

Four drown in Kurigram, Rajshahi

STAR REPORT

Four people drowned in separate incidents in two districts yesterday, reports UNB.

In Kurigram, two cousins drowned while playing beside a pond at Khamar Beldoho village in Bhuruingamari upazila.

The deceased were identified as Jabir, 2, and his cousin Adib, 2, sons of Abdul Hamid and Anwar Hossain of the village.

Officer-in-Charge of Bhuruingamari Police Station Ruhul Amin said filing of an unnatural death case was underway.

Meanwhile in Rajshahi, a woman and her niece died after falling into a pond in Durgapur upazila.

The deceased were identified as Megha Khatun, 8, and Hira Khatun, 24, of the upazila. Both the deceased were speech-impaired.

The incident happened around 8:30am. Police rushed to the spot around

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



An urban forest will be created in Purbachal Residential Area of the capital, under the initiative of the Forest Department and Rajuk. Such forests serve as vital defenses against airborne pollutants, alleviate the heat island effect, improve mental well-being, and contribute to the replenishment of water tables.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Purbachal to host country's first urban forest

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

When rapid unplanned urbanisation has been engulfing the green coverage of Dhaka, a praiseworthy initiative has been taken to create the country's first ever urban forest in Purbachal Residential Area of the capital.

The Forest Department and Rajdhani Unnayan Katnipakkha (Rajuk) have joined forces in a collaborative effort to conserve and enhance Dhaka's green spaces.

The urban forest, encompassing a vast area of 144 acres located at plot 24 and plot 25 in Purbachal, will be the result of an upcoming memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two government bodies.

RSM Munirul Islam, the conservator of Forest for the Social Forestry Circle in Dhaka, said this urban forest will be designated as a special biodiversity conservation area. Furthermore, the forest will be recognised and protected under the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act.

Munirul Islam emphasised the intention to preserve the originality of the Shal forest, as the chosen area already consists a forest that serves as a habitat for various wildlife species such as jackals, macaques, civets, snakes, and birds.

The forest restoration plan involves the plantation of Horihoki, Bohera, Kumbi, Pitraj, and Holdu trees.

Jibon O Prakriti Foundation will conduct a wildlife and biodiversity survey, while a master plan is being developed to ensure effective conservation efforts.

To promote research and facilitate nature-based education for children and students, a Natural Learning

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

BNP's demand for caretaker govt failed to gain traction

Says info minister

UNB, Ctg

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud yesterday said no discussion is taking place on a non-party caretaker government to oversee the next polls.

"This topic did not come up in any conversation with anyone. BNP's demand for Sheikh Hasina's resignation and the formation of a non-partisan government did not gain traction in Bangladesh, and they received no support from foreign entities," he said.

Hasan Mahmud said this while talking to reporters after delivering a speech at the Asian University for Women's certificate distribution ceremony in the port city.

"Even the topic of inclusive elections involving all political parties, including the BNP, did not come up," the minister said.



ILLEGAL NETTING OF SHRIMP FRY

A threat to marine biodiversity

MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Defying the 65-day ban on bay fishing, a worrisome trend has emerged along the coastal districts spanning from Cox's Bazar's St Martin's Island to the Sundarbans in Khulna.

Local fishers have been targeting tiger shrimp fries, a delicacy known as "bagda chingri" in the region, using highly detrimental methods. Employing large zero-mesh nets with minimal permeability, they resort to two hazardous techniques: net-dragging and netted-closing.

With the aid of these immense nets held at two opposite ends, the fishers drag them across the water from one side of the coastline to the other. This practice aims to capture the newly-hatched tiger prawns for their demand in local markets.

Moreover, they construct small enclosures to confine the fries and prevent their eggs from drifting away, leading to their untimely demise.

This alarming development has

raised serious concerns among authorities and conservationists. The affected coastal districts, namely Laxmipur, Noakhali, Bhola, Patuakhali, Barguna, Bagerhat, and Satkhira, find themselves grappling with the repercussions of this blatant

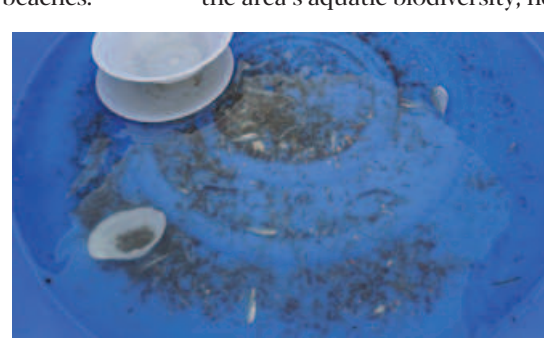


disregard for fishing regulations and ecological well-being.

A recent survey conducted by WorldFish's ECOFISH II revealed that for every tiger shrimp fry caught using the net dragging and netted-closing techniques, approximately 70-80 other fish fries are inadvertently getting killed.

During visits to the affected

areas, this correspondent observed numerous locals engaging in such fishing practice along the coastline. These individuals use shells to identify and separate the tiger shrimp fries, discarding the remaining dead fries on the beaches.



Many marine fish species release their eggs near the coastline from May to July when the seawater sweetens after rainfall, explains Dr Shafiqur Rahman, principal scientific officer of the Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute.

These eggs, including those laid in deep waters, float towards the bay and hatch into larvae,

eventually growing into fry near the shoreline. Unfortunately, the practices of catching tiger shrimp fries result in the destruction of larvae, other shrimp varieties, marine fries, and zooplankton, causing significant damage to the area's aquatic biodiversity, he

added. Abdus Shukkur, owner of Sagar Dry Fish, said, "We struggle to find fish as most of the fries die after hatching during this period. One of the reasons behind this is the destruction of eggs, larvae, and fries while catching tiger shrimp fry on the coastline and estuary."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

'Your time is up, resign'

Fakhrul tells govt at Noakhali rally

STAR REPORT

BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir has demanded the resignation of the government, saying that their time in power is up.

"There is no more time. Their time is up. I have made it clear before, and I am saying it again... resign and dissolve parliament and form an interim government to oversee elections under a neutral and non-partisan government," he said.

Fakhrul made the demand while speaking at a brief rally held at Shahid Bulu Stadium in Noakhali yesterday afternoon, reports UNB.

"We want such an election where we can vote as per our choice... We don't want any election under Awami League government," he said.

He also urged the law enforcers and administration to work impartially, reports our Noakhali correspondent.

"After assuming power, they [AL] nullified the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

Razing a hill for housing

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

In a blatant disregard for environmental regulations, a vested quarter is reportedly engaged in cutting a hill in Charamba Union in Chattogram's Lohagara upazila for constructing houses.

The Department of Environment (DoE) has confirmed that the responsible individuals started the activity without obtaining necessary permissions.

According to upazila land office sources, the hill in question is jointly owned by Siddik Ahmed and Syed Ahmed. It covers approximately 10 acres, with at least 0.10 acres already razed.

The owners razed the hill with the help of Kamal Uddin, a local influential person, claimed locals.

Contacted, Kamal Uddin said, "I have only rented excavators and trucks to the hill owners."

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent observed a portion of the hill being levelled. One of the owners is building a house on this section.

Under the Bangladesh Environment Preservation Act 1995 (amended in 2000), cutting a hill without the approval of the DoE is deemed illegal. First-time violators of this law may face penalties of up to two years' imprisonment, or a fine of Tk 2 lakh, or both. Subsequent

offences may lead to punishments of up to ten years' imprisonment, or a fine of Tk 10 lakh, or both.

"I have been working as a day labourer at this construction site since the past week," disclosed a worker, preferring anonymity.

Siddik Ahmed declined to comment on the matter.

Mohammed Shahjahan, assistant commissioner of Lohagara, said, "We recently seized an excavator and two trucks, and fined the vehicle owner as we could not apprehend the hill owner at the site."

Meanwhile, DoE officials have confirmed that no permission was granted for hill cutting in the area.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



A part of this hill, covering approximately 10 acres, has been razed by a vested quarter, defying environmental regulations.

PHOTO: STAR

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IN ALL ASPECTS.

AYM MAINUDDIN CHOWDHURY
APARTMENT OWNER, BTI SORRENTO (CHATTOGRAM)

