



The majority of the plants on this divider on the capital's Mirpur Road just might be of foreign variety, which disrupts the natural ecosystem, causing birds and insects, natural pollinators, to lose their habitats. Experts recommended gradually replacing exotic plants with native ones, with the combined efforts of authorities concerned. This photo was taken from Dhanmondi 27 yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

ROAD DIVIDERS IN DHAKA

Exotic plants outnumber local species, finds survey

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Majority of the plants -- 56 percent -- on the capital's road dividers are exotic species, which is detrimental to the environment and disrupting the ecosystem, found a recent survey.

According to the data, among the top 15 dominant plant species, nine are exotic and six are native. Plants of foreign origin are not suitable for the country's climate.

A research team, led by Mohammad Zashim Uddin, professor of botany at Dhaka University, conducted the survey and published a paper titled "Evaluation of Plant Species Diversity in the Road Dividers of Dhaka City" in the June edition of Bangladesh Journal of Plant Taxonomy, the official journal of Bangladesh Association of Plant Taxonomists.

Researchers and urban planners said due to high presence of exotic species, the country's native species are being lost day by day. Moreover,

birds, butterflies, honey-bees, insects and other pollinators that depend on native species are also in danger.

They said the whole city is being occupied by exotic species, which is not conducive to Dhaka's environment, biodiversity and beautification. No integrated planning among different departments for tree plantation is the reason behind this problem.

In 2017, Roads and Highways Department had planted Chinese and Taiwanese bonsai tree on Airport Road for beautification, which caused controversy.

"In urban planning, it's basic knowledge that indigenous trees should be prioritised when planting. Foreign trees can't adapt to local environment in most cases, and they also have a great impact on biodiversity," said Adil Mohammad Khan, secretary general of Bangladesh Institute of Planners.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research team found a total of

90 plant species from dividers of 31 roads at 10 locations, including Uttara, Mirpur, Hatirpul-Panthapath, Dhanmondi-Azimpur, Hatirjheel, Rampura-Badda, Gulshan-Mohakhali, Kamalapur, Fakirapul-Gulistan, said Prof Zashim.

Seventy-eight percent of the species were classified as trees, 12 percent as shrubs, seven percent as herbs, and three percent as climbers. *Mimusops elengi* (bakul), *Polyalthia longifolia* (debdaru), *Leucaena leucocephala* (epil-epil), *Tabernaemontana divaricata* (togor), and *Swietenia mahagoni* (mahogany) were the most abundant species.

Only togor is native among the five species; bakul and debdaru originates from the Indian subcontinent.

Most diversity was found at Hatirjheel and least was recorded at Baridhara-Badda area.

PROBLEMS OF EXOTIC SPECIES

The researchers said the higher number of exotic plants is perhaps

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196 more patients hospitalised with dengue in 24 hrs

UNB, Dhaka

At least 196 people with dengue fever were admitted to hospitals across the country in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

Around 100 dengue patients being reported daily for more than a week has sparked new worries, as the country's health services are already overburdened with growing Covid-19 cases and fatalities.

Of the new dengue cases, 194 were reported in Dhaka, while only two were from outside the capital, said Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

According to DGHS, 777 patients are currently receiving treatment at different hospitals across the country.

A vast majority of dengue patients are from Dhaka; only 30 were being treated in hospitals outside the capital.

Some 2,658 patients have been admitted

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ANTI-AEDES CAMPAIGN

Clean homes, surroundings once a week: DNCC mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Atiqul Islam has urged city dwellers to clean their homes and surroundings every Saturday to destroy *Aedes* mosquito breeding grounds.

"Let us clean our homes and surroundings every Saturday at 10am for 10 minutes," said the mayor, who launched the campaign from the rooftop of his home yesterday.

"Please make it a social movement," said the mayor, "because controlling *Aedes* mosquitoes is crucial."

Speaking at a virtual live programme from his Uttara house, he said the city corporation workers will not come to clean rooftops, and that it is everyone's individual responsibility to clean their own homes and rooftops.

"I've come to my Uttara house to see if there's any water in the rooftop garden after yesterday's rain. Rain and then sunshine are ideal conditions for *Aedes* mosquitoes, so we must clean up the stagnant water as soon as possible," he explained.

"If we have rooftop gardens, we must be careful not to allow stagnant water to become mosquito breeding grounds," the mayor said.



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Form platform to address wage theft

Speakers urge govt so migrant workers can complain on the issue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at an online dialogue yesterday said a separate platform should be established by the government so that migrant workers can complain about wage theft that they face in the host countries.

They said such a platform can be developed at the Bangladesh missions abroad, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET) or at different airports.

They also stressed for launching a national-level campaign in the country to address wage theft issue.

WARBE Development Foundation with support from Migrant Forum in Asia (MFA) organised the "Online National Dialogue on Justice for Wage Theft Campaign".

Members of Bangladesh Parliamentarians' Caucus on Migration and Development (BPCMD), policymakers and government officials, researchers, NGO representatives, UN agencies, trade unions, and victims of wage theft spoke at the event.

Presenting a keynote, WARBE director Jasiya Khatoon said they have received many claims against wage theft and collected 200 of those claims with evidence between August 2020 and July 2021.

She said the returnee migrants have lost about \$2,000 on an average, leaving behind wages of two to nine months.

Nurul Islam, former director of BMET, said embassies and high commissions can establish separate platform or develop app to receive wage theft complaint from migrant workers.

There should be similar opportunity at BMET, he said, adding that for wage theft claim, returnee migrants have to possess necessary documents.

Shakirul Islam, chairperson of Ovbashi Karmi Unnayan Program, said Bangladeshi migrant workers have been victims of wage theft for long while the issue came to the fore amid the pandemic as an "institutional crime".

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RAKHINE TEMPLE IN KUAKATA

33 eminent citizens protest land grabbing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thirty-three eminent citizens have condemned and protested the incident of land-grabbing taking place at the 200-year-old Rakhine temple in Patuakhali's Kuakata.

They sent a statement to the media in this regard yesterday.

They said with most of the surrounding land of the establishment -- which once sprawled over 99 decimals of land near the present-day Kuakata municipality building on Patuakhali-Kuakata highway -- already occupied by the land grabbers, only several structures of the temple and graveyard still bear the testimony of time.

Only recently, influential locals including Haji Abdul Mannan Hawlader, Ilias Hossain, Sohel Hossain, Saiful Islam, Tofazzal and Mizanur Rahman declared their claim of ownership on parts of the land.

They have been claiming that their names had been recorded in the Bangladesh Survey (BS) as owners of different parts of the old Buddhist temple's land.

In addition, a Dhaka-based real estate business owner named Kudrat-e-Khuda has launched several shops and structures on the part of the land that belongs to the old temple.

"Even though the Buddhist Bihar committee and the Rakhine community had requested the businessperson to omit the land of the temple from their

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Workers who had left their workplaces ahead of Eid as the lockdown rendered all factories closed, cram themselves on whatever vehicles they can find, to head to their workplace after the sudden decision to open factories from today without arranging for their transport. Many waited helplessly to find vehicles while others set out on foot towards their destinations. The photos were taken from Savar, Narayanganj, Mymensingh, Tangail, and Barishal yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN, MD AMINUL ISLAM, MIRZA SHAKIL, TITU DAS, STAR



Ensure transportation, jobs for workers first

Say orgs, protesting govt move to reopen factories from today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different organisations yesterday protested the government decision to reopen factories from today. They said it was a very imprudent decision to open the factories without ensuring public transport for workers and their health security.

The government has decided to allow export-oriented factories to reopen from today amid the ongoing "strict lockdown" enforced to curb the spread of Covid-19.

The cabinet division in a circular issued on Friday said all export-oriented industries and factories will be out of the purview of restrictions from August 1 considering the "overall situation".

Protesting the decision, Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati organised a human chain in front of the national museum in the capital's Shahbagh while other organisations issued press statements in this regard.

At the human chain, Garment Sramik Sanghati demanded that workers' salary should not be cut if they are unable to join work due to the ongoing "strict lockdown".

They also demanded mass vaccination and testing programmes for workers and transportation for them, maintaining health protocols, before reopening the factories.

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Biman suspends official as passenger misses flight

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Biman Bangladesh Airlines yesterday suspended one of its officials and withdrew another at Sylhet Osmani International Airport after a London-bound passenger missed her flight due to excess luggage on July 28.

A three-member committee headed by Monirul Islam, general manager of Biman's Customer Service, was formed to investigate the incident, sources at Biman confirmed to The Daily Star yesterday.

The suspended official is Moklesur Rahman, a junior ground service officer, and the withdrawn official is Kawsar Ali Mandal, a ground service supervisor. Both were stationed at the Sylhet airport, a top Biman official, wishing to remain anonymous, told this correspondent.

"One staff member was suspended and another was withdrawn due to 'unprofessional behaviour'," said Tahera Khondoker, deputy general manager of Biman's Public Relations in a press release yesterday.

According to the press release, Jamila Chowdhury, a passenger of Biman's Sylhet-London route on July 28, requested to issue her boarding pass without paying for carrying an additional 41kg luggage.

She missed her flight due to delay in decision regarding the luggage. However after noticing the incident, Biman's Sylhet station manager rescheduled Jamila's ticket as per her choice for the next available flight, said the Biman press release.

Earlier, a video footage of the incident recorded by the passenger went viral on various social media platforms.

"In order to clear the confusion caused by the video footage and considering the professionalism of the staff members, Biman officials paid a courtesy call at the passenger's residence on Thursday," the release added.

The Daily Star was unable to contact the passenger for her comments on this issue.

Over 1.5 lakh prisoners under trial released on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 1,51,146 under trial prisoners have got released from jails after they secured bail from virtual courts in two phases of 112 working days.

The first phase of virtual court proceedings started on May 11 last year and continued till August 4 last year and the second phase started on April 12 this year due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

The released prisoners include more than 2,000 minors accused in criminal cases who were granted bail by virtual courts concerned during this period, Supreme Court spokesperson Mohammad Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

Meanwhile, Saifur yesterday issued a statement saying that bail petitions of the accused in total 3,00,228 criminal cases were disposed of by the subordinate courts across the country since May 11 last year.

Regular activities of courts are suspended due to the surge of Covid-19 transmission.

Last year, Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain issued some directives for the courts about dealing with urgent cases through using ICT during the ongoing closure.

Writ petition seeks vaccination for expecting mothers on priority basis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday seeking its directive on the government to provide Covid-19 vaccine to expecting mothers on priority basis.

Four Supreme Court lawyers submitted the petition to the HC, saying it is the constitutional right of expecting mothers to receive vaccine, but this issue has not been included in the government's vaccine registration app -- Surokkha.

The lawyers said thousands of expecting mothers and children are dying due to Covid-19 infection.

Their deaths can be reduced if they are vaccinated on priority basis, he added.

The petitioners prayed to the HC to pass directives on health secretary, principal secretary at prime minister's office, cabinet secretary, directorate general of directorate general of health services and director of Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research to take necessary steps in this regard.

Lawyer Humayun Kabir Pallab told The Daily Star that the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim may hold a hearing on the petition on Monday.

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