



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

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JAMADIUL AWAL 15, 1443 HIJRI

16 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00

REGD. No. DA 781

VOL. XXXI No. 329

POUSH 5, 1428 BS

## BSCIC wants 214 acres of Sal forest

The corporation plans to set up industrial park in Madhupur as the 'land lying idle'



SUKANTA HALDER and MOSTAFA YOUSUF

The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation is looking to turn 214 acres of Madhupur Sal Forest into an industrial park.

The corporation wants to set up a fruit processing plant at Beribaid Mouja, marked by the Forest Department as part of a reserved Sal forest.

The plan is to build a road, drainage system, dump yard, an effluent treatment plant, and utility lines in the forest, which according to the Mymensingh Agricultural University is home to numerous shrubs, medicinal plants, flower plants, monkeys, deer, and different species of birds.

Implementing the project may cost an estimated Tk 400 crore, said immediate past chairman of the corporation Mostaque Hassan.

The Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation (BSCIC) sent a letter to the Department of Environment (DoE) in Tangail on June 9, seeking to get the land on lease.

Since 1925, the Sal forest has lost 80,000 acres, which is two thirds of its land due to deforestation and encroachment, according to Forest Department data.

Pavel Partha, coordinator of Bangladesh Resource Centre For Indigenous Knowledge, said the Sal forest in Madhupur is dominated by trees that lose their foliage at the end of the growing season. It is the last of its kind in Bangladesh, he said, adding that an industrial park will put its biodiversity at risk.

Deforesting another 214 acres by leasing it out will violate the Forest Act-1927, National Land Use Policy, National Forest Policy and a Cabinet Division circular from 2015.

Besides, Bangladesh promised to end deforestation by 2030 at the recently concluded 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow, Scotland.

Jahirul Haque, divisional forest officer in Tangail, said he was not aware of the BSCIC plan. "All I can say is that it [industrial park] will not be allowed by the law. People are not even allowed to enter a reserved forest without authorisation."

Contacted, Mohammad Mojahidul Islam, deputy director at the DoE, said, "We will make a decision after the forest department states its opinion."

In September last year, the then BSCIC chairman Mostaque Hassan visited the project site. The chairman said a detailed project plan was being made.

"There are some land of the forest. If necessary, we will exempt the

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Nurse Runu Veronica Costa gets the country's first coronavirus booster dose at Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons in the capital's Mohakhali yesterday. She was also the one who received the first coronavirus shot in the country in January. Story on page 2.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## 'Never break the chain of command'

Hasina tells BGB personnel



UNB, Dhaka

Stressing the importance of following the chain of command, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday directed the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) personnel to perform their responsibilities with patriotism, honesty and discipline.

"I expect you to discharge your respective responsibilities with patriotism, honesty and discipline," she said.

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LABOUR MIGRATION TO MALAYSIA

## Employers to bear costs at their end

Says expat ministry release after Dhaka, Kuala Lumpur sign MoU; not clear how much workers have to pay in Bangladesh

JAMIL MAHMUD

Employers in Malaysia will bear Bangladeshi workers' migration costs incurred in that country, the expatriates' welfare ministry said in a press release after the signing of an MoU between the two countries.

Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad and Malaysian Human Resources Minister M Saravanan signed the memorandum of understanding, which will be in effect until December 2026, in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The release did not mention how much the workers have to pay while in Bangladesh before migrating to Malaysia.

The MoU will end a freeze of more than three years on Bangladeshi workers'

recruitment in Malaysia. In September 2018, the Malaysia government froze recruitment from Bangladesh following allegations of labour exploitation and high migration costs of up to Tk 4 lakh per worker.

Despite the development, however, fears remain over syndication of a few recruiting agents driving costs up.

The ministry hoped recruitment of Bangladeshi workers will start soon upon completion of necessary procedure.

However, fears also remain over whether labour migration would meet the ethical recruitment criteria of employers covering migration costs at both ends.

The costs that employers will cover

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## PRESIDENT'S DIALOGUE Starts today with JP; BNP undecided

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and RASHIDUL HASAN

The president's talks with registered political parties over the formation of the next Election Commission starts today, while BNP is still undecided about joining.

President Abdul Hamid is to sit with the Jatiya Party today, the first day of separate talks with each party, amid hopes of a stronger and impartial EC.

Due to alarming apathy among voters and distrust towards the EC, its formation is back under the spotlight with the national elections about two years away.

Hamid initiated the dialogue as the tenure of the current EC, under the leadership of Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda, ends on February 14. One of the major

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THE BUSINESS

## IMF suggests phasing out caps on interest rates

The International Monetary Fund yesterday suggested the government phase out the interest rate caps on lending and deposits.

It slightly raised its projection on Bangladesh's economic growth to 6.6 percent for the fiscal year 2021-22 from previous 6.5 percent but sounded alarm that rapid spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus in Bangladesh's major export destinations might affect recovery and the GDP growth.

STORY ON B1




### ডিজিটাল লোনের যুগে প্রবেশ করল বাংলাদেশ

## সিটি ব্যাংক-এর ইনস্ট্যান্ট ডিজিটাল ন্যানো লোন এখন বিকাশ-এ!



জনগণের আর্থিক অন্তর্ভুক্তির জায়গাটিতে এক যুগান্তকারী নতুন সম্ভাবনা নিয়ে এলো সিটি ব্যাংক, বিকাশ-এর সাথে! এখন বিকাশ গ্রাহকেরা তাদের বিকাশ অ্যাপের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করে লোন প্রাপ্তির যোগ্যতা সাপেক্ষে মুহূর্তেই পেয়ে যাবেন সিটি ব্যাংকের ইনস্ট্যান্ট ন্যানো লোন; আবার বিকাশ অ্যাপ থেকেই সেই লোন তারা পরিশোধও করতে পারবেন।

- ৫০০ টাকা থেকে ২০,০০০ টাকা পর্যন্ত ৩ মাস মেয়াদি অসমতর্কিত লোন
- কোনো ঝামেলা ছাড়াই তাৎক্ষণিক লোন পাওয়ার সুবিধা, অনেক কম ইন্টারেস্ট
- বিকাশ অ্যাকাউন্ট ব্যালেন্স থেকেই অটো-কিস্তি পরিশোধের সুবিধা