

Data unavailable on land, water area in country

Minister tells parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Land Minister Saifuzzaman Chowdhury yesterday told parliament that there is no specific data on the size of land and water portions in Bangladesh.

"No specific information was found regarding the size of water and land parts of the country from Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics or any other government organisations," the minister said in reply to a tabled question from ruling Awami League MP M Abdul Latif.

He said for the welfare of the people of the country, the land ministry and other related ministries are working round the clock for preserving arable land, forests and waterbodies.

Replying to another query from Mozaffar Hossain from Jamalpur-5, the land minister said no land development tax is needed if the amount of total personal and family based-arable land is up to 8.25 acres or 25 bighas.

Under this waiver, sugarcane cultivation, land for salt farming and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Five commuters barely hang on to the back of a human haulier at Ambagan area of Chattogram city yesterday. One of the passengers has one foot hanging outside as the leg rest cannot fit so many people. People cram on these vehicles to save time, risking their lives to commute to work every morning as monitoring of the road safety violation seems to be non-existent.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

COMBATING MOSQUITO-BORNE DISEASES

No alternative to better waste management in urban areas: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is no alternative to a multi-sectoral and standard waste management in urban areas to fight dengue and other mosquito-borne disease, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

Besides, mosquito control activities need an intensive engagement of urban dwellers to make it effective, they said while speaking at the Dissemination Workshop for Post-Monsoon Aedes Survey-2020.

The Communicable Disease Control (CDC) unit of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) organised the event at National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM) in the capital.

In the event, Dr Afsana Alamgir Khan, deputy project manager of national malaria control under CDC, presented the survey report. In 2020, a total of seven people died of dengue fever -- much lower than the previous year's death toll of 179, according to the report.

In her presentation, Dr Afsana said, a total of 3,000 households in Dhaka city were surveyed during the 10 day study between December 18 and 27, 2020.

The survey teams found Aedes larvae in 124 households. Common breeding sources of Aedes mosquito were flower tubs and trays, discarded tires, plastic drums, bottles and polythene bags, buckets, flooded floors, cement tanks, elevator space, and pockets in water meters.

The survey revealed that nearly 39 percent of the households where

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Councillor Rajib may own more assets than thought

Says CID; probe finds duplex home, multiple vehicles, Tk 1.46cr in bank; manager quizzed

SHARIFUL ISLAM

As investigation into the money laundering case against Dhaka city ward councillor Tareqzammqn Rajib nears completion, the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has found a previously undiscovered duplex house owned by him and Tk 1.46 crore deposited in his bank account.

In addition, CID also found an SUV and a private car belonging to Rajib -- who was arrested on October 19 in 2019 as part of the crackdown against corruption and illegal casino business.

In light of these discoveries, investigators now suspect that the actual amount of assets owned by the expelled joint general secretary of Dhaka north unit of Jubo League could be much more than initially thought.

"Months into our inquiry into Rajib and his wife's wealth, we've found Tk 1.46 crore deposited in Rajib's bank account,

a duplex house, a jeep and a private car," said Mostafa Kamal, special superintendent of CID. "We're now looking into whether Rajib has more money and properties."

"We also found several land ownership documents which shows Rajib had earlier sold the lands," the official said.

He said they are hopeful of submitting the case's charge sheet soon.

Meanwhile, the Anti-Corruption Commission has seized the jeep, while his bank account has been frozen too.

In this connection, investigators have interrogated a staff member and the manager of Mohammadpur branch of the private bank where Tk 1.46 crore is deposited.

The staffer had on several occasions deposited money to Rajib's account by herself and put her sign on the deposit slips, breaching Bangladesh Bank's policy, said a CID investigator.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

HUMAYUN AZAD MURDER CASE Prosecution, defence complete arguments

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Both the prosecution and defence yesterday completed their arguments in the case filed over the killing of Prof Humayun Azad in February 2004.

During yesterday's closing arguments, the prosecution told the court that they were able to prove the charges against all accused and sought highest punishment for their involvement in this offence.

The defence claimed the prosecution failed to prove the charges against and sought acquittal of the accused.

Judge Maksud Parvin of the Fourth Additional Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka asked both sides to submit their legal opinion on March 4. The judge will then set the date for delivery of judgment in the case.

The accused are: Salehin alias Salahuddin, Anwarul Alam alias Anwar, Mizanur Rahman alias Minhaz and Nur Mohammad. Among them, Salehin and Nur are on the run while two others are in jail.

On February 27, 2004, JMB activists stabbed 56-year-old Azad when he was trying to hail a rickshaw to go home from Ekushey Book Fair at Bangla Academy in the capital.

Azad was treated in Dhaka for 26 days and then in Bangkok, from where he returned home after over 47 days.

A day after the murder attempt, Azad's brother Manjur Kabir filed an attempt to murder case with Ramna Police Station against some unnamed people.

DU dorms to reopen Mar 13

UNB

Dhaka University (DU) has decided to reopen residential halls on March 13, after a year of closure due to the coronavirus outbreak.

However, residence facilities will only be open to the final-semester examinees of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes.

The decision emerged from an academic council meeting yesterday.

DU Proctor Prof AKM Golam Rabbani said the council decided to reopen dormitories for examinees.

"All deans were asked to prepare a list of the examinees by February 7. Next, they will arrange residence facilities for them on a priority basis."

"DU's academic activities will resume on February 7. Students must leave the dorms at the end of exams," Golam Rabbani said.

'Shut down illegal brick kilns in Ctg'

High Court orders authorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed authorities concerned of the government to immediately shut down all the illegal brick kilns in Chattogram and submit a report after complying with the directive by February 18.

During hearing a petition, the court also asked the deputy commissioner of Chattogram and the director of Department of Environment in the district to submit all the documents on fining 71 illegal brick kilns through mobile court drives along with a compliance report.

The HC bench of Justice Md Mozibur Rahman Miah and Justice Md Kamrul Hossain Mollah fixed February 22 for passing further order on this issue.

The bench came up with the directive following a petition filed, bringing contempt of court charges, against two executive magistrates for not complying with its order over shutting down the illegal brick kilns at Chandanaish and Lohagara upazilas in Chattogram.

Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh filed the petition with the HC on January 20 against executive magistrate of Chandanaish SM Alamgir and executive magistrate of Lohagara Zillur Rahman.

The organisation said the HC, following a petition, on

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

MITU MURDER INVESTIGATION

Progress report submitted to HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) yesterday submitted a report on the progress of investigation into the murder of Mahmuda Khanam Mitu, wife of former Superintendent of Police (SP) of Chattogram Babul Akter, before the High Court.

PBI's inspector and the case's investigation officer Santosh Kumar Chakma submitted the report to the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman in line with its December 2, 2020 order.

Deputy Attorney General Sarwar Hossain Bappi said the HC bench will hold hearing on the matter on February 4.

He, however, refused to disclose the contents of the progress report, saying that it is not a public property.

During hearing a bail petition of Motaleb Mia Wasim, an accused, the HC bench on December 2 wanted to know the progress of the investigation.

On that day, IO Chakma told the HC that the charge sheet of the case will be submitted to the trial court soon.

The same day, the HC refused to grant

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Tk 34.89CR GRAFT CASE AGAINST KHOKON

Submit probe report by Mar 3: court directs PBI

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again directed Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to submit by March 3 the probe report of a case filed against former Dhaka South City Corporation mayor Sayeed Khokon and six others on charges of embezzling Tk 34.89 crore.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Ashek Imam passed the order after PBI failed to submit any probe report.

Moreover, PBI did not submit any application as to why they failed to do so, Atiqur Rahman, bench assistant of the court, told The Daily Star.

Delwar Hossain, president of Traders-Owners Association of Fulbaria City Supermarket-2 in the capital's Gulistan, filed the case with the same court on December 29 last year.

The magistrate took the case into cognisance and recorded statement of the complainant that day.

Yusuf Ali Sardar, former chief revenue officer of the city corporation; Md Mazed, its former deputy assistant engineer; and their assistants Kamrul Hasan, Helena Akter, Atiqur Rahman Swapan and Md Walid were also made accused in the case.

According to the case document, Khokon and six others colluded to build and allot shops, violating the main design of Fulbaria City Supermarket-2.

Contacted, Sayeed Khokon told The Daily Star, "I will not comment on the case now, as it is under investigation. I will present my statement before the court after investigation."

Some 2,300 shops were constructed at the Fulbaria Supermarket-2 following the main design. But 911 others were built illegally at different times.

DSCC on December 8 last year started a drive to demolish all 911 illegal shops.



Traffic lights at Gulshan-1, a major intersection in one of the most upscale neighbourhoods of the capital, remain out of order, as traffic police are left with the task to manage the busy thoroughfare with hand signals, inset. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



This is a familiar sight in Chattogram at the beginning of every month -- movers carry furniture on vans as families set off for a new home in the city. People prefer moving at the end or beginning of the month to avoid rent-related hassles. This photo was taken at Kazir Deuri area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

16 get life term for murder of AL leader

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Khulna court yesterday sentenced sixteen persons to life imprisonment in a case filed over the murder of local Awami League leader Asaduzzaman alias Titu Sharif in 2018.

Judge Md Nazrul Islam Hawlader of Speedy Trial Tribunal announced the verdict. The court also fined them Tk 5,000 each in default of which they will have to remain one more year in jail.

Meanwhile, 15 accused were acquitted from the murder case as they were found not guilty.

On July 2, 2018, Titu Sharif, vice-president of Gopalganj municipality unit of AL, was hacked to death at Shingati village in Narail. His brother filed a case with Naragati Police Station naming 18 persons and 10 to 12 unnamed.

A protective eye on avian species

Wildbird monitoring and research camp progressing at Tanguar Haor

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

Through the lenses of cameras and binoculars, researchers are now looking out for our avian friends who kept on flying for thousands of kilometres in search for sanctuary during the winter.

These researchers belong to a twelve-day wild bird monitoring and research camp progressing at Tanguar Haor, a protected wetland under the Ramsar Convention at Sunamganj district.

Such camp plays a vital role in understanding wild birds' seasonal migration and protecting the area's inhabitants, while the data helps understand climate change, pollution levels and many other factors.

The camp started off on January 28 with a monitoring team of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) along with Bangladesh Forest Department and volunteers of Bangladesh Bird Club, said ABM Sarwar Alam, senior programme officer of IUCN Bangladesh.

The monitoring and research camp will conclude on February 8 while the Waterbird Census for 2021, a part of the programme, will take place on February 2-3, Sarwar said.

For years, IUCN has been implementing the monitoring and research programme at Tanguar Haor, with support from Linnaeus University.

As part of the programme, the team conducts major activities like bird ringing (attaching tag with a unique code on to the birds for future identification), satellite tagging (attaching GPS devices to long-distance migratory ducks), and tracking movement using artificial intelligence (AI). Waterbird census is also a major part of the programme.

On January last year, a total of 51,368 birds of 35 species were recorded during the Waterbird Census.

The number was 1,50,000 birds of around 40 species in January 2019; 59,542 in 2018; 91,236 in 2017; 42,558 in 2016, and 52,299 in 2015.