

## HOLEY ARTISAN ATTACK Seven Japanese victims remembered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The seven Japanese nationals who died during the Holey Artisan attack on July 1, 2016 was remembered at an event yesterday.

The event was organised by the governments of Japan and Bangladesh and the Japan International Cooperation Agency at the Metro Rail Exhibition and Information Centre (MREIC) in the capital's Uttara.

The deceased had significantly contributed to the Dhaka Mass Rapid Transit Development Project, read a press release.

Speaking on the occasion, Jica Executive Senior Vice President Yamada Junichi said they have been taking necessary measures to ensure safety of those engaged in its projects in Bangladesh.

"I deeply regret the loss of all those who dedicated their invaluable efforts and time to the development of Bangladesh," he said.

The agency established a memorial monument at MREIC in their honour, he added.

Japanese Ambassador to Bangladesh Iwama Kiminori, Director General (Southeast Asia Wing) Najmul Huda of the foreign ministry, and Managing Director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited MAN Siddique, among others, were present at the event.



Pedestrians cover their noses to block the stench coming from rawhide scraps left on the Dhaka-Aricha highway. This issue is common to locals in the area, as the trash is usually dumped on this road following Eid-ul-Azha. This time, however, the situation worsened due to rain. The photo was taken in Savar's Boliapur area recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Man held over rape, murder of 10-year-old

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Rajshahi

Rajshahi Metropolitan Police arrested a man yesterday on the charge of killing a 10-year-old girl after raping her in the city's Chhotobongram area two days ago.

Md Polash, 30, a hotel employee was held from Natore at 4:00am, said Rafiqul Alam, an additional commissioner of RMP.

Based on Polash's confessional statement, police recovered the victim's body from a pond in Chhotobongram area at 6:00am, Alam said.

Polash abducted the girl from near her house in Nawardapara area on Saturday evening, he said.

He took her to an abandoned site near the pond in Chhotobongram and raped her. Later, he strangled her to death.

Polash then dumped the body into the pond and fled to Natore. The victim's father filed a case against Polash with Shah Makhdum Police Station.

## 'Protect Kawnia playground' Barishal residents demand PM's intervention

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Barishal

Barishal city residents yesterday gave a memorandum to the prime minister through the deputy commissioner to protect a playground located at ward 2 and 7.

Deputy Commissioner Md Jahangir Hossain said he will notify the police administration to protect it.

Taushik Ahmed Rahat, member secretary of the ground protection committee at Kawnia Section Road, Barishal, said for the last 70 years, the residents of the wards have been benefiting from the playground, locally called Kawnia ground.

Two government primary schools, a madrasa, children's organisation "Khelaghar" are continuing sports, and cultural and religious activities there.

Some personnel of the district police are living on a portion of this field after taking lease from the district administration, said Taushik Ahmed.

Earlier, it was used as a police outpost for some time but now, it is only used as residences by a few policemen, he said.

Recently, a signboard has been placed there on behalf of the district police for renting the land out for warehouses and stalls.

Superintendent of Police Wahidul Islam said this land has been under their possession since 1964.

# A foray into reserve forest

### Corrupt officials, influential people grabbing lands in Bhaluka of Mymensingh, allege locals



Deforestation and encroachments continue to destroy the reserve forest in Mymensingh's Bhaluka while the authorities turn a blind eye to the issue despite repeated complaints from locals.

PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Mymensingh

The reserve forest in Mymensingh's Bhaluka upazila is now almost half its original size, thanks to the deforestation and encroachments for over three decades.

Bhaluka, once known for its vast tract of natural forest and wildlife, has now shrunk significantly as people have been living illegally in these reserved government lands.

Rampant deforestation has also altered the region's geography.

The reserves cover 71,088 acres of land, 30,524 of which have been illegally taken in the last three decades, according to sources at the divisional forest office.

"The department has already increased vigilance in the area. Cases have also been filed against the plunderers," said ANM Abdul Wadud, Mymensingh divisional forest officer.

More than 20 reports were filed against influential persons in March this year for cutting down and setting fire to forest trees in the reserved areas in Bhaluka and Uthora Ranges, he added.

In 2010, the government declared 80.5 acres of land in Kadirgrah and Palgaon areas as national park to protect its trees and wildlife. However, the reserves are not safe anymore due to encroachments, said another officer of the department, requesting anonymity.

The local influential people have been colluding with corrupt officials in various ways to carry out these illegal works. Opting for a slash-and-burn farming technique, they first chop down the trees and later burn them.

With no trace left of the land once being a part of the forest, the lands are first claimed as personal property through false documentation and later sold to elite in high price, claimed

locals.

There are over 50 sawmills around the forest reserves in Kadirgrah, Kachina, Batajoor, Palgaon, Tamat and Dhakuria villages where stolen trees are processed, said a local preferring anonymity.

"We have recently evicted five such mills and all the forest land will be recovered soon," said Harun-ur-Rashid, range officer of Bhaluka. He also denied the corruption charges against the division's forest department officials.

Advocate Shabbir Ahmed Lito, secretary of Poribesh Rakhha O Unnyan Andolon in Mymensingh, however, blamed the negligence of the forest officials behind this mishap.

"They are not just destroying the forest trees and grabbing the reserve lands illegally, they are also burning them, which is causing harm to the area's ecology while compelling animals to leave the sanctuary by

taking away their natural habitat and food," he said.

"Wildlife has already disappeared from the forest due to lack of sufficient food and safe habitats," said Awlad Rubel, a local journalist.

Prof Md Azharul Islam of Environmental Science department at Bangladesh Agricultural University, said, "Continued deforestation will lead to an increase in pollution — making these areas more prone to earthquakes, while endangering the area's natural biodiversity."

"The forest tracts in Tangail, Mymensingh and Gazipur used to be a sanctuary for animals and plants. With similar issues seen in the other two regions, the authority should have addressed these issues sooner."

"We have already instructed the local administration to take quick steps to protect the reserves," said Mustafizur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Mymensingh.

## No option for govt but to resign Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said there is no other way for the government but to resign to end the political deadlock and hold a credible national election.

"Our statement is very clear... resign immediately and dissolve parliament. If you buy time unnecessarily, the country and its people will be affected and the democracy will be damaged," he said.

The BNP leader called upon the current regime to take steps for establishing a polls time neutral government for holding the next election in a credible way by forming a new Election Commission.

"This is the only way, there is no other way. So, do it as fast as you can. Otherwise, you won't find a way to escape. Your time is up," he said.

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## No dialogue with BNP on caretaker govt: info minister

UNB, Dhaka

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday ruled out possibility of holding any dialogue with the BNP on its demand to hold the upcoming national election under a neutral caretaker government.

"There is no question of holding any dialogue with them (BNP) on this issue," he told reporters after unveiling a book titled "Bangladesh at a glance" at the secretariat.

"We believe that the BNP wants to create chaos and destabilise the country. As BNP's only aim is to establish a caretaker government there is no need to hold any dialogue with them," he said.

There is no constitutional obligation to form an election-time government, he said adding that the incumbent government will oversee the polls.

The prime minister will take decision whether

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## Turning riverbanks in dumping ground

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

The municipal authorities in Trishal upazila of Mymensingh have been accused of contributing to pollution by dumping daily garbage on the banks of the Sutia River near a bridge on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway.

Despite being established in 1998 and covering an area of 15.49 square kilometers with a population of around 40,000, the municipality has failed to establish a designated garbage dumping ground in the past 25 years. Additionally, there is a lack of dustbins in the municipality area according to locals, resulting in garbage being dumped in various locations along the riverbank.

The negligence towards the rivers, including the Khiru, Banar, and Pagalia, which flow through the upazila and connect to the old Brahmaputra River, is a matter of concern for the local community.

These rivers are crucial for agriculture and maintaining ecological balance in the municipality. However, they are currently being neglected, says Azhar Ali, a local businessman.

During a visit to the Sutia River bank in the Naudhar area of the municipality, this correspondent found large piles of garbage where cattle were scavenging for food.

The garbage dumped beside the highway causes



Sutia river continues to suffer due to rampant waste dumping on its banks near the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway. Inset, a portion of the river remains clogged with water hyacinth, reducing the water's oxygen and nutrient contents.

PHOTO: STAR

## Fake baby milk formula seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The Directorate of National Consumers Right Protection and Rapid Action Battalion in a joint drive yesterday seized a huge amount of substandard

products — including mango juice and baby milk formula — from a warehouse in Bagerhat yesterday.

The drive was conducted in Chitoli-Baitpur area of Sadar upazila around 1:00pm. Alamin Sheikh Babu, a local and the owner of the warehouse, fled during this time.

The team fined two employees of the warehouse Tk 2 lakh and sealed the place. Later, they destroyed the seized products. About 50 types of substandard products were seized and destroyed during the drive, said the official.

