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2018

HERITAGE IN DANGER Unesco to put Sundarbans on the list



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The World Heritage Centre of Unesco has decided to put the Sundarbans on the list of World Heritage in Danger.

The centre decided this last week as it was not happy with Rampal power plant and other development projects being constructed in the Southwest region where the mangrove forest is located.

The centre also requested the government to invite its mission to prepare a set of corrective measures to secure the Sundarbans from any potential environmental danger.

The World Heritage Centre, which enlisted the Sundarbans as natural heritage in 1997, has been raising

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Container vessel Express Mohananda, left, collides head-on with oil tanker MT Borgan on the Chattogram port channel of the Karnaphuli river yesterday morning. Movement of vessels through the channel was halted for about two and a half hours following the accident.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Two ships collide at Ctg port

Operations in port channel stopped for 2.5 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Vessel operations on Chattogram Port channel remained suspended for two and a half hours yesterday following a tanker-container ship collision.

However, none was hurt.

A three-member committee was formed to investigate the incident with Deputy Conservator of Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) Capt Faridul Alam as head, and asked to submit the report within three working days.

Talking to The Daily Star, Capt Alam said the Kharnaphuli channel, the country's main export-import gateway, could collapse if it were a major accident and one of the vessels caught fire, sank or ran aground.

The accident occurred around 8:24am when an empty oil tanker, MT Borgan, was sailing off the port and container vessel Express Mahananda was coming from the opposite direction, said CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk.

Another vessel, Shakti Sanchar, which carries equipment for construction of Patenga Container Terminal, was also leaving the port at the time without prior information, he said. The container vessel ended up ramming the tanker head-on, while trying leave space for Shakti Sanchar to pass, he added.

Capt Alam said, "Our pilots in both the foreign vessels, who were engaged in guiding them through the channel, repeatedly gave instructions to the master of the equipment-carrying

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Don't take risky sea route to Europe

Migrants warned as 64 Bangladeshis on Egyptian boat still in the sea

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Embassy in Libya has warned Bangladeshis there not to take the risky sea journey to Europe, citing the risks of drowning as well as Tunisia and European countries' strong stance against illegal entry into their territories.

The warning comes at a time when a rescue boat carrying around 75 migrants, 64 of them from Bangladesh, have been stuck off Tunisia for 14 days as the Tunisian authorities refused to let them disembark, the Red Crescent said on Tuesday.

The Egyptian boat rescued the migrants in Tunisian waters on May 31, but authorities in the governorate of Medinina say its migrant centres are too overcrowded for which they could not allow them to come ashore, leaving the vessel 25km from the coastal city of Zarzis, reports Reuters.

No European countries agreed to accept them, said ASM Ashrafur Islam, labour counsellor at Bangladesh Embassy in

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Less tax for well-off, more for commoners

SOHEL PARVEZ

"So unfair!" is what middle-class taxpayers were left mouthing upon seeing the budget for the fiscal year 2019-20.

Save for simplification in getting tax rebate on investment in certain savings tools, there is no good news for individual taxpayers from middle-class households in the new budget. But for the relatively well-off and black money-holders, it is the opposite. Other than some incentives for small investors, there is nothing in the budget for the middle-class to cheer about, said Towfiqul Islam Khan, senior research fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD).

"On the contrary, the rich have been given benefits by increasing the surcharge-free net wealth threshold," he said.

The popular demand for raising the tax-free income tax ceiling to give relief to low- and fixed-income groups was not entertained on the ground that the tax-exempted threshold was mostly on par with or below the per capita income of developing countries.

In Bangladesh, the tax exemption threshold is

almost 1.5 times the per capita income.

"Any increase in tax exemption threshold will push a significant number of taxpayers out of the tax net, which will eventually erode the tax base," said Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal in his budget speech.

So, anyone who earns Tk 21,000 a month from July this year will come under the tax net, helping the government expand the overall base further from nearly 40 lakh registered taxpayers.

But, given the rising cost of living, the erosion of purchasing power and the lack of social security benefits, the disposable income of people in the lower income brackets will shrink.

The government has kept the tax-free income threshold unchanged at Tk 250,000 since fiscal year

2015-16.

"The pressure on the middle-class will increase for the tax measures," Khan said, adding that the CPD proposed lowering the income tax rate for the first slab to 7.5 percent from existing 10 percent without changing the taxable income level.

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Train baby to get 25 years free rail travel



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A baby girl born on board a train has been offered free rail travel for the first 25 years of her life.

The birth took place on an Iarnród Éireann (Irish Rail) service from Galway to Dublin Heuston station at around 3:05pm on Tuesday 11 June.

The baby was delivered by two nurses and a doctor who happened to be on board, after train staff put out a call for medical professionals.

"We are delighted, and grateful to both customers and staff who assisted, that the mother safely gave birth to her baby daughter on board," an Iarnród Éireann spokesperson told The Independent.

"We wish mother and baby well, and respecting her privacy would be delighted to arrange for free travel for her new daughter throughout her childhood and up to age 25."

Train staff were first alerted to the mother's

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PRAYER TIMING JUNE 15

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-50 8-15

JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-55 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Using banned gill nets, fishermen collect shrimp larvae in the Pashur river at Chadpai range of the Sundarbans. Although it fetches them only Tk 40 to Tk 80 each a day, they collect larvae throughout the night as they have no other alternative works. Such an activity is damaging the natural breeding ground of shrimp species. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF TOUHID PARVEZ BIPOLO

GULF OF OMAN OIL TANKER ATTACKS

US blames Iran

Tehran calls accusation alarming; EU, China call for restraint from all sides

AGENCIES

Iran said yesterday it was alarming and wrong of the United States to blame Tehran for attacks on two oil tankers at the entrance to the Gulf, after an incident that has raised concerns about a new confrontation in the vital oil shipping route.

Washington released a video that it said showed Iran's Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) were behind Thursday's attacks on the Norwegian-owned Front Altair and the Japanese-owned Kokuka Courageous near the Strait of Hormuz shipping chokepoint.

President Donald Trump yesterday accused Iran of executing twin tanker attacks, saying the incident had Iran "written all over it."

"Iran did do it," Trump said in an interview on "Fox and Friends".

"You know they did it because you saw the boat," Trump said. "I guess one of the mines didn't explode and it's probably got essentially Iran written all over it."

"You saw the boat at night, successfully trying to take the mine off -- and that was exposed."

Russia warned yesterday against jumping to hasty conclusions over the attacks on two oil tankers.

A Dutch firm said it had been appointed to salvage the ships in the Gulf of Oman yesterday, after the attacks that caused a

spike in oil prices.

About a fifth of the oil consumed globally passes through the Strait of Hormuz, shipped from Gulf energy producers, including Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest crude exporter.

The US military said black-and-white footage filmed from a US aircraft showed Guards on one of their patrol boats drawing up to Kokuka Courageous, after blasts struck both vessels, and removing an unexploded limpet mine from its hull.

"It is the assessment of the United States government that the Islamic Republic of Iran is responsible for the attacks that occurred in the Gulf of Oman," US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo told reporters.

He said the assessment was based on intelligence, the weapons used, expertise required and similar recent attacks, reported Reuters.

Washington has also blamed Iran or its proxies for attacks on May 12 that crippled four oil tankers in the same area. In addition, it said Tehran was behind May 14 drone strikes on two Saudi oil-pumping stations. Tehran has denied all the charges.

"These accusations are alarming," Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi said, adding that blaming Iran for Thursday's attacks was "convenient" for US officials.

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