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RAZING HILLS IN CTG Fines don't deter big businesses

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

No amount of fines has been able to stop businesses from cutting hills in Chattogram's Mirsarai and Sitakunda upazilas, putting the environment at risk.

Over the past three years, the Department of Environment (DoE) fined various business, including six renowned ones, for cutting hills on different occasions.

Between 2017-19, the Chattogram DoE conducted 19 mobile court drives and filed cases against those accused of hill-cutting.

The cases came after the DoE prepared a list of companies involved in the illegal act in 2018. The Daily Star obtained a copy of that list.

Despite the crackdown, however, the hills continue to be razed to the ground.

Visiting the hills in Barokunda area of Sitakunda upazila on November 30, some companies were found cutting those.

Chattogram-based MH Group, Dhaka-based FR Refinery Pvt Limited and a tyre factory were found to have fenced off areas and were razing the hills between those.

Contacted earlier this month, Mohammed Raj, group coordinator of MH Group, said some people had cut the hill adjacent to their factory area.

"We did not cut any hill...we just fenced off the area which belonged to us," he added.

This was an excuse heard before.

According to the list prepared by the Chattogram DoE,

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Scrap pieces of wood and parked rickshaws occupying a big portion of an around 40ft wide road over Beribandh next to the Buriganga in Shyambazar. Parked rickshaws only made the situation worse. Gridlocks are very common on this road. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Explosions in DU leave authorities clueless

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Explosion of four crude bombs near Madhur Canteen yesterday left police and Dhaka University authorities puzzled.

Three crude bombs exploded around 9:45am and another one went off around 5:30pm after it went under a wheel of Prof CR Abrar's car, witnesses said.

No one was injured in the incidents.

DU Chhatra League in the morning said activists of Chhatra Dal, BNP's student body, were likely to be behind the incidents.

The incidents happened three days after an unexploded crude bomb was found at the same place.

"A vested quarter that wants to gain political benefits and destabilise the campus, might be behind this," DU Proctor AKM Golam Rabbani told reporters.

At a prescheduled press conference around 11:00am, DU Chhatra League General Secretary

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Year's lowest 4.5 degrees in Tentulia

Cold spell could stay till tomorrow

STAR REPORT

Public sufferings caused by the ongoing bone-chilling cold have been intensified as mercury continued to drop in the northern region of the country.

This year's lowest temperature was recorded as 4.5 degrees Celsius in Tentulia upazila of Panchagrah yesterday morning, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD).

"Such cold weather may continue tomorrow [Monday] and the day after tomorrow [Tuesday]. Temperature across the country may start rising from Wednesday," said Abdur Rahman, an official of BMD's forecast centre.

However, light rain may occur at few places in the country on Thursday and Friday. But temperature will rise, he told The Daily Star last evening.

The BMD's weather bulletin said moderate to thick fog may occur at places over the country during mid-night to morning today, while weather may remain dry with temporary partly cloudy sky over the country.

Meanwhile, our correspondents in different districts reported on public sufferings.

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Skilled here is not skilled there

Says RMMRU chief about workers going abroad with jobs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Until November this year, only 2,073 professionals went overseas with jobs, which is one percent of the total Bangladeshi migrants, says a report of Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).

Of around 6.04 lakh migrant workers, 44 percent or around 2.52 lakh were sent abroad in the "skilled" category, says the report. Semi-skilled and less-skilled workers are the remaining 55 percent or about 3.5 lakh, it adds.

But those who categorised as "skilled" workers are not being considered the same by many receiving countries, said RMMRU Chair Prof Tasneem Siddique while disclosing the report's findings at a programme at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

The government sends female migrant workers after they are trained for 30 days and labelled as "skilled" workers, she said, adding that, "But they are treated as unskilled workers in receiving countries."

The report styled "Labour Migration from Bangladesh 2019: Achievements and Challenges" was prepared based on government data, media reports, and significant events and incidents that took place throughout this year.

This is the 10th such report published by the organisation.

Speaking about the low number of professionals, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said it reflected that the country failed to send adequate skilled migrants for overseas employment.

This is also a great reflection of the country's education system that it is not producing enough skilled workforce, he said.

Now, many countries have stopped recruiting doctors and engineers from Bangladesh, which is a matter of concern, he opined.

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Kaikaus new principal secy to PM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ahmad Kaikaus, senior secretary to the Power Division, has been appointed principal secretary to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

Public administration ministry yesterday issued a gazette notification in this regard saying this order will come into effect immediately.

Kaikaus, who served as senior secretary to the power division, will replace Md Nojibur Rahman.

Kaikaus received a master's degree in development economics from the Center for Development Economics at Williams College in Massachusetts in the US, and a PhD in Public Policy and Political Economy from the University of Texas.

He joined the

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Female astronaut breaks record



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Astronaut Christina Koch has made history by conducting the longest space flight ever by a woman.

The Nasa astronaut has now spent 289 consecutive days in space, breaking the record that was set by Peggy Whitson, who came back to Earth after 288 days.

During that unprecedentedly long journey, Koch has already set another record. She and fellow astronaut Jessica Meir conducted the first ever all-female spacewalk from the International Space Station in October, in another breakthrough that was watched around the world.

By the time she returns, Koch is expected to have taken part in six spacewalks, as well as conducting vital research while on board the space station.

But she is not set to come down for some time

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On this day in 1971

DECEMBER 30

Members of the probe committee of intellectual killing meet President Syed Nazrul Islam.

The members demand to form a stronger probe committee including personnel from

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 30

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:27 7:00

JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:30 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Trespassing will not be allowed

Says BGB chief; reiterates that NRC India's internal issue

STAR REPORT

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is an internal affair of India but nobody would be allowed to enter Bangladesh illegally, said Maj Gen Shafeenul Islam, chief of Border Guard Bangladesh yesterday.

He made the remark while wrapping up the BGB-BSF biannual conference in India.

Responding to a question, he said cooperation between the border guarding forces of Bangladesh and India is very good.

The BGB, in a press release, said it protested shooting, injuring and killing unarmed Bangladeshi nationals at the border and discussed the ways to stop such acts.

Issues of illicit drugs -- yaba, phensidyl, alcohol, marijuana, heroin -- and arms smuggling from India to Bangladesh were also

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A school teacher in Chandpur collecting books that are meant to be distributed among her primary school students. New books will be given to primary students all around the country on January 1. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ALAM PALASH

Deeds of a deed writer

He started out as a tea boy and now is the richest in his village taking huge cuts for his 'services'

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenaidah

With Aladdin's lamp seemingly in hand, Nasir Chowdhury from a small town in Jhenaidah amassed a fortune in a mere decade.

The once tea-boy does not have a flourishing business nor did he inherit a taka from his family. Yet he is touted to be the richest in the village.

Mere wealth was not enough for him. The insatiable Nasir craved political and social status.

He went on to become the chairman of Rokonpur Union Parishad under Kaliganj upazila, and general secretary of the upazila unit of Bangladesh Dalil Lekhok Samity (deed writers' association).

So how is it that the 48-year-old is now under the scanner of the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), which recently launched an investigation to find out the source of his wealth?

Poverty stricken Nasir worked as a day labourer in his early years. He used to sell coconuts at a local market to make ends meet, said locals, who knew him since childhood.

At one point, he landed a job as a tea boy at a local sub-registrar office. This gave him a chance to continue his studies up to class eight in 1997.

He later also worked as a helping hand in the household of then sub-registrar, who helped him obtain a licence with his existing educational qualifications. Thus, he began his

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Nasir