Vulnerable families in Sundarbans receive aid

Households dependent on natural resources of the Sundarbans have been significantly affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This is mainly due to reduced income as a result of limited access, restricted movement, less demand of harvested products and more.

In light of this, some 7,000 households neighbouring Chandpai and Sarankhola Range of the Sundarbans are receiving cash grants and aid packages, said a press release.

The support comes as part of a special emergency project "COVID 19 Mitigation Measures in the Sundarbans" -jointly implemented by Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is funding the initiative, while Centre for Natural Resources Studies (CNRS) supported the rollout of this effort, the press document said.

Begum Habibun Nahar, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, inaugurated the programme on Thursday at the Chandpai Range Office

During her speech, the Deputy Minister urged everyone to join hands with BFD to conserve the Sundarbans, which she termed "Our pride and our lifeline," said the press release. She also thanked the German Government for their support and expected continued cooperation in conservation and enrichment of Bangladesh's vital forest resources, as well as climate change adaptation and

In the inauguration event, senior BFD officials, Divisional Forest Officers of Sundarbans East Forest Division, Upazilla Chairman of Mongla, GIZ Bangladesh and CNRS representatives, Chandpai Co-Management Committee members were present among others, the press release said.

DU students

a place where humour has no place? Cartoons are very effective at relaying important information. Cartoonist Kishore showed the kind of courage that is non-existent in the pens and paintbrushes of many. But this courage is not allowed in Bangladesh," said Jahid Jamil, a student cartoonist and organising secretary of Bangladesh Student Union's DU

Writer Mushtaq Ahmed and cartoonist Ahmed Kishore were arrested on May 6 after being prosecuted under Digital Security Act for their writings and their art. They have been denied bail multiple times.

Act neutrally

on January 27, according to the Election Commission.

The EC issued a circular in this regard on Saturday, said Mohammad Hasanuzzaman, returning officer of CCC polls. He said there will be no restriction on public transport movement.

When asked about the reason, Hasanuzzaman said if general holiday is announced, many voters may go out of the city. "If voters stay in the city, turnout will increase," he said.

Moreover, if it is declared, traders and businesspeople will suffer too,

410 POLLING STATIONS "RISKY"

According to police, 410 polling stations out of 723 are "risky". Of the polling stations, 12 stations are situated in Hathazari upazila, which is out of Chattogram Metropolitan Police's jurisdiction.

CMP sources said the risky polling stations are situated under 20 wards of CCC where police are on high alert to avoid any kind of untoward situation. Besides, law enforcers have chalked out four-tier security measures for the election, they said.

Marking the risky centers "important", CMP Deputy Commissioner Abdul Warish said, "A team of six armed police personnel and 12 Ansar members will be deployed at important centres while four police and 12 Ansar members at regular centers.

Around 8,000 police personnel will be deployed across the city and around 1,500 are on stand by for any emergency during the polls, he said.

City FROM PAGE 3

connectivity among the canals where it is possible. "If this is implemented, Dhaka will be a very

beautiful city," he said. He said they have asked the two city corporations to submit their project proposals on the canals.

Tazul said they will provide all kinds of support from the ministry to the city corporations in this regard.

The capital's city corporations on December 31 formally took over the management and maintenance responsibilities of 26 canals and 10-kilometres of box culverts from Dhaka Wasa, raising hope that city's long-standing waterlogging problem would be solved.

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) had been responsible for the 26 canals (84.5 km) and the 10- box culverts (around 10 km) since 1988. It also looks after 385 km of storm water drains.

The DNCC and DSCC had been managing 2,200 km of pipe and surface drains alone at that time.

≸tar journo Mirdha wins AmCham award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star senior staff reporter Mohammad Refayet Ullah Mirdha has won the prestigious AmCham Frontline Journalism Award for his work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Along with him, some 25 journalists from print and electronic media also won the awards, and were presented with crests, certificates, and cash prizes by Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen at a virtual programme yesterday. Mirdha won the award for his report "Exports crash to a 40-year-low"

published on The Daily Star on May 9 of last year. The award was organised by American Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bangladesh (AmCham), in collaboration with Masthead PR.

No achieving

The opening session was titled "Lifelong learning - education to instil leadership values". Country Director of Asia Foundation Faisal Seraj; BGMEA President Rubana Huq, and Global Campaign for Education (GCE) Co-founder Rasheda K Choudhury participated in the discussion.

Principal of Sunbeams School, Munize Manzur; Brac Institute of Educational Development's Executive Director Dr Erum Mariam and representative from Asia Foundation Sukla Dey participated in the session "Learn and play: benefits of storytelling and activities in children's education."

Prime Bank's Head of Brand Nazmul Karim; JCI Bangladesh National President Niaz Morshed Elite; Deputy General Manager, of MM Ispahani Didarul Hasan, and Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre (BYLC) Communication Manager Upashana Salam spoke at the session titled "From campus to professional life: reshaping education for tomorrow's workforce."

Former UGC Chair Azad Chowdhury and Prof M Rezwan Khan of UIU discussed the fourth industrial revolution in the afternoon session.

Upskill Co-founder Mustafizur Rahman; Alokito Hridoy Foundation Chairperson Azwa Nayeem and Founder and Director of Kotha, Umama Zillur spoke on "EdTech: innovation transforming the education landscape." HerStory Foundation's Curator Katerina Don and ULAB Pro-vice Chancellor Shamsad Mortuza discussed the importance of arts and creativity in modern education practices at a session as well.

Pledges are beyond their

Architect Iqbal Habib, also joint secretary of the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said that among other jobs, city corporations collect revenue and take care of vital civic amenities like waste collection and management, mosquito control, maintenance and repair of roads and footpaths, surface drains, street lightings and fighting food adulteration.

Both Rezaul and Shahadat, in their manifestos, gave priority to ending waterlogging and overcoming traffic congestion in the port city and promised to resolve the issues, if

However, these vital issues remain under the jurisdiction of the Chattagram Development Authority and the Chattagram Metropolitan Police traffic department.

On Saturday, Rezaul announced his 37-point manifesto while Shahadat announced his 9-point one on the same day.

Some of the pledges in Rezaul's manifesto are: eliminating waterlogging, 100-day priority projects, resolving traffic congestion, restoring discipline on roads, evicting occupants of canals and rivers, managing waste, developing Chattogram as the country's tourism capital, restoring the lost natural diversity and environment of the port city, harnessing the importance of Chattogram in the Blue Economy, building a mosquito-free city, and discouraging the construction of unplanned facilities.

But most of the pledges he made are under the jurisdictions of other authorities. Shahadat also gave eradicating the waterlogging problem the highest priority.

He said,, if elected, he will recover the city's canals to build a waterlogging-free Chattogram and build dams to protect both sides of the canals, taking effective measures to prevent the slicing away of hills in the city.

The BNP candidate also said fertiliser and electricity will also be generated through

Experts said most of the promises made by the BNP candidate are not totally under the jurisdiction of the CCC as various concerned government ministries and departments are

Dr Mahfuzur Rahman, convener of Chattogram's Public Health Right Protection Committee, said as per the third schedule of the Local Government Act, all sorts of responsibilities in the city has been given to the mayors of city corporation without empowerment

The mayor has responsibility but no power, he said.

According to Article 59 of the Constitution, all the government officials and staffers would go under the local government but a law in this regard has not been enacted. So the mayors, virtually, do not have any power to address most of the pledges in their election

Only the system of the metropolitan government can address the issue, Mahfuzur said, adding so the public representatives in local government institutions should raise their voices to introduce the metropolitan government system.

Otherwise the mayors would pledge to voters but in many cases, they would not be able fulfil those and consequently the voters would be deprived, he said.

Asked, why the mayoral candidates, despite knowing their limitation, offer such pledges, Mahfuzur said many of them do not have a clear idea about their mandate and others do it to be popular amongst voters even after knowing they do not have the mandate to meet those pledges.

Wild elephants

FROM PAGE 12 Humayan breathed his last on the way to a local clinic in Cox's Bazar.

SM Kaiser, divisional forest officer (DFO), Lama, said humans have been blocking the passage of these wild elephants for a long time.

"It became serious in 2018 with the construction of Dohazari-Cox's Bazar rail line through the Chunati and Fasiakhali wildlife sanctuaries and Medhkachapia National

It will be difficult to stop the human-elephant conflict in the future as the elephants' passages are already blocked in the area, said the DFO, adding that it would also pose a serious threat to wildlife and biodiversity in the region.

'Blue jet' lightning

The fifth flash sent out a pulsating blue jet, a form of lightning that can reach as far as 50km into the stratosphere and lasts less than a second. An artist's visualisation of the phenomenon has now

been released by the European Space Agency (ESA) to accompany the Nature article. Scientists say that their observations using the ASIM

- known as the space storm hunter - could help reveal how lighting is initiated in clouds and how they may influence the concentration of greenhouse gasses in Earth's atmosphere.

Astrid Orr, ESA's physical sciences coordinator for human and robotic spaceflight, said: "This paper is an impressive highlight of the many new phenomena ASIM is observing above thunderstorms and shows that we still have so much to discover and learn about our Universe.

"Congratulations to all the scientists and university teams that made this happen as well as the engineers that built the observatory and the support teams on ground operating ASIM - a true international collaboration that has led to amazing discoveries.

Sbrac





Request for Project Proposal

The Climate Bridge Fund (CBF) is a trust established by BRAC with support from the Government of Germany through KfW. The CBF is an innovative direct climate finance mechanism, which will support any local, national and international NGOs present in Bangladesh. CBF Secretariat invites project proposal from NGOs to increase the resilience of vulnerable people who are either displaced or are at the risk of being displaced due to the impacts of climate change and also highly vulnerable to COVID 19 under its **Emergency Response Window (ERW)**. CBF will support projects to be

- 1. Any of the five city corporations/ municipalities among Rajshahi, Barishal, Khulna, Sirajganj and
- 2. Any other location based on justified needs as to be the ultimate destination of climate migrants and hotpots of COVID 19 in climate vulnerable areas.

Duration of the project will be 2 years (max) and estimated budget should be limited within BDT 3 to

Please visit our website for detailed information and instructions to apply: http://www.brac.net/cbf All interested NGOs are requested to complete and submit the project proposal in approved template (available at the website) to: cbf.info@brac.net with subject: CBF-ERW/Call-NGOs/2021/01. Project proposal must be submitted in English.

Deadline for submitting: Wednesday, 3 March 2021, 23.59 pm BST.

Any form of persuasion shall result in disqualification

Dhaka FROM PAGE 12

As per the commitment made by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi during PM level summit with his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina on December 17 last year, India on January 21 supplied two million doses of vaccines produced by SII.

Under a tripartite deal among the Bangladesh government, Beximco Pharmaceuticals and SII, three crore more vaccines are scheduled to arrive in six months. The first tranche of 50 lakh shots of the purchased vaccine is scheduled to arrive today.

At the vaccine handover ceremony on January 21, Health Minister Zahid Maleque also requested Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram K Doraiswami to ensure that the contract of the vaccine is implemented smoothly.

Bangladesh will begin pilot vaccination of the vaccine on Wednesday, a week before the planned countrywide rollout vaccination campaign.

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla visited Dhaka on August 18 19 and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen was then first scheduled to visit India in September and then in December, but could not do it due to the pandemic. The secretary was also infected with Covid-19.

The foreign office consultations will comprise all the issues of bilateral relations, including trade and commerce, deals on water-sharing on Teesta and other common rivers, connectivity projects and border killings, officials said.

"Bangladesh would seek more Indian investments in Bangladesh and remove the non-tariff barriers of exporting Bangladeshi goods to India," a foreign minister official said.

He said though Bangladesh's export to India has exceeded \$1 billion mark, the trade between the two countries is heavily imbalanced against Bangladesh.

Dhaka expects Delhi to expedite the settlement of water-sharing deals. In 2011, Bangladesh and India failed to sign the Teesta water-sharing agreement due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute opposition. The issue remains unresolved as of now. The two countries are

now working on watersharing deals on six other small rivers -- Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar. "Besides, the connectivity

projects under the Indian Line of Credit also need expedition. We are working on how to speed up the release of money and implementation of the projects," the official added.

Teenage boy

FROM PAGE 12 18. Her mother filed a case against Sajib yesterday.

The girl was sent to a hospital, said Moshiur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Siddhirganj Police Station.

Our correspondents in Benapole and Narayanganj contributed to the report.]

ACC sues former OC

Star published a report that he was in service though he had been accused in forgery, land grabbing, and an attempted murder.

According to the case description, Nurul was murdered on June 11, 2019, following his dispute with other transport leaders over the election of Puthia Motor Sramik Union.

On the same day, Nurul's daughter Nigar Sultana filed a murder case with Puthia Police Station against eight people, including transport leader Abdur Rahman Patal and local Awami League leader Ahsanul Haque

In the FIR, she also alleged that report to the HC in November then OC Shakil was involved in manipulating the election results in favour of Patal. But police later submitted an FIR

of the murder case to the trial court in Rajshahi, dropping the names of Patal, Masud and OC Shakil. Nigar later filed a writ petition the

HC, challenging tampering of the FIR. On September 16, 2019, an HC bench, led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim, directed the Chief Judicial

enquiry into the allegation. Hasan Talukder submitted a probe

Magistrate of Rajshahi to conduct an

2019, holding five police officials, three including additional superintendents of Rajshahi police and OC Shakil, responsible. In December that year, the HC

Shakil was undoubtedly grave and a punitive offence. Based on the judicial probe, the HC directed the ACC to initiate the next course of legal action. OC Shakil then filed a petition with

observed that the allegation against

the Supreme Court, challenging the In March 2020, the SC dismissed

Rajshahi's then CJM Md Mehedi his appeal and upheld the HC

No deaths in Europe tied to Covid jabs

In France, of 800,000 people vaccinated, nine deaths of chronically ill residents of care and retirement homes were recorded by Friday. The national medicines agency

ANSM said that based on available evidence, "Nothing leads to the conclusion that the reported deaths were linked to vaccination. Other examples include 13 deaths

of elderly people recorded in Sweden

and seven in Iceland, all with no link established. In Portugal, a care worker died two days after being inoculated but the justice ministry said a post-mortem

found no direct link. France's interior ministry on January 18 listed 71 "observations of death" in Europe of people who had the inoculation, but offered no further

The European Medicines Agency said that despite the deaths, "to date no specific concerns have been identified with Comirnaty", the commercial name for the Pfizer shot. In many countries -- such as France, Norway, Britain and Spain -- the

vaccinations. "It is not unexpected that some of these people may naturally fall ill due to their age or underlying conditions shortly after being vaccinated, without the vaccine playing any role in that,"

the UK medicines regulator MHRA

frail and elderly are first in line for

The deaths are a highly sensitive issue, and approaches to informing the public vary. France and some Nordic countries have reported postvaccination deaths and detailed the potential side effects of the jabs even if no link has been established. But Britain's MHRA said it would

possibly seeking to avoid spreading In any event, European health officials say the deaths do not call into question the safety of the vaccines.

make a statement at a later date.

Norway has not changed ıts vaccination rollout, even if it has recommended doctors consider the overall health of the most frail before giving them the jab, the policy of numerous other countries.

In India, the huge coronavirus

vaccination drive is behind schedule, with a third of recipients not showing up for appointments because of safety fears, technical glitches and a belief that the pandemic is ending. After one week, India has vaccinated 1.4 million people, or

200,000 people per day. It had initially hoped to process 300,000 per day before ramping up the rollout and inoculating 300 million At the Sharda Hospital in Greater Noida near New Delhi, pharma

student Khushi Dhingra, 17, hugged a

friend and wept as she waited to get

"I am very afraid. I hate needles and I am worried about side effects, she told AFP. "My papa is very worried too. He is calling me again and again to make sure I am okay. India is using two shots for its drive.

produced version of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, which has been approved and safely used in a number other countries after completing Phase 3 human trials. The other -- Covaxin -- was developed locally by Bharat Biotech

One is Covishield, a locally

and has not yet completed Phase 3 trials, though the government has insisted it is "110 percent safe". Side effects are a common fear, with a few cases of severe reactions and even deaths -- reported widely

in the media and circulating wildly on Facebook and WhatsApp.

Dhingra, in the end, did not get a shot after staff realised she was under 18. She had, however, received a text telling her to come for the vaccination from the IT system managing the

mammoth process. The government says that this and other glitches are being ironed out.

One was that if a person did not show up for vaccination, someone else could not simply take their place.

This led to unfinished vaccine vials which contain a certain number of doses and have to be used that day being thrown away.

The killing of Kohelia

for the road construction. As a result, the river has narrowed significantly. Huge shoals emerged from the river as road construction reduced

water flow from the sea, Mohon said.

Many commercial and nonmechanised fishing boats were seen stuck on the shoal of the river. No wooden fishing mechanised or non-mechanised, or

vessels carrying salt -- produced in the

area -- can currently navigate the river,

thanks to the road construction and river filling. "The road to the power plant not only destroyed the river but also our livelihood, hopes, and future. Now I eke out a living on daily labour," an

aggrieved Mohon said. The Kohelia river emanates from Ujantia union of Pekua upazila and ends up in the Bay of Bengal, crisscrossing 12km through many villages such as Mohon's.

Abul Bashar Parvej, convener of the Committee to Protect Kohelia River, told The Daily Star that the river was a local heritage for Moheshkhali.

The river once facilitated easy communications with other parts of Cox's Bazar and Chattogram as traders used to carry their goods in boats -salt traders in particular used to ship their produce via the Kohelia.

"It is now on its deathbed owing to this road being built."

"More than 2,000 fishermen from three unions including Dholghat, Matarbari and Kalarmarchhara lost their livelihoods. Many of them are

now migrating to shipbreaking yards in Chattogram in search of work," he

"We protested, organising human chains to stop such mindless activities,

Project Director Shyamal Kumar Bhattacharya, also additional chief engineer of the Roads and Highways department, told The Daily Star that they got clearance from the Department of Environment (DoE) for the road construction.

The project includes the building of a 13km road from Badarkhali to the Matarbari power plant, 7.4km of which will be along the Kohelia river,

are doing minimum encroachment and it is not a fullfledged river. It is a canal which dries up during low tide," he said.

Safkat Hasan, manager of the project, claimed that they had their clearance issued by DoE, renewed it each year, and had the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and feasibility study approved by the DoE.

Deputy director of DoE Cox's Bazar office Nazmul Huda told The Daily Star that the project authorities had obtained clearance from DoE (in 2014) and that they had renewed it. "But the problem is they did not

mention anything about encroaching the river. Had they mentioned it, DoE would not have issued any clearance. We will move as per the law," he said. Sharmeen Soneya Murshid,

the Kohelia river on January 20, told The Daily Star that the way the Roads and Highways Department filled up the road is "a criminal act" against the "The DoE must be held responsible

if they issued any clearance for the

project," she said, adding that RHD embarked on the road construction violating existing environmental law. "RHD brought a change in the design after it was approved by DoE. The RHD authorities did not feel

it necessary to have their renewed design approved from DoE again, Murshid said. General secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa) Sharif Jamil told The Daily Star that while the government is on a campaign to reclaim river land, an entire river is

being filled up -- setting a massive contradiction between policy and action. "Why does the Roads and Highways Department have to fill up a river mile after mile? How dare they destroy the river -- its rich biodiversity and the livelihoods of hundreds who live off

of fishing in the river?" He raised these questions, adding that the grabbers know very well they will have to face no punishment for

At a protest programme at the Dhaka Reporters Unity office in Segunbagicha on Saturday, the National River Alliance and Bapa demanded the government stop sand member of National River filling and road construction by the Conservation Committee, who visited Kohelia river.