

3 villages give it up

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the years.

However, the Integrated Development Foundation (IDF), an NGO, introduced an initiative in 2018 for farmers in the area to return from tobacco to other crop varieties, bringing about a change in just two years.

Now the three villages -- where farmers used to cultivate tobacco on around 400 acres -- have almost stopped growing this crop.

TOXIC RESIDUE, DECLINE IN EGG YIELDS

A large amount of toxic residue from the pesticides used in tobacco farming in these villages wash downstream into the Halda river, a 98-kilometre-long unique waterbody in South Asia where brood fish spawn naturally each year.

As the tobacco farmland increased at the hinterland -- one of several manmade hazards posing a threat to Halda -- the fallout the river faced was unprecedented.

Spawning reduced alarmingly in 2016 with no eggs laid by the brood fish in Halda.

Over the years, the river saw a massive drop in egg yields by brood fish from 211kg in 2011, to just 70kg in 2013, 47kg in 2015, and none at all in 2016.

This decline was blamed by researchers on tobacco farming.

Prof Dr Manzoorul Kibria, eminent Halda researcher, told The Daily Star that he had been observing that the volume of eggs laid by brood fish was declining.

This prompted the researcher to conduct a baseline study in 2016 to find the reason behind the decline of egg yields in the Halda since 2011, he said.

"As we were looking for the reason, we came across the large swathes of Halda hinterlands at Manikchhari where the Halda river originates.

"These had been engulfed by tobacco farming. As tobacco farming requires large amounts of pesticides and fertilisers, the toxic residue washed downstream causing egg production to slump."

Villager Saira Begum said, "We could never imagine the damage we are doing to Halda river. People of our village walked into their [tobacco companies] trap.

"The tobacco growing was on the rise, thanks to the high profits. As



Fajul Kader of Ghorkona used to grow tobacco years ago. Now he has returned to producing potatoes on his land.

PHOTO: STAR

production increased over the years, however, the company agents showed their real face by reducing the profit margins."

They also experienced some skin-related diseases due to the high amounts of pesticides they needed to use in cultivation. The profits they made from tobacco farming, they had to spend for their treatment, she added.

RETURN TO OTHER CROPS

IDF, the NGO, made villagers aware of the harm to their health and the damage to the river, arising from tobacco farming.

"Following all aspects of the situation, we returned to crop farming once again," said Saira.

Gias Uddin, another farmer from Chodurkhal village of Manikchhari, told The Daily Star that all they cared about was to live a better life.

"Tobacco once gave us that. But later we realised that our land is losing its fertility, our health is in jeopardy, and our environment is degraded."

The whole village has now left tobacco farming, he said.

Prof Kibria said he had earlier proposed to the relevant authorities to give an alternative to the farmers of Halda upstream.

IDF came forward to save the Halda and in just two years, the farmers were convinced to switch from tobacco

farming, he said.

The Halda is also recovering and last year, the egg yield by brood fish in the river was 25,736kg, which is the highest in 14 years, according to the researcher.

Md Hasinur Rahman, Manikchhari upazila agricultural officer, told The Daily Star that they always discourage tobacco farming, due to its disastrous impact on the environment.

The tobacco companies lure them in many ways, he added.

"It is very motivating that the farmers changed from tobacco farming and took to other crop varieties. We have to keep this up."

Jahirul Alam, executive director of IDF, the project was undertaken following a report of The Daily Star published March 29, 2016.

In the beginning, he said, it was tough to move the farmers back to other crop varieties.

"We sat with them several times, convinced them of the negative impacts of tobacco farming, and supported the farmers with grants and other necessities.

"All these things helped achieve the goal."

IDF also initiate a conversation with vegetables wholesalers and expects to get a positive outcome within this year, Jahirul added.

Posthumous trials

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explaining steps taken against persons whose names were disclosed in the confessional statements made by the accused in corruption cases filed against PK Halder and others.

The HC bench of Justice Md Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Mohi Uddin Shamim passed the order while hearing a suo moto rule issued by it questioning the inaction of the authorities concerned in arresting PK Halder and bringing him back to the country.

ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star there is no criminal law in the country for posthumous trial of offenders, but the HC may issue a guideline in this regard.

Issuing the suo moto rule, the HC bench on November 18 last year wanted to know what steps have been taken to arrest PK Halder, who fled the country after allegedly siphoning around Tk 10,200 crore from some non-banking financial institutions, and to bring him back to the country.

Yesterday, the bench gave a month's time to Bangladesh Bank to submit a report explaining why its officials concerned have failed to detect and prevent irregularities, corruption and money laundering and what steps have been taken against them.

The bench fixed March 15 for further hearing on the issue.

On January 21, BB was directed to provide the names, status and addresses of the officers who were working in departments concerned in BB between January 1, 2008 and January 1, 2020, and to submit a report explaining why they failed to detect and prevent the irregularities, illegality, corruption and money laundering offences for so long.

Yesterday, BB's lawyer Khan Md Shamim Aziz asked the HC for two months' time to submit the report and list saying they received the HC order on February 11.

Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik represented the state.

ACC sues DGHS driver, wife

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Malek, now suspended, has amassed Tk 1,50,31,810 illegally but submitted a false statement that he owns Tk 93,53,648, the ACC says.

He was made the lone accused in the first case for concealing information about his wealth.

In the second case, Malek and his wife Nargis Begum were accused.

According to the second case statement, Malek directly assisted his wife in acquiring wealth worth Tk 1,10,92,050 beyond their known

sources of income.

Malek joined DGHS as a driver of a project in 1982. He had been working as the driver for the director-general of DGHS before being arrested.

Malek was the president of the Health Directorate Drivers Association, sources at the DGHS said, adding that he used the name of this association to exert influence.

Over the years, DGs changed but the power and influence of the driver remained as he had an alliance with key officials at the DGHS.

ISRAEL-UAE OIL DEAL

Red Sea coral reefs 'under threat'

AFP, Eilat

Israeli environmentalists are warning that a UAE-Israeli oil pipeline deal threatens unique Red Sea coral reefs and could lead to "the next ecological disaster".

The agreement to bring Emirati crude oil by tanker to a pipeline in the Red Sea port of Eilat was signed after Israel normalised ties with the Gulf Arab nation late last year and should come into force within months.

With experts warning of possible leaks and spills at the ageing Eilat port, and the Israeli environmental protection ministry demanding "urgent" talks on the deal, activists mobilised last week.

They held a protest in a parking lot overlooking Eilat's oil jetty against what they see as a disaster waiting to happen, chanting that profits will be

made "at the expense of corals".

"The coral reefs are 200 metres (yards) from where the oil will be unloaded," said Shmulik Taggar, an Eilat resident and founding member of the Society for Conservation of the Red Sea Environment.

"They say the tankers are modern and there won't be any problem," he said, warning however that "there's no way there won't be a malfunction".

He predicted that with the projected arrival of two to three tankers a week, traffic will be "back-to-back".

This, he said, would also impact the aesthetic of a city promoting ecological tourism.

"You can't sell green tourism when you have oil tankers by the dock," he said.

The Jewish state and the UAE established ties last year as part of the US-brokered "Abraham Accords".

Haitians protest, alleging new dictatorship

AFP, Port-au-Prince

Several thousand people demonstrated Sunday in the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince, saying the government was trying to establish a new dictatorship and denouncing international support for President Jovenel Moise.

The protests were mostly peaceful, although a few clashes broke out between some demonstrators and police, who fired tear gas and rubber bullets.

Protesters waved the national flag and chanted, "Down with the dictatorship!"

Officials loyal to Moise claimed last Sunday they had foiled an attempt to murder him and overthrow the government. Police arrested 23 people,

accusing them of an "attempted coup."

Moise has been ruling by decree for a year because there is no parliament right now. Legislative elections due in 2018 were delayed.

He also maintains that his term lasts until February 2022 -- but the opposition argues it should have ended last weekend, in a standoff over disputed elections.

The dispute stems from Moise's original election. He was voted into office in a poll subsequently canceled after allegations of fraud, and then elected again a year later, in 2016.

The issue has led to weeks of violent protests on the streets of the poor Caribbean country.

Freedom fighter

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flowing into Bangladesh at the border with India to the edge of Sari-Gowainghat river, is under the ECA.

On January 18 this year, the accused started lifting stone from Insan's property, he said in the case statement, adding that the accused also began stealing stone from nearby Khas land, flood protection dam of the Piyain river and adjacent Amir Miah High School field around the same time.

Insan said he had already informed the matter to the ACC, the police headquarters and the home ministry in Dhaka.

In the case statement, the freedom fighter alleged that he and his family members were threatened by the accused when he protested the stone lifting.

The Daily Star repeatedly tried to contact the OC over phone for his comments on the issue, but he did not pick up the calls.

The SI also could not be reached.

Councilor-elect

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class around 1.00pm.

Hours later, the deceased man's brother Abdul Mannan, who was a contender in the election, filed a case accusing Sarwar and six others, police said.

11 more die

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the handout, adding that 487,870 patients (90.17 percent) have recovered from the virus infection so far.

As of now, 3,862,254 samples have been tested, including 14,138 in the past 24 hours.

Bangladesh reported its first coronavirus cases on March 8 last year and the first death on March 18.

Life found 900m

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to them from as far as 1,500km away.

The find suggests life at the world's southernmost and harshest continent is more adaptable and diverse than initially believed.

"We've discovered this isn't some graveyard where a few things cling on, it's more complicated than we thought," Dr Griffiths said.

The team want to further study the life forms, which face an uncertain future in the face of a climate crisis leading to the collapse of ice sheets.

Most of Antarctica's vital ice shelves remain frozen all year round and are stable, but fractures in their surfaces could make them vulnerable to rapid collapse if rising temperatures drive meltwater into the gaps, a separate study last year revealed.

Dr Griffiths now hopes to intensify the study of the creatures -- a tough task in such an unforgiving and remote region of the planet.

Verdict to be

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arguments on February 4, the prosecution told the court that they were able to prove the charges against the accused and sought capital punishment for them.

The defence sought acquittal for their clients during their arguments.

On February 26, 2015, US-based Bangladeshi blogger Avijit Roy and his wife Rafida Ahmed Bonya were hacked near TSC of Dhaka University by a gang of assailants when the couple was walking out of the Ekushey Boi Mela around 8:30pm.

Prof Ajoy filed the murder case accusing unidentified assailants with Shahbagh Police Station the next day. Bonya is now living in the United States. She suffered severe injuries when she tried to protect her husband from the attackers.

Inspector Muhammad Monirul Islam of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of police submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka on March 11, 2019.

On August 1 that year, the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal of Dhaka framed charges against the six accused.

On February 10 this year, Zia, Akram, Sohel and Mozammel were sentenced to death for murdering Jagriti Prokashoni publisher Faisal Afrin Dipan inside Aziz Super Market in the capital's Shahbagh area on October 31, 2015.

Small protests after troops deployed

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of our country," youth activist Esther Ze Naw said at a protest in the main city of Yangon. "We don't want to live under a military dictatorship. We want to establish a real federal union where all citizens, all ethnicities are treated equally."

The unrest has revived memories in the Southeast Asian nation of bloody outbreaks of opposition to almost half a century of direct army rule that ended in 2011, when the military began a process of withdrawing from civilian politics.

Violence this time has been limited, although police have opened fire several times to disperse protesters. One woman who was hit by police fire in the capital Naypyitaw last week is not expected to survive.

Two people were lightly wounded yesterday when police in the city of Mandalay used rubber bullets and catapults to break up a protest, media and residents said.

Coup leader Min Aung Hlaing told a junta meeting yesterday that authorities were trying to proceed softly, but said: "Effective action will be taken against people who are harming the country, committing treason through violence."

In a statement posted on a military

website, it said that people preventing the security forces from carrying out their duties could face 20 years in prison, while those found to stir up fear or unrest in public could be imprisoned for terms of three to seven years, reports BBC.

Authorities have said police were also hurt by stones thrown at some protests.

As well as the demonstrations in towns and cities, a civil disobedience movement has brought strikes that are crippling many functions of government.

TROOPS ON THE STREETS
Armoured vehicles were deployed on Sunday in Yangon, the northern town of Myitkyina and Sittwe in the west, the first large-scale use of such vehicles since the coup.

More soldiers have also been spotted on the streets to help police, including members of the 77th Light Infantry Division, a mobile force accused of brutality in campaigns against ethnic minority insurgents and protests in the past.

Crowds were smaller, though it was unclear if people were intimidated by the soldiers or fatigue was setting in after 12 days of demonstrations.

"We can't join the protests every day," said a laid-off travel officer

worker in Yangon who declined to be identified. "But we won't back down."

At a protest outside the central bank, demonstrators pasted a sign saying "We do not want military government" on an armoured vehicle. Police sealed off the headquarters of Suu Kyi's party, searching it as protesters demonstrated nearby.

Police in Naypyitaw detained about 20 student protesters, one of whom posted pictures of them chanting as they were taken away on a police bus. They were later released, reports Reuters.

Suu Kyi, 75, spent nearly 15 years under house arrest for her efforts to end military rule.

The army has been carrying out nightly arrests and has given itself search and detention powers. At least 400 people have been detained, the group Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said.

On Sunday, the military published penal code amendments aimed at stifling dissent and residents reported an internet outage after midnight on Sunday that lasted until about 9:00 am.

"It's as if the generals have declared war on the people," UN Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews said on Twitter.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Divisional Forest Officer Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division, Dhaka.

Memo No-22.01.0000.106.28.000.2021.693

Date: 15.02.2021

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the works below.

| SL No | Tender ID | Work/Tender Description | Last selling Date & Time | Closing Date & Time | Opening Date & Time |
|-------|-----------|---|--------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1. | 542384 | Repair and Maintenance works of Champa VIIP Rest House at Bhawal National Park Gazipur Under Wildlife Management & Nature Conservation Division Dhaka. | 03-Mar-2021 17:00 | 04-Mar-2021 12:00 | 04-Mar-2021 12:00 |
| 2. | 542387 | A. Repair and Maintenance works of Orchid Rest House at Bhawal National Park Gazipur Under Wildlife Management & Nature Conservation Division Dhaka. B. Repair and Maintenance works of Rajonigondha Rest House at Bhawal National Park Gazipur Under Wildlife Management & Nature Conservation Division Dhaka. | 03-Mar-2021 17:00 | 04-Mar-2021 14:00 | 04-Mar-2021 14:00 |
| 3. | 545938 | A. Barbed Wire Boundary Wall at Beat Officer Residence Building area of Bhawal Range under Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division Dhaka. B. Construction RCC Boundary Wall at Beat Officer Residence Building area of Bhawal Range under Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division Dhaka. | 07-Mar-2021 17:00 | 08-Mar-2021 12:00 | 08-Mar-2021 12:00 |

The interested person/firms may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get the details of the tender. This is an online Tender, where only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP system portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@procure.gov.bd, 02-41080100).

(Kajal Talukder)
15/02/2021

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GD-319

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF FAMILY PLANNING LOGISTICS & SUPPLY UNIT (5TH FLOOR) 6 KARWANBAZAR, DHAKA 1215, BANGLADESH. www.dgfp.gov.bd

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File Name : DGFP /L&S-2/Surgical mask /2020-21/248/169

Date: 15/02/2021

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| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 |
| Tender ID No : 531398 Package No MCHTI-LGR-13/e6 | Procurement of Disposable Items | 02/03/2021, 16:00 | 03/03/2021, 14:00 | 03/03/2021, 14:00 |

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Further information visit national e-GP portal and from e-GP help desk (Help Desk e-mail: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

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GD-318