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SHAH CEMENT

Forest land lost to govt agencies

Given 1.6 lakh acres for dev projects, other purposes

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Cg

The government is supposed to increase forest land to 20 percent of the country's total landmass by 2030, but the reality is, it is losing land every year to different government agencies who demand land for their establishments and development projects.

Official numbers show that so far Bangladesh has 17.62 percent of its landmass covered by forests and of that the Department of Forest (DoF) has jurisdiction over 10.84 percent.

Sources in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change said so far almost 1.6 lakh acres of forest land has been handed over to different government agencies and establishments, or used for development projects.

That is not all; the feasting on forest has not stopped and several government agencies and wings are demanding a huge amount of woodland from the ministry to build their establishments, make recreation centres, cottages, guest-houses, offices, and roads.

The government aims to stop deforestation by 2020 and have 20 percent of the landmass as forests by 2030 with 70% tree density -- a quantitative measure of tree cover in an area -- as per the sustainable development goal (SDG) finalised in 2015.

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The newly built dirt road winding through the now flattened mangrove forest in Chattogram's Mirsharai where an economic zone will be established. Below, the project has been a blessing to local lumberjacks. Mainly due to continued deforestation, the government is unlikely to reach its goal of increasing the country's forest land to 20 percent of the total landmass by 2030. The pictures were taken on Monday.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF FORESTS

BOSNIA WAR CRIMES Karadzic gets life in prison

AFP, The Hague

Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic will spend the rest of his life in jail for the "sheer scale and systematic cruelty" of his crimes in the war that tore his country apart a quarter of a century ago, UN judges said yesterday.



Karadzic, 73, stood motionless and grim-faced in the dock as judges in The Hague said they had upheld his 2016 convictions for genocide in the Srebrenica massacre and war crimes in the 1990s.

In one of the last remaining cases from the break-up of Yugoslavia, they also increased his original 40-year sentence, saying it did not reflect his role in the worst bloodshed

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13 killed in road, railway accidents

34 wounded; schoolgirl loses leg as pickup rams school van in Jashore

STAR REPORT

At least 13 people have been killed and 34 others injured in separate road and train accidents in seven districts since Tuesday afternoon.

A 35-year-old unidentified man was run over by a lorry of Korotoa Courier Service in the capital's Paltan area around 9:15pm yesterday.

Mahmulul Haque, officer-in-charge of Paltan Police Station, said the man was crossing a road near Paltan intersection around 9:15pm when a speeding lorry hit him.

The man died on the spot, he said, adding police detained the driver and seized the vehicle immediately after the incident.

The accident took place just a day after a university student was run over by an unruly bus of Suprabhat Paribahan which was reportedly on a mad race.

In another road accident in Sirajganj, at least three more people were killed and 10 others injured at the west end of the district's Bangabandhu Bridge as two buses collided head-on around 5:00pm yesterday.

Sayed Shahid Alam, officer-in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge West Zone Police Station, said none of the three victims -- two male and a female -- could be immediately identified.

The accident occurred as drivers lost control over the steering wheels, he added.

A long tailback was created due to slow vehicle movements on the bridge and its adjacent roads for about two hours after the accident.

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2ND PHASE OF UZ POLLS Less than 15pc votes cast in four upazilas

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Voters are apparently showing little interest in the ongoing upazila elections, which has seen less than 15 percent voter turnout in at least four upazilas.

Election Commission sources said only 8.63 percent voters cast their votes in the Dakshin Surma election in Sylhet district and 9.38 percent of voters voted in Jaintapur upazila election in the same district.

Besides, 13.13 percent exercised their franchise in the Bogura sadar upazila election and only 13.19 percent turned up for the election to Bagmara upazila of Rajshahi district.

Sources further said Gowainghat upazila in Sylhet registered a 16.53 percent voter turnout, 20.63 in Panchagarh sadar, 21.66 percent in Santhia of Pabna, 24.89 percent in Gaibandha sadar upazila, 24.94 percent in Kurigram sadar, 25.97 in Bera of Pabna, 26.09 percent in Lalmonirhat sadar and 26.63 in Ishwardy of Pabna.

Less than 30 percent votes were cast at

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Europe gets its first underwater restaurant



REUTERS, Baaly

Europe's first underwater restaurant opened in Norway yesterday with more than 7,000 customers booked in to eat among the fish.

Situated on the southern tip of Norway, the restaurant looks like a large concrete tube partly submerged in the North Sea. It is called Under, which also means "wonder" in Norwegian.

It was designed by Norwegian architecture firm Snohetta, which also created the Opera house in Oslo and the National September 11 Memorial Museum in New York.

"The fascination is just this movement from

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Quader's surgery successful

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader underwent a successful bypass surgery at Singapore's Mount Elizabeth Hospital yesterday, said Prof Dr Abu Nasar Rizvi of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

Cardiothoracic surgeon Sivathasan Cumaraswamy, a member of the medical board treating Quader, conducted the surgery, said Rizvi, who accompanied

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PRAYER TIMING MARCH 21
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-55 12-45 4-45 6-16 7-45
JAMAAT 5-30 1-15 5-00 6-20 8-15
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



MARCH 21, 1971

Dhaka city sees wave of protests

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On the 20th day of the agitation movement, Dhaka city was riding on a wave of freedom crazed processions chanting slogans -- "Joy Bangla" and "Joy Bangabandhu".

Thousands of people took to the streets during the meeting between Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Yahya Khan.

A significant development of the day was the arrival of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in Dhaka. The chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party had been asked by President Yahya Khan to come to Dhaka and join the negotiations the regime was conducting

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Students of Cumilla Victoria Government College marching on their campus yesterday demanding justice for Sohagi Jahan Tnu, who was raped and killed three years ago.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Funerals of NZ victims begin

PM urges 'united front' on social media, says Friday prayers' call for Muslims will be broadcast nationally

AGENCIES

The bodies of victims from New Zealand's mosques mass shooting were carried in open caskets on the shoulders of mourners into a large tent at Christchurch's Memorial Park Cemetery yesterday - the first burials of the 50 victims.

The majority of victims from Friday's attack in the South Island city were migrants or refugees from countries such as Pakistan, India, Malaysia, Indonesia, Turkey, Somalia, Afghanistan and Bangladesh.

The youngest was a boy of three, born in New Zealand to Somali refugee parents.

The first two victims buried, father and son Khaled and Hamza Mustafa, came from war-torn Syria.

"I cannot tell you how gutting it is...a family came here for safety and they should have been safe here," said Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, visiting the city for the second time since the massacre.

Wrapped in white cloth, the bodies were laid to face Makkah, and, after jenazah (funeral) prayers, were carried towards their freshly dug graves.

"Seeing the body lowered down, it was a very emotional time for me," said Gulshad Ali, who had travelled from Auckland to attend the first funeral.

Several mounds of dirt piled high marked the site of multiple graves which will be used for New Zealand's worst mass shooting.

Hundreds gathered to mourn, some men wearing a

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