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Forestland taken for training centre

Govt de-reserves part of it for BFF ignoring environmental concern, dealing another blow to Cox's Bazar forests

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, back from Cox's Bazar

The government has handed over a part of Jungle Khuniya Palong reserved forest in Cox's Bazar to the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) for building a residential training facility after de-reserving the 20-acre land.

This deals a fresh blow to the fast depleting forests in the region, home to critically endangered Asian elephants along with other flora and fauna.

BFF will build a technical centre to be funded by Fifa, the governing body of the world's football, on the forestland in Khuniya Palong union of the district's Ramu upazila.

The plan includes two football fields, a medical centre and a four-storey dormitory, among others, according to a top official of the federation.

Forest officials estimated that about 30,000 trees will have to be felled for the construction work.

Sarwar Alam, divisional forest officer of Cox's Bazar Forest Division (south), told The Daily Star that following a gazette notification on the de-reservation, they handed over the forestland to BFF through a ceremony in Khuniya Palong on July 4.

The land was de-reserved in the beginning of June, said sources.

The government has the right to de-reserve any forestland or declare a forest no longer reserved through a gazette, according to Section-27 (f) of Forest Act-1927.

But environmentalists insist this must be done only for national indispensable interest. And state-managed reserved forests should not be used for non-forest purposes.

During a recent visit, this correspondent saw a red flag demarcating the land given to BFF. The Cox's Bazar Forest Division (south) has a 20-year-old plantation within that de-reserved area.

Ayasur Rahman, president of the Co-Management Committee which oversees Himchhari National Park in Cox's Bazar, said the forest is relatively in good condition.

"Elephants roam around in many parts of the forest. If such structures are built, the movement of wildlife will be disturbed. There will be no forest at all in future," he said.

The handover of the forestland comes at a time when the reserved forests in Cox's Bazar have been facing an onslaught with more than 7,000 acres of forest already razed by Rohingya refugees in Ukhiya and Teknaf.

Encroachers across the coastal town sliced away more than 50,000 acres of the total 1,86,457 acres of reserved forests.

Cox's Bazar forests are the abode of Asian elephants – categorised critically endangered by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). Encroachment, de-reservation, deforestation and leasing out are the key drivers behind the depletion of Cox's Bazar forest areas.

The 4,610-acre Khuniya Palong forest, declared reserved in 1907, is also part of an ecologically critical area (ECA) demarcated by the Department of Environment in 1999 because of its rich biodiversity.

The forest hosts reptiles and mammals including wild boars,

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People in their droves return to the capital by launches, not in picture, after celebrating Eid with their near and dear ones in their home districts. The photo was taken near Jagannath University in Bahadur Shah Park area around 5:00am yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

20 ACRES OF FORESTLAND HAS BEEN DE-RESERVED

BFF to build a residential training facility there

Govt handed over the forestland to BFF this month

Around 30,000 trees to be felled for the centre

The site is part of elephant habitat

Size of the forest is around 4,610 acres

Circuit houses get tight spending caps

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The government has cut the expenditures of circuit houses in 63 districts as a part of exercising austerity to cope with the mounting pressure on the country's economy due to the fallout of the pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war.

The Ministry of Public Administration on Tuesday issued an order to the district deputy commissioners (DCs) fixing component-wise allocations for the circuit houses.

The government has cut the expenditures in different sectors, said KM Ali Azam, senior secretary of the ministry.

"The measures have been taken to practise austerity," he told The Daily Star.

Earlier, the ministry issued a set of directives to

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Lanka looks past Rajapaksa era

Anger as Wickremesinghe made ruling party candidate for president; vote on July 20; Rajapaksa brothers barred from leaving country

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka's parliament accepted the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa yesterday after he fled the country, paving the way for lawmakers to start repairing the island's shattered politics and resume efforts to ease its economic crisis.

After suffering from crippling shortages of petrol and diesel and runaway prices of basic items like vegetables and bread for months under the rule of Rajapaksa and his brothers, Sri Lankans are now waiting for lawmakers to elect a new president on July 20.

Until then, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe will be the interim president although protesters want him

gone too. His private residence was set ablaze by demonstrators last weekend and his office stormed this week.

Nevertheless, the ruling Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party yesterday nominated Wickremesinghe to take up the top job full-time.

"Ranil Wickremesinghe is not the change we have fought so hard for," said Wimal Jayasuriya, 43, a martial arts specialist who is on a hunger strike opposite the prime minister's official residence that was also sacked by protesters.

"We will not allow him to be president. The SLPP parliamentarians should stand with the people and not allow Ranil Wickremesinghe to become president."

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Ctg Wasa officials keep going on foreign trips

Ignore directive of austerity

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

Six officials of Chattogram Water Supply and Sewerage Authority have made trips to the US and Turkey since May 12, when the government issued a restriction on foreign trips of government officials as part of an austerity measure.

On Thursday, Chattogram Wasa Managing Director AKM Fazlullah, Deputy Managing Director (finance) Samsul Alam, Chief Engineer Maksud Alam, Superintendent Engineer Mohammad Mahabubul Alam and Additional Secretary of Local Government Department (water supply division) Khairul Islam left for the US "for training" under the Bhandal Jhuri Water Supply Project.

In June, Deputy Managing Director (admin) Tahera Ferdous and Superintendent Engineer Arifur Rahman visited Turkey under another project.

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Restaurant staffers holding umbrellas try to persuade potential customers to have food near Mawa ferry terminal in Munshiganj's Shimulia yesterday. The eateries there are struggling to keep their businesses afloat as they are getting very few customers since the opening of the Padma Bridge late last month.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Children to get 2yrs of pre-primary edn

Initiative to start with 3,000 schools

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government is going to introduce two-year pre-primary education at primary schools next year despite the fact that the pre-primary training programme could not prepare teachers for effectively teaching students in classrooms, especially considering the play-based approach towards education.

The one-off 15-day training for teachers of pre-primary education (PPE) also could not help the educators effectively identify, report and track children development outcomes, found a latest World Bank report.

Against this backdrop, the government is planning to extend the duration of PPE, an important component of early childhood learning, to two years from existing one year from January 1 next.

Under the extended PPE, pre-primary learning will start with children above four rather than above five.

Prof Farhadul Islam, chairman of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), said the two-year PPE curriculum was approved on June 25.

"We are going to introduce the two-year pre-primary education at 3,000 government primary schools from January

1 on a pilot basis," he said.

After reviewing the results, the NCTB would expand the education to all primary schools, he added.

Primary and mass education ministry officials said that the government took the decision as the target 4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) calls for ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education by 2030.

The one-year PPE was introduced in government primary schools for 5-year-old students in 2014. There are now 39 lakh above-five students in pre-primary schools in the country.

STUDY FINDINGS

The World Bank study titled "Playful Pre-Primary Education in Bangladesh: Study on Professional Development Needs of Pre-Primary Teachers and Headteachers" surveyed 200 PPE teachers and 200 headteachers of government primary schools.

It said a 2020 World Bank assessment found that the current provision of professional development opportunities for PPE teachers in government schools

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