

Tackling river erosion with trees

Forest Department plants 29,000 trees on Halda riverbank

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

To tackle erosion, the Forest Department has planted 29,000 trees on a stretch of Chattogram's Halda riverbank -- which had been grabbed by locals -- bringing a welcome change for the region's biodiversity.

Under the "social forestry" project, 19 species of trees -- including gamhar, arjun, olive and neem -- are now spreading their branches on the 29-kilometre stretch.

The project started in 2021 and will end in 2033.

River researchers said there are several ways, including planting trees, to help prevent riverbank erosion.

Monzurul Kibria, a prominent river researcher and professor of Chittagong University's zoology department, told The Daily Star, "Plant and tree roots hold the soil in position and prevent it from being washed away," he said.

During a visit to Chipatali area of the

riverbank recently, this correspondent saw locals nurturing the saplings. Some beneficiaries were seen guarding the forest.

Besides, the department listed 145 destitute families in the area as beneficiaries under the project. These families will get 45 percent dividends from the sale of trees, after the project ends.

Ahmed Hossain, a beneficiary of the forest, told this newspaper, "At one point, local encroachers grabbed the riverbank and set up different kinds of illegal establishments. But now, the situation has totally changed. It's now turning into a green haven, full of different species of trees."

"We will get money as beneficiaries after the trees are cut down, which will bring us prosperity," he said.

"The project not only maintains ecological balance in our area but also brings happiness to poor families," said

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For children, tyres are magical playthings. They roll the circles around on the roads and alleys all day, as if the objects are an endless source of fun. And a tyre race among friends, like these three here, can be full of excitement, suspense, and joy. This photo was taken recently on Sylhet city's Airport Road.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

No chance of 'Sitrang' hitting country Says state minister for disaster management

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is no possibility of super-cyclone "Sitrang" hitting the country, said State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief Enamur Rahman yesterday. "Our meteorologists are monitoring and have reported that no depression has formed in the Bay yet," he said at a press briefing at the secretariat.

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief held the press briefing on "International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction", which will be observed today, under the theme "early warning and early action for all".

Quoting a Global Forecast Center report, Enamur said a depression will form in the Bay of Bengal on October 17 and will intensify into a cyclonic storm. It may hit parts of West Bengal and the Sundarbans through Andhra Pradesh.

Japanese and Indian meteorological departments will work jointly with Bangladesh in this regard, he said.

He also said the government is prepared to deal with cyclones. All field-level administrations, district administrations and volunteers have been instructed to be ready. "Usually we start preparatory work after the depression forms."

The poor suffer, as usual

Rajnagar health complex in Moulvibazar shut down for 23 days as cracks spotted in building

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Hundreds of people from lower-income backgrounds in the haor and tea garden areas in Moulvibazar depend on the Rajnagar Upazila Health Complex for affordable medical treatment.

However, most of the activities inside this facility have remained suspended for 23 days, depriving them of affordable health care.

The authorities have not taken in any new patients during this time as the building is in a dilapidated state, with at least 100 cracks on different parts of the establishment.

The patients who were already admitted have been transferred to the Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital of the district.

The development came immediately after parts of the facility's ceiling fell off recently, with the patients and doctors narrowly escaping a grave accident.

However, activities of the emergency and outpatient unit are continuing amid great risks, with doctors and patients coming to work fearing for their safety.

According to the authorities, Rajnagar Upazila Health Complex with 31 beds was established in 1982. Since then, this hospital of the Sadar Upazila has been providing medical services to the upazila residents. Currently, about three lakh people live in the upazila.

At present, the construction of a 50-bed health complex building



is in progress.

However, before shifting the activities of the health complex to the new building, cracks appeared in the old building. The cracks started appearing on September 17, according to eyewitnesses. Around 1:30 am, there was a huge noise at the establishment, when parts of the ceiling collapsed.

The matter was quickly reported to Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Mohammad Afzalur Rahman.

Contacted, Afzalur Rahman told this correspondent that he observed multiple cracks on the building and immediately reported the matter to his seniors.

Following the recommendation of the concerned authorities, Additional Director General of Health Directorate Ahmedul Kabir ordered the suspension of medical activities at the establishment.

Upon visiting the site recently,

this correspondent saw at least 100 cracks on different parts of the complex building. Doctors and patients at the emergency unit were in fear of the establishment collapsing at any given time.

Salah Uddin, a resident of the Pachgaon area of the upazila, said, "I was in the hospital for a few days as my mother fell sick. It was very scary with the huge cracks on all sides of the building."

Other patients and attendees who were at the hospital in recent times echoed the same.

Upazila Health Officer Dr Afzalur Rahman said, "Once the new building is completed, the problems will no longer exist."

Shafiqul Islam, executive engineer of the Moulvibazar Health Engineering Department, said that the building is in a vulnerable state and needs to be abandoned immediately.

Civil Surgeon Chowdhury Jalal Uddin Murshed said he asked the authorities to deal with the matter on a priority basis.



The 23rd founding anniversary of Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University was observed through various programmes yesterday. On the occasion, Vice Chancellor Prof Md Farhad Hossain along with Treasurer Prof Md Sirajul Islam hoisted the national and university flags on the campus. Besides, various programmes were held marking the day.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

7 missing as fishing trawler capsizes in Karnaphuli

STAR REPORT

At least seven persons remained missing as a fishing trawler capsized in the Karnaphuli early yesterday.

The incident occurred when the trawler FV Maglerat was trying to dock at a dockyard named Sea Resource in Ichanagar area on the southern bank of the river around 1:30am, said Ekram Ullah, officer-in-charge of Sadarghat River Police Station.

There were 21 persons including 15 crewmen on board at the time, said the OC. The trawler owned by Rancon Oceania Limited, a concern of Rangs Group, was trying to get on the dockyard, owned by the same company.

The missing persons are captain of the trawler Faruk Bin Abdullah, second officer Md Jahirul Islam, chief officer Md Saiful Islam, greaser Pradip Chowdhury, fish master Md Jahir Uddin, staff of the dockyard Rahmat and father of one of the crewmember whose name could not be known.

Divers of the fire service went to the spot for rescue operation but they faced difficulty due to the strong current in the river.

They will continue with their rescue attempts, said officials.

A three-member probe committee has been formed in this regard. The committee will submit a report within ten working days, they added.



COURT CORNER

5 to die for killing photojournalist

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday confirmed the death sentence of five persons for killing Ekushey Padak recipient photojournalist Aftab Ahmed in 2013. It also upheld the trial court verdict that sentenced another accused to seven years' imprisonment.

The HC bench of Justice Jahangir Hossain and Justice Md Bashir Ullah delivered the judgement after holding hearing on the death reference (trial court documents) and appeals filed by the convicts in the case. The 79-year-old photojournalist, Aftab Ahmed,

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6 cops sued over JCD leader's death in police custody

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Six policemen, including two OCs of Shahbagh and Ramna police stations, were sued yesterday over the custodial death of Jatityabadi Chhatra Dal vice-president of Dhaka city unit (north) Jakir Hossain Milon in March 2018.

The policemen are Abul Hasan, OC of Shahbagh Police Station, Kazi Mainul Hossain, the then OC of Ramna Police Station, former SIs of Shahbagh Police Station Amal Krishna, Sujan Kumer Roy, Saidur Rahman Munshi and Shahriar Reza.

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BCL CLASH AT EDEN COLLEGE

Don't harass or arrest seven of rebel group: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the law enforcers not to harass or arrest seven members of rebel group of BCL in Eden Mohila College for next six weeks in a case filed over the clash between the two groups on September 25.

The HC, however, asked the seven accused to surrender before the trial court in six weeks. The bench of Justice Md Salim and Justice Md Zakir Hossain passed the order.

The seven are Rupa Rani Dutta, Sheikh Shanjida, Maria, Sharmin Akter alias Sharmin, Monika Talukder alias Monika Tonchonga Mimi, Mayeda Begum Maya and Tanjila Akter.

Chandpur UP chair sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent Chandpur's Union Parishad Chairman Md Selim Khan to jail after rejecting his bail petition in a case filed for illegally amassing wealth worth Tk 34.53 crore.

Judge Md Asaduzzaman of Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court passed the order after he surrendered before it, seeking bail. The ACC on August 1 filed a case against Salim on allegation of acquiring illegal wealth worth Tk 34.53 crore and concealing the information of wealth worth Tk 66.99 lakh.



Dengue death toll 75

Total number of cases 22,517

2,481 still undergoing treatment

Number of recovered patients 19,961

647 more hospitalised yesterday

SOURCE: DGHS

PRAYER
TIMING
OCTOBER 13

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:45 12:45 4:15 5:45 7:15
JAMAT 5:20 1:15 4:30 5:50 7:45
SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION