

Morning glory returns to Cox’s Bazar beach



MOSTAFA YOUSUF, Ctg

All it took was a mere few weeks for it to come back to the vast stretch of Cox’s Bazar sea beach.

With a ban on tourist movement in place, sagarlata, also known as beach morning glory -- a key component of the beach ecology -- which had disappeared from parts of Cox’s Bazar due to unbridled movement of tourists and construction of structures along the beach, started to grow once again.

The 120-km stretch of the beach laid empty with a tourist ban in place from

March 18, making room for the vine to grow rapidly in absence of human activities and reappear at Kolatali, Sugandha and Dorianagar -- three important beach areas.

Also known as railroad vine, sagarlata acts as a natural barrier to waves, protecting seashores from erosion.

Ahmed Gias, a resident of Dorianagar who is working to safeguard the beach ecology, told The Daily Star that sagarlata is important to dune erosion control and acts as a shield against natural calamities.

Hotels which were built occupying many dunes in the area destroyed roots

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Ctg jail inmates make 4,000 masks

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

A group of prisoners in Chattogram Central Jail have made 4000 face masks in last eight days, to be used as a precautionary measure against a possible coronavirus outbreak inside the jail.

Kamal Hossain, senior superintendent of the jail, told The Daily Star, “With help from 10 inmates, we started manufacturing masks on March 22, using raw materials from Dhaka, with an aim to contain the spread of coronavirus among the prisoners.”

“Chief tailor Md Shahjahan of the jail coordinated the inmates to prepare the masks while as senior official, I personally oversaw the work,” added Kamal.

“Every day around 250-350 masks were prepared by the inmates and then sent to the canteen for sale. At least 4,000 masks were made during this time,” added he.

The face masks have been distributed among the jail staff for free while the inmates can buy it at the canteen using Tk 15 from their personal cash cards, said the officials.

According to jail sources, there are more than 7000 inmates in the jail now. This population includes both men and women prisoners.

However, the initiative has been halted for now, due to shortage of raw material supply, said jail officials.

PRISONERS CAN NOW CALL LOVED ONES

According to jail authorities, prisoners of Chattogram Central Jail can call their family members using official phones installed by the jail authority.

He said, 650 inmates talked to their family members yesterday over phone.

Senior Jail Super Kamal Hossain said, “Prisoners at the jail are allowed five minutes every week to talk to their dear ones -- parents, wife, children, and siblings -- over phone.

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40 prisoners quarantined, 6 isolation units at jails

Says report by home ministry cell

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The directorate of prisons has opened six division-wise isolation centers inside jails for inmates, to keep any potential coronavirus patient.

The isolation centers are in jails at Kishoreganj, Madaripur, Pirojpur, Sylhet, Feni and Dinajpur, according to a report of the home ministry’s special coordination cell.

No coronavirus positive cases were reported from jails until Saturday, but 40 inmates have been kept in quarantine at different jails as precautionary measures, reads the report, signed by Abdul Kadir, a deputy secretary of the ministry.

The country’s jails are being kept under strict vigilance to prevent spread of the virus, he said.

Sources at prison directorate said there are around 89,000 prisoners now in 68 jails across the country, against the capacity of 41,244.

Jail officials were instructed to follow necessary health advisory properly, and disinfect hands and shoes and check body temperature regularly before joining duty, reads the report.

On March 25, the home ministry formed the special coordination cell to provide support to law enforcers to prevent

coronavirus during the ten-day general holiday from March 26 to April 4.

The tenure of the cell would be increased upon extension of the holiday, Sharif Mahmud Opu, public relations officer of the ministry, told The Daily Star yesterday.

According to the coordination cell report released yesterday, on-arrival visas have been suspended for all foreign nationals until April 15.

No traveller who visited the European Union and Iran after March 1 are allowed to enter Bangladesh till April 15.

However, others with valid visas must provide medical certificates to prove they are Covid-19 negative, while visa applicants must also provide it with their applications.

With an aim to ensure smooth operation of all development projects during the ongoing situation, Bangladesh has already extended visa validity to all temporary and permanent foreigners involved with the projects upon their application, reads the report.

In a bid to ensure monitoring of home quarantine, information of Bangladeshis who returned from overseas were given to National Telecommunication Monitoring Center (NTMC), Directorate General of Health Services and Institute

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VEGETABLES, SPICES

Wholesale prices fall in Rajshahi

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

Although retail prices remain unchanged, wholesale prices of vegetables and spice crops have dropped -- in some cases by more than 50 percent-- in Rajshahi markets, frustrating growers.

Farmers and wholesalers attributed the price fall to absence of buyers, closure of markets and stoppage of supplies to the country’s other parts during the 10-day shutdown from March 25, a protectionist move by the government to avoid spread of Covid-19.

Although the shutdown has no embargo on the supply chain of food crops and vegetables, many trucks used to transport those to different regions including Dhaka, Sylhet and Chattogram from Rajshahi region have remained off the street, contributing to the price fall.

Price of onion has come down to Tk 20 from Tk 30 per kg while it is being sold in retail market at Tk 34 per kg. Garlic price has plunged to

Tk 40 from Tk 70 per kg against the retail price of Tk 80.

Prices of okra and pointed gourd have decreased to as low as Tk 10 from Tk 30 per kg against retail price of Tk 40. Prices of brinjal and cucumber have come below Tk 6 from Tk 30 per kg.

The prices of wheat, masur and khesari dal have also come down.

“The prices may fall further,” said Sazzak Hossain, a farmer, who was picking okra from his field in Duari village beside Rajshahi-Tanore road while this correspondent was passing by recently.

The farmer said he would distribute the day’s harvest among his relatives and villagers. He cultivated the vegetable on half a bigha of land and will be harvesting twice a week for three months.

“I would rather donate than sell at such low price,” Sazzak said. “I sold okra at Tk 50 per kg even a week ago. Now, buyers are hesitating to pay even Tk 12.”

“Most wholesalers are declining

to purchase vegetables,” said Shahjahan Ali from Baksara village in Poba upazila.

Shahjahan shared a story of one of his neighbours named Anarul Islam, who returned home with four maunds of cucumber after failing to get fair price at a wholesale market in the city.

“I saw Anarul selling cucumber at Tk 10 to neighbours,” he said.

Faijul Islam, president of Rajshahi City Vegetable Wholesalers’ Association, said finding no buyers many are dumping brinjal and cucumber in dustbins.

“Many are also selling cucumber at a very low price,” he further added.

“We’re incurring a complete loss as the markets are empty,” he said, adding that the onions they purchased at Tk 28 per kg are being sold at Tk 20.

The labourers at the market have become unemployed, he said.

The city has around 2,000 trucks while some 400 of those are used to transport crops and

vegetables to different parts of the country, said Sadrul Islam, general secretary of Rajshahi Truck Owners’ Association.

“Most ruckers are fearing obstacles by law enforcers on roads,” said Sadrul Islam.

Most shops of vegetable wholesalers were empty at the city’s Kharkhari.

“At least six trucks with vegetables leave this place for different districts daily,” said Samjan Ali. “No truck plied in the last five days,” he added.

The law enforcers are frequently raiding the market, he said.

While visiting the areas under Poba and Tanore upazilas, this correspondent found that farmers almost completed harvesting wheat while some were harvesting potatoes.

Wheat price has fallen to Tk 900 a maund from Tk 1,200 within a week, said Sayebur Rahman, a farmer from Idolpur in Poba.

Masur dal is selling at Tk 2,700 per maund against its normal price

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Brac launches food support at city slums

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Urban Development Programme of Brac yesterday started essential food package distribution campaign for poor people in two major slums of the capital -- Korail in Banani and Shahidnagar in Lalbagh amid the coronavirus outbreak, said a press release.

Brac will distribute 7,500 food packages door to door to the extreme poor and daily wage earners, who have been without work since the government imposed a country-wide “general leave” last Thursday.

The packages each contain 7kg rice, 1kg lentil, 1kg edible oil, 1kg salt, 2kg flour, two hand soaps, and half kg detergent powder.

Brac has also undertaken different measures, such

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PAHELA BAISHAKH

Chhayanaut cancels Ramna Batamul event

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Cultural troupe Chhayanaut has cancelled their celebration of “Pahela Baishakh”, the first day of the Bangla year 1427, at Ramna Batamul considering safety of artistes as well as countrymen from the coronavirus pandemic.

The Bengali new year falls on April 14.

Chhayanaut, one of the leading cultural organisations of the country, has been holding the celebration since 1967. This is for the first time since the country’s Liberation War that the organisation is not holding their programme at Ramna.

People from all walks of life usually join the programme in thousands, held at the capital’s Ramna from dawn.

“We have decided not to hold the programme at Ramna Batamul as people are panicked over coronavirus, and for the sake of safety of artistes performing there as well as general people,” executive president of Chhayanaut Sarwar Ali told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

He said that Chhayanaut has also decided to donate the fund of arranging the programme to its relief fund.

Over the decades, Chhayanaut’s programme, that had begun in erstwhile East Pakistan as a protest against the cultural domination of the Pakistan military regime, has become synonymous with Pahela Baishakh celebrations.

“The major aim of Chhayanat’s programmes is to awaken humanity among people and society,” Sarwar Ali added.

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Tragic end to a noble initiative

Man killed in road crash after distributing food to poor

STAR REPORT

Noor Jamal Ghazi began his day yesterday visiting poor families in Manirampur upazila of Jashore. He had stepped out of his house from a sense of duty even during the shutdown, distributing food to those suffering during the coronavirus crisis.

His noble initiative, however, ended in tragedy. On his way back home on a motorbike, Jamal was killed in a road accident at Bagerhat Bazar area. He owned a private clinic named “Bandhan” in jail road.

Md Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said a truck coming from the opposite side hit him.

His body was kept at Jessore Medical College morgue for autopsy, he added.

In Cumilla, a couple and their car driver were killed after the vehicle plunged into a roadside canal in Bangra Bazar area of Muradnagar yesterday morning.

The deceased were Parvin Akhter (24), Saddam Hossain (27), and Abdur Rahman (28). Kamruzzaman Talukder, officer-in-charge of Muradnagar Police Station, said the vehicle skidded off the road and fell into the canal, killing all three on the spot.

DSCC distributes food among 800 labourers, rickshaw-pullers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) distributed necessary food items among 800 labourers and rickshaw-pullers yesterday as part of its efforts to help around 50,000 poor families who are out of work due to the ongoing shutdown to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

DSCC Mayor Sayeed Khokon handed over the food packets, which included rice, lentil, salt, potato, oil and soap, near the High Court area.

The mayor also urged city dwellers not to go outside unless necessary. “It’s imperative that we follow rules and maintain social distancing,” Khokon said.

He also said DSCC will continue their food distribution programme for the next 15 to 20 days. “We will provide food to 500 families in a ward and all the 75 wards under DSCC will be brought under the programme,” he said. The mayor said they are providing a month’s supply for now.

Khokon said there is a committee -- comprising zonal executive office, local councillor and elders in every



Mayor Sayeed Khokon during the food distribution programme yesterday.

ward -- which will take necessary steps so that those in need get the assistance.

On Saturday, DSCC started the distribution programme from Bahadur Shah Park. Khokon also handed over money to around 100 rickshaw-pullers and labourers on Friday.

“If any resident calls our hotline and informs us that they are facing a food crisis, our DSCC team will bring them food,” the mayor assured.

BIWTA HANDS OUT FOOD

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport

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This old man earns his living by begging on the streets of Gulistan, but there’s no one left on the roads to give him money. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

সুরক্ষা ও চিকিৎসা সামগ্রীর ঘাটতি নেই: প্রধানমন্ত্রী শেখ হাসিনা

- স্বাস্থ্যকর্মীদের সুরক্ষার বিষয়ে সর্বোচ্চ অগ্রাধিকার দেওয়া হয়েছে।
- পিপিই-সহ পর্যাপ্ত পরিমাণ সুরক্ষা সরঞ্জাম সংগ্রহ করা হয়েছে।
- করোনাভাইরাস পরীক্ষার জন্য পর্যাপ্ত কিট মজুদ আছে।
- ঢাকায় ৪টি স্থানে এবং চট্টগ্রামে করোনাভাইরাস পরীক্ষার ব্যবস্থা করা হয়েছে।
- অন্য ৬টি বিভাগে করোনাভাইরাস পরীক্ষাগার স্থাপনের কাজ চলছে।
- কেউ গুজব ছড়াবেন না। গুজব রটনাকারীদের বিরুদ্ধে কঠোর ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণ করা হবে।