforcement) of BRTA, said.

However, experts and road safety campaigners said the action would yield little and advised having lanes on highways for non-motorised and low speed vehicles.

The Daily Star found numerous Nosinom and other three-wheelers on Dhaka-Tangail and Dhaka-Aricha highways last week.

Correspondents from different districts said the frequency of number three-wheelers seen on highways decreased, but they were still there.

Bangladesh has 3812.78km national and 4246.97km regional highways, Roads and Highways Department website says.

In 2,419 crashes in the first eight months of this year, at least 2,873 died. Of them, 381 were children 344 women. The incidents left 6,500 injured, according to National Committee to Protect Roads and Railways (NCRPR).

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SIBI Foundation Hospital & Diagnostic Center

PRAYER TIMING OCTOBER 12

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrif Esha

AZAN 4:45 12:45 4:45 5:45 7:15

JAMAT 5:20 12:15 4:30 5:50 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION