



The northern beach of St Martin's Island where geotextile bags filled with sand from the same location is causing further erosion of the beach. The Department of Environment said they filed a case against the local union parishad chairman for placing the bags without obtaining necessary authorisation.

PHOTO: STAR

'Heaven on earth' now haven for plunderers

Mindless destruction of corals, screw pine trees and sand for commercial gains will endanger St Martin's Island in the long run

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

The movement restrictions and ban on tourist arrival, imposed to curb the spread of Covid-19, on the picturesque Saint Martin's Island have come as a blessing for a few public representatives and their accomplices.

Taking advantage of lax monitoring of the administration during the ongoing second wave of the pandemic, at least three local public representatives have been doing brisk business by openly selling crushed corals, extracted from the nature, to hotels operating on the country's lone coral island.

In their bid to cash in on the burgeoning demand for accommodations on the island during normal times, the criminals are operating a protection racket that controls the illegal trade of construction materials, which are prohibited on St Martin's.

A union under Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar, St Martin's was declared an 'Ecologically Critical Area (ECA)' in 1999.

The gang of criminals brings in shipments of various construction materials from the mainland and engage around 150 workers to crush corals after extracting those from the island.

They pay the workers Tk 60 to Tk 70 for each square foot of crushed coral and they later sell those to the hotel owners for Tk 150 a square foot.

As the organised criminals charge about Tk 180 for each square foot of stone chips brought in from the mainland, the demand for 'low-priced' crushed coral rose considerably at construction sites on St Martin's.

The construction works to build around 20 hotels and resorts have been in full swing lately, especially amid the ongoing ban on travel to the island, said locals, adding that the island was similarly abuzz with construction activities between April and October last year when a tourist

ban was in force.

Solaiman Haider, director (planning) of the Department of Environment (DoE), said the island was declared an ECA in 1999 and a ban on construction of any concrete structure on St Martin's has been in effect ever since.

Despite the fact, more than 150 concrete structures for different hotels and resorts were built on the island over the past few years and construction of more is underway.

Clearance from the DoE was never obtained by the owners and the illegal construction works go on without any monitoring or enforcement of the applicable laws, he also said.

Aside from destruction of corals of the island, the sand on its beach is being plundered for use in construction, while bushes of screw pine (Keya in Bangla), which surrounds the island and shields its inland from sea storms and storm surges, are being depleted by hotel owners to create sea view for their clients.

All such illegal activities and unauthorised and indiscriminate use of geotextile bags -- filled with sand from the same site -- has been causing erosion to the beach and will ultimately threaten the island's existence, said environmentalists and experts.

When asked, Teknaf Upazila Nirbahi Officer Parvez Chawdhury said although the use of construction materials is banned without approval of the upazila administration and they no longer approve the use of construction materials for building or repairing even non-commercial structures on the ecologically critical island, an organised crime syndicate has been illegally bringing in the materials from mainland and extracting corals from the island for high profits.

Since drives conducted by the administration, located in Teknaf, against the criminals on the remote island often do not bear results, they

would make concerted efforts among law enforcers and the DoE to stop coral extraction and illegal construction works on St Martin's, the UNO assured.

When reached for his comments over the allegations, St Martin Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Noor Ahmed admitted that a number of hotels and resorts were being built on the island and people with political clouts were bringing construction materials in to the island, violating the ban.

Claiming ignorance of knowledge on involvement of public representatives in the illegal trade of construction materials and destruction of corals on the island, he said, "The DoE or any other government authorities didn't yet send any letter [to us], mentioning that the [ongoing] construction work is illegal."

"They didn't issue any written directive to take action against the work either. Then how would we take action against them?"

This correspondent during a recent visit to the island came across a section on the northern beach (locally known as Dail Para) where sand-filled geo bags were placed in a bid to protect the beach from erosion.

Signs of further erosion of sand were apparent on the beach, in between the geo bags and a resort made by Bangladesh Police.

DoE Director Solaiman Haider said the filling up of the geo bags with sand from the same site catalysed the erosion of the beach.

UP Chairman Noor Ahmed placed the geo bags on the beach and the DoE filed a case against him in that connection, he added.

Asked, Noor Ahmed said he placed the sand bags on the beach to protect a graveyard nearby.

While taking a tour around the island, a good number of screw pine bushes, in front of hotels facing the sea, were found uprooted and removed -- apparently to ensure unrestricted view of the sea from hotel rooms.

Family with two mentally ill members appeals for help

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A 55-year-old woman and her son, 30, both suffering from undiagnosed mental disorder, had been chained up for around eight years in their house in Badhukamal area of Rangpur city.

The woman's husband, Abdur Rashid, said he already sold all his valuable properties, including a piece of arable land, to pay for the treatment of his wife Dulali Begum and their son Dukhal Mia.

Rashid now cannot afford their expensive treatment with the money he makes from driving battery-run auto-rickshaw in the city, he said, adding, "I used to have a beautiful family. But their sudden illness is driving me insane."

In 2009, young Dukhal, then only 18, went to Dhaka to work at a garment factory. He came back home a couple of years later when he fell sick. Slowly and with passing of time, signs of mental imbalance started to show and Dukhal even stopped wearing clothes.

Tears rolled down the father's cheeks as

he continued, "I had to chain him up in a room after he became violent and attacked villagers on several occasions."

"Dukhal's food is provided in the same room where he also answers to the call of nature... It's just unbearable."

After Dukhal's mother also started to develop similar mental disorders in 2014, Rashid tried to get proper treatment for his wife to the best of his abilities. But Dulali or Dukhal's condition never improved.

Sending out an appeal for help to the affluent and competent organisations working in the field, Rashid said his younger son has been engaged full-time to look after his wife and elder son.

Contacted, Mamunar Rashid Manik, the councillor for Ward 8 in Rangpur City Corporation (RCC), said Abdur Rashid and his family are suffering agonies, as they cannot afford the treatment expenses of the two members of their family.

Abdur Rashid has filed an application with the RCC, seeking financial support in this connection, he added.

Tornado hits four villages in Faridpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Tornado ripped into four villages in two upazilas of the district early yesterday, damaging at least 150 dwelling houses.

The storm that hit the villages around 5:45am lasted for only one minute.

At least 35 houses in Chandpara-Rasulpur and Meherdia villages of Saltha upazila, and 115 houses of Goherpur and Bibirkandi villages in Nagarkandi upazila were destroyed during the storm, said Kamal Mia, a member of Faridpur Zila Parishad.

Moreover, the tornado uprooted over 200 trees in those villages, Kamal added.

IMPACT OF YAAS

Water levels in Jamuna rise: Fear of early flood grips dwellers of low-lying areas

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

As the water level of Jamuna is increasing with the influence of cyclone 'Yaas', the people of low lying areas of Pabna and Sirajganj are worried over early flood induced by the cyclone.

However, the officials at the Water Development Board (WDB), however, said that there is nothing to be worried about and the increase in the water level is very normal at this moment.

"The rate of water level increase in Jamuna has been 14 to 15 centimeters in the last few days and the increasing trend will continue for the next few days but there is nothing to be worried," said Md Shafikul Islam, executive engineer of Sirajganj WDB.

The Jamuna is flowing 8 meter at the Hard Point while danger level is 13.5 meter, he added.

Visiting different areas of Pabna and Sirajganj, it was found that the people of low lying areas were taking necessary preparations worrying about early flood. Most of them were harvesting their half ripe paddy, repairing their damaged boats in the low-lying areas.

"Last year, we could not save our



A villager repairs his damaged boat fearing early flood induced by cyclone 'Yaas'. The photo was taken from Rautara in Sirajganj on Wednesday.

PHOTO: STAR

crop from cyclone 'Amphan' and post-Amphan early flood. Fearing the onslaught of early flood induced by cyclone 'Yaas', we have hurriedly reaped our crop using harvesting machine," said Paresht Sutradhor of Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj.

Meanwhile, many people have already started shifting their homes from the low-lying areas worrying about early flood.

"The water level increased very

quickly last year bringing the early flood after the cyclone. We are very worried about the impact of this year's cyclone as well." Kamrul Islam of Pabna's Santhia upazila said.

Dispelling the foreboding of the people, Md Shafikul Islam said that "Increase of water level in Jamuna is very normal at this moment. However, there is no threat of early flood this year."



বাংলাদেশ উন্নয়ন গবেষণা প্রতিষ্ঠান
BANGLADESH INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

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Date: 27 May 2021

VACANCY

Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) under the Ministry of Planning is inviting applications from bonafide Bangladeshi nationals for the post of **Senior Research Fellow and Research Fellow**.

Name of the Post and Scale of Pay (NPS 2015)	Minimum Qualifications
Senior Research Fellow (SRF) Grade-4; Tk. 50000-71200/- with admissible allowances.	The candidate should have a Ph.D. degree, eight years of teaching/research experience excluding the period spent in Ph.D. program and five journal publications (of BDS standard)*.
Research Fellow (RF) Grade-6; Tk. 35500-67010/- with admissible allowances.	The candidate should have a Ph.D. degree, two years of teaching/research experience excluding the period spent in Ph.D. program and two journal publications (of BDS standard)*.

* BDS means *Bangladesh Development Studies*, which is a quarterly journal published by the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies.

The candidates for SRF and RF are expected to have a background in economics, development studies, sociology, anthropology, population studies or a related field. The candidates having experience in Demography, Population, Trade and Macro (monetary and fiscal) will be given preference. *PhD requirement can be relaxed for otherwise excellent candidates* for the post of SRF and RF. Candidates with single-authored or lead-authored publications (of BDS standard) will be given preference.

Application forms can be downloaded from the website of the Institute (www.bids.org.bd). Completed application forms may be submitted electronically to srf@bids.org.bd / rf@bids.org.bd for the posts of SRF and RF respectively by 31 July 2021. Applicants are not required to send publications or certificates electronically or by post at this stage. An electronically generated acknowledgement receipt of the application will be sent to the applicant. If the applicant does not receive it in two days, it may be sent directly by post to the **Secretary, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, E-17, Agargaon, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207**.

Candidates already in service should apply through proper channel.

The authority reserves the right to reject any or all applications without assigning any reason. BIDS is an equal opportunity employer. Women and those from ethnic minority groups are particularly encouraged to apply.

27/05/21

(Subash Chandra Saha)
Secretary (a.i.)
BIDS, Dhaka

GD-1077

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Memo-5365/2

Dated: 25/05/2021

Invitation for e-Tender

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

Sl No.	Tender ID	Invitation Reference No.	Name of works	Tender closing date & time
1	581225	bari/PWD/DC/Office/SI-2/4/Memo-122/20-21	SI No. 01: Cleaning drain, apron, septic tank, soak well & inspection pit adjacent to Deputy Commissioner's Office at Barishal. SI No. 02: Ordinary repair work to prevent water leaking from the roof with replacing ferro-cement tanks with plastic tanks of Deputy Commissioner's Office at Barishal.	07-06-2021 12:30

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders 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 (<http://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 (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

GD-1067

Gerald Liver Guda
Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Barisal