

WORLD CLEANUP DAY

Trash crisis on spotlight

AFP, Sydney

Thousands of activists fanned out across beaches and rivers throughout Asia yesterday, picking up rubbish and drawing attention to the amount of trash that is dumped worldwide, a day after millions marched to urge world leaders to act on climate change.

The volunteers turned out for World Cleanup Day -- an initiative that has got millions into the streets and cleaning up litter across the globe since it began just over a decade ago.

The Pacific island nation of Fiji swung into action early, with people scouring palm-fringed beaches for rubbish, heaving discarded car tyres and engine parts from the coast just west of the capital Suva.

On Australia's Bondi beach activists sifted through the sand, carting off bits of plastic and cigarette butts.

In the Philippines, some 10,000 people swept across a long stretch of beach on heavily polluted Manila Bay, clutching sacks they filled with rubbish.

Plastic pollution is a major problem across Southeast Asia, but particularly in the Philippines, which -- along with China, Vietnam and Indonesia -- is frequently listed among the world's worst offenders.

"It's for us to help the environment, especially here in Manila, there's a lot of garbage," Mae Angela Areglado, a 20-year-old student told AFP as she pitched in

with the cleanup -- held right next to the city's huge Baseco slum.

"(Plastic is) affecting the marine life because they think that it is food", she added.

The mass cleanup is coordinated by the Let's Do It Foundation, which aims to "connect and empower people and organisations around the world to make our planet waste free", according to its website.

It attracted around 1,400 volunteers in Vietnam's capital Hanoi, where they scoured different areas of the city for litter under the scorching sun.

"Although our actions are very small -- like cleaning trash from the sidewalk -- it could spread a meaningful message," 18-year-old Hoang Thi Hoan told AFP, as motorists zipped by on a busy street.

In China, a group of about 30 gathered by the Xiaotaihou River in Beijing to pick up rubbish along the manmade waterway.

"You can't get permission to organise large events in Beijing due to tight security ahead of the 70th anniversary celebrations," organiser Zhang Hongfu, from the environmental group Friends of Nature, told AFP.

Seventy-nine percent of the plastic ever made has ended up dumped, with little reused or destroyed despite recycling and other initiatives to curb use, a UN report from 2018 said.

Just nine percent of the nine billion tonnes of plastic the world has produced has been recycled.



Different environmentalist organisations observing World Rivers Day near Shahbagh intersection in the capital yesterday. A river is a living entity and it has legal rights, they said. PHOTO: COLLECTED

No let-up in river grabbing

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Asked whether there is a conflict of interest in getting the lists made by the deputy commissioners, as they are the authorities who lease out river foreshores and flood plains of rivers, Howlader said legally they are the trustees of public property like rivers and are entrusted with taking care of it.

It is the DCs who have to identify and prepare the lists of land and river grabbers as per laws like State Acquisition and Tenancy Act, he said.

"For now, we are happy with the lists because this is the first time in the country's history we have got such lists of river grabbers."

The river commission will examine if there are any lapses and if any grabbers are found to have been left out, he added.

The lists have been submitted to the commission in phases over the past six months. The DCs got the lists done with the help of local assistant commissioners and upazila nirbahi officers.

DIVISION-WISE GRABBING

In eleven districts of Chattogram division, the total number of grabbers is 18,411 with the highest 5,906 in Cumilla, followed by 4,704 in Chattogram district.

In nine districts of Khulna division, the total number of river grabbers is 6,518 with the highest 3,134 in Kushtia district, and in four districts of Sylhet division, the total is 2,044.

In six districts of Barishal division, a total of 5,215 grabbers have been identified with the highest 2,272 in Barishal district. The total grabbers identified in six districts of Rangpur

division is 2,154 with the highest 1,047 in Dinajpur.

In three districts of Mymensingh division, the number of river grabbers is 1,335, excluding those in Mymensingh district.

The High Court in a landmark verdict in February ordered the government to make a list of the grabbers and expose them by publishing the lists in the media.

According to the HC orders, the Election Commission is supposed to make the river grabbers ineligible for contesting any elections and the Bangladesh Bank is to make them ineligible for bank loans.

The court said playing any blind man's buff over protection of rivers had to stop since the grabbers return and occupy rivers after their evictions.

GK Shamim on remand

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contractor and his seven bodyguards were accused in the case filed under the Arms Act with Gulshan Police Station.

The accused bodyguards are Delwar Hossain, Murad Hossain, Zahidul Islam, Shahidul Islam, Kamal Hossain, Samsad Hossain and Aminul Islam.

Two other cases filed against Shamim with the police station are under the money laundering and narcotics control acts.

Naib Subeda Mizanur Rahman of Rab 1 filed the cases yesterday afternoon.

During a raid at Shamim's house and office in the capital's Niketan, Rab seized eight firearms, a huge amount of ammunition, Fixed Deposit Receipts of Tk 165 crore and around Tk 1.8 crore in cash, a large stash of the US and Singaporean dollars and some foreign liquor.

Shamim is known to be an influential contractor of the Public Works Department and other government organisations. His company GKB and Company (Pvt) Limited is handling 15 big construction projects of the government, involving around Tk 3,000 crore, said Shafaeth Hossain, marketing manager of his firm.

PLACED ON REMAND

Shamim was placed on a 10-day remand in the cases filed under the Arms Act and Narcotics Control Act.

In one case, the prosecutors appealed for a seven-day remand each for Shamim and his seven bodyguards, but the court granted Shamim five days and seven bodyguards four days each.

Shamim was placed on another five days remand in the drugs case in which Shamim is the lone accused.

His lawyers pleaded to the court for cancellation of the remand, saying Shamim was a special contractor. They argued that he needed the armed bodyguards because his 18 construction projects involving several thousand crores.

They also argued that the firearms were legal and the liquor seized did not belong to him.

The prosecution lawyers asked how a man could win the contract for 18 government projects.

They said to know the mystery Shamim needs to be interrogated in remand.

KALABAGAN CLUB PRESIDENT

Kalabagan Krira Chakra Club President Shafiqul Alam Feroz was placed on a 10-day remand on charges of possessing an illegal firearm and drugs.

A Dhaka court passed the order after police produced Shafiqul before it with a 20-day remand prayer in two cases.

The prosecutors said as the law enforcers found a foreign pistol and 990 yaba pills in his possession, it was necessary to interrogate him in remand.

Shafiqul's lawyer told the court that an influential quarter, conspiring against Shafiqul, implicated him in false cases.

The lawyer said Shafiqul was "threatened with crossfire" and asked why he would keep firearms and yaba pills at his office at a time when series of raids were going on in the capital.

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said Muzibur, also a former secretary.

"Rivers are a national property that cradles the country's economy, ecology, culture and heritage and provide plenty of precious sweet water. But they have been victims of greed of the wealthy grabbers, who are politically and socially powerful, and blessed by the government's executive machinery," he told The Daily Star in an exclusive interview recently.

Though 99 percent of the country's people want the rivers to be protected, the government has failed to take action against the remaining one percent -- the grabbers.

Year after year the river commission requested Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), deputy commissioners, Water Development Board (WDB), superintendents of police, and Department of Environment (DoE) to protect rivers. But the conditions of the rivers have become deplorable due to the authorities' apathy, dilly-dally, inaction and inefficiency in reclaiming rivers.

Most recommendations the commission made over the last one year for eviction of the encroachers have been ignored. The BIWTA has carried out several drives to remove illegal structures from the Buriganga and the Turag in recent months. But they are yet to remove the massive amounts of earth and sand filling the rivers.

"If the authorities do not save the rivers and recover them from grabbers, it is obvious they are complicit in

this," the former secretary noted.

So far, the authorities have not acted in the way they should have. As a result, river grabbing has snowballed into a complicated issue and the authorities' inaction led to the rivers being in a woeful state today.

Non-implementation of the commission's recommendations naturally leads to waning public confidence in the commission's authority, he said.

Shortage of manpower and fund is often a big challenge for officials, but if any official shows negligence in their duty, they must be held accountable, Muzibur said.

He recommended making crimes against rivers a cognisable offence to punish grabbers. To this end, the commission is going to propose forming a special tribunal to try these offenders.

About determining the actual river area, he said the BIWTA, the Water Development Board, the district administrations and the Directorate of Land Records and Surveys have to play their due roles in this regard.

Those who are responsible for demarcating the river boundary and evicting grabbers have not done their job in time, for which they should face action, he said.

"But it will be unfortunate if the authorities do not bring them to book. What we see is the authorities are silent. We have not seen any authority taking action against their officials for their failure to protect rivers," he said.

Outsiders attack students; 20 hurt

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Since Thursday, several thousand students have been demonstrating for the VC's removal, bringing allegation against him of sexual harassment, nepotism in recruiting teachers and other employees, and corruption in development projects, including the construction of the Shaheed Minar and Bangabandhu's mural on the campus.

A section of students began an indefinite hunger strike to press home the same demand.

The VC, Prof Khondoker, had denied all the allegations while talking to The Daily Star earlier.

This newspaper tried to contact him several times yesterday for comments on the attacks, but he did not pick up calls.

The protesters said the first attack was carried out around 10:30am yesterday near Gobra Madrasa when students, failing to get transport, were walking to the campus on foot.

More than 100 youths, many of whom carrying sticks and sharp weapons, attacked the students. Even girls were not spared, they said.

To escape the beating, many students jumped into waterbodies in the area, said Sairul Islam, a third year student of chemistry department.

"Many of the students were caught and beaten. Anyone found trying to capture the incident on cell phone were beaten even badly," said an injured female student, wishing not to be named.

Protesters were intercepted and

beaten in Balurmth area, Sobhan Road and Sonakur areas.

"I saw an attackers grabbing a female student by her hair and assaulting her. He was also scolding her for joining the protests," said a student of management department, who was attacked in Sobhan Road area.

The injured were rescued and taken to hospital by fellow students.

Defying university order and attacks, the students demonstrated in front of the VC office for the third straight day yesterday. They vowed not to leave until the VC steps down.

The university suspending Fatema Tuz Zinia, a student and also a campus reporter of English newspaper daily sun, on September 10 for a Facebook post triggered the movement.

CONDEMNATIONS

Talking to this daily, Assistant proctor Humayun said, "I resigned as I can't be holding the post anymore ethically following attack on my students."

Yesterday, at least 10 teachers of the university went to the demonstrators and condemned the attacks. They expressed solidarity with their demand.

Gopalganj Chhatra League also condemned the attacks on general students and said it wanted the attackers to be punished.

In a press release, the BCL unit extended its support to the "logical" demand of the students.

Journalists working at Rajshahi University demonstrated on the campus, protesting the attack that left

three of their colleagues injured.

Quota reform activists brought out a procession at RU demanding the VC steps down.

Speaking there, Nurul Haque Nur, quota reform leader and Vice-President of Dhaka University Central Students' Union, said, "Students come under attack whenever they protest for a logical demand. We demand the VC's resignation."

Hurricane Lorena makes landfall at Mexico's Los Cabos resort

AFP, Mexico City

Lorena made landfall Friday as a Category 1 hurricane, lashing the turquoise waters of popular beach destination Los Cabos on Mexico's Baja California peninsula.

"The eye of Hurricane Lorena is now passing over the coast of Los Cabos," Mexico's hurricane monitor, CONAGUA, wrote on Twitter.

The hurricane, which has been churning up the Pacific coast, first made landfall Thursday in west-central Mexico, then was briefly downgraded to a tropical storm before moving back over the water and regaining strength.



Mijanur Rahman Ashrafur Islam

Two Kushtia

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Shamsuzzaman Tuhin and Jubo League leader Anisur Rahmn Bkash.

According to the case statement, Mijanur and Ashrafur had been putting pressure on Al Amin for paying Tk 50 lakh as extraction money.

Campus sources said development works involving Tk 550 crore were underway at the university. Some ruling party men were influencing the authority's decisions on awarding tenders.

Asked about the allegation of extortion, Kushtia district AL President Sadar Uddin Khan said the party follows "zero tolerance" policy against extortion and anyone involved in such a crime using the party's name will not be spared from legal action.

Shakib powers

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the previous game, once again disappointed. The left-hander added just five runs before departing, hanging a simple catch while misreading a slower delivery from pacer Naveen ul Haque.

Bangladesh's two experienced cricketers, Mushfiqur Rahim and Shakib, steadied the ship with a 58-run third-wicket stand. But despite being given a lifeline through a dropped catch when he was on 14, Mushfiqur departed as he went after Karim Janat for a second six in the same over. He was caught and walked back for a 25-ball 26.

Mahmudullah and Sabbir Rahman also failed and things looked difficult for the Tigers. Shakib, who reached his fifty at the other end, was the biggest hope for the hosts. The skipper went full-throttle and, alongside Mosaddek Hossain who hit a valuable 19-ball 12, took Bangladesh over the line.

Shakib smashed eight boundaries and a six during his fiery knock of 70 off 45 balls as Bangladesh got home with exactly one over remaining, presumably to be bowled by the wily Rashid Khan.

Earlier, Bangladesh made just one change by bringing in Sabbir Rahman to replace injured leg-spinner Aminul Islam, who required three stitches to his left hand after sustaining an injury during his impressive debut against Zimbabwe in the previous game.

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The hosts were almost rewarded for that in the second over when Gurbaz, on just three runs, top-edged a short delivery from Shaful and popped a regulation catch to Mahmudullah, who incredibly dropped the dolly.

The Afghan openers then grabbed the opportunity and started to punish the Bangladesh bowlers and were eventually cruising on 75 without loss after nine overs before Shakib introduced Afif Hossain into the attack for the first time in the series.

The 19-year-old provided the breakthrough with his off-spin, picking up two wickets in his first over. He removed Zazai for a team-high 35-ball 47 and then removed Asghar Afghan for a duck.

After that, Bangladesh gained momentum and the Afghan middle order collapsed. The visitors could add just 34 runs with their last five wickets, ultimately posting 138 for seven in 20 overs.

Pakistan frees two Pashtun lawmakers after months of detention

REUTERS, Peshawar

Two Pakistani parliamentarians and human rights campaigners were released on bail in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province after four months in detention, their lawyer said on Saturday.

The two lawmakers, Ali Wazir and Mohsin Dawar, along with several activists of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), were arrested after a deadly clash between troops and activists at a security post in northern Pakistan in May.

"Both the parliamentarians were released from Haripur jail after midnight," Tariq Afghan, the lawyer for the two leaders told Reuters.

PTM campaigns against alleged extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances of Pashtuns and other ethnic minorities.

It emerged last year after the killing of an ethnic Pashtun man by police in the southern city of Karachi, which led to nationwide protests and turned the issue of alleged state violence against Pashtuns into a national debate.