



TREE FAIR

Rain leads to low turnout

MOHAMMAD SUMON

“Due to continuous rain, no buyers are visiting the plant fair for the last four days. We hope to see a good turn-out when the rain recedes,” said Nusrat Jahan Mim, owner of Bagan Bilas Nursery.

More than 70 nursery owners and employees have been waiting for visitors for the last few days at the 15-day tree fair, organised by Chattogram forest division in the port city’s busy CRB area. Though the fair began on a good note on July 30, continued rain has led to a poor turnout for the last few days.

Visiting the fair on Monday, this correspondent saw all 100 stalls, displaying various kinds of local and foreign varieties of plants, vacant since morning. While some visitors came to the fair when the rain lessened in the afternoon, the number rounded off to a few as the drizzles continued.

“I did not want to miss out on the opportunity of exploring new species of trees and plants with my children. So, I came to the fair today. My children really enjoy such fairs, but the rain is making regular visits difficult,” said Rowshan Ara, a homemaker who visited the fair with her two children.

Rubel Hossain, a salesman of Paharika Nursery, requested the authorities to extend the fair as his sales were very low in the last four days.

“I could not even sell trees worth Tk 200 after the rain started. Eight days have already passed. Hopefully, the authorities will consider the situation and extend the fair,” he said.

The fair is organised annually, informed Chattogram North Divisional Forest Officer SM Kaichar.

“We take this initiative to raise awareness on the need of planting more trees and conserving them for the future. Considering the situation, we might extend the fair,” he said.



Continuous rain for the last four days swamped the port city, inundating homes, shops, schools, and hospitals. While some resorted to deploying sandbags and bricks to prevent the water from entering their premises, a few set off with nets to enjoy fishing amid the drizzle. The water has receded from main roads, but many of the city’s lanes and alleys still remain waterlogged. The photos were taken over the last couple of days in different areas of Chattogram city.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

CMP service centres remain closed for poor response



FM MIZANUR RAHMAN

Two service centres of Chattogram Metropolitan Police in the port city have remained closed for months following poor response from service seekers.

CMP introduced the centres last year in Agrabad and Kazir Dewri areas in a move to take its services to the peoples’ doors.

After their inauguration, CMP said people from any police station area under CMP can lodge a general diary for missing documents and mobile phones and pay traffic fines at the centres.

The service centres were set up using a 40-foot container each, with computers, furniture, and air conditioners installed inside.

CMP Commissioner Saleh Mohammad Tanvir first inaugurated the centre in front of Agrabad Corporate Branch of Sonali Bank in Kadambari area under Double Mooring Police Station.

CMP made significant efforts to announce and advise regarding the centre’s inauguration to draw people’s attention and get a good response.

Later, another centre was inaugurated in the Kazir Dewri area under Kotwali police station.

Initially, response from people was good following the inauguration, according to CMP sources. However, over time, the response gradually came down.

Seeking anonymity, a police official of CMP’s Kotwali zone said, “There is no visible work of the service centre installed in the Kazir Dewri area. For the poor response from the public, the centre has been closed. Now



traffic police or police personnel use it while covering different political programmes.”

“To run the service centre, a sub-inspector, an assistant sub-inspector, a constable and a computer operator were appointed. Sometimes, only one GD was registered over a span of two days while four police personnel had to stay at the centre from morning till evening to keep it operational. It was a waste of manpower,” he added.

This correspondent visited Agrabad and Kazir Dewri service centres on three days last week and found those locked.

On a few occasions, Agrabad Service Centre was opened for traffic police, said roadside hawkers.

However, senior officials claimed the service centres have been fully functional and are not closed.

Talking to The Daily Star, Muhammad Jasim Uddin, deputy commissioner of CMP west zone, said “It’s not true that the service centre in Agrabad is closed. We are providing legal suggestions and assistance to the people from the centre and it is fully functional.”

When asked how many people were served from the centre in the last one month, the DC asked to talk about the issue with the Double Mooring Police Station.

Contacted, Kotwali Police Station’s Officer-in-Charge Jahidul Kabir said, “The service centre in Kazir Dewri is not closed. Most of the people, however, are now coming directly to the police station for legal assistance.”

The OC, however, admitted that the number of service seekers at the centre has not been significant.

No respite for KARNAPHULI, HALDA

Sewage flow into the rivers continues as STP project yet to finish

SIFAYET ULLAH

Chattogram city dwellers will have to bear the nuisance of sewage pollution in the Karnaphuli and Halda rivers even longer, as the completion deadline for the Sewerage Treatment Plant-1 project has been extended.

Every day, more than 25 crore litres of polluted water, including sewage, flows through the city’s 16 main canals, and eventually goes into the Karnaphuli and Halda, damaging the aquatic ecosystem.

The deadline for the STP-1 project, implemented by Chattogram Water Supply and Sewerage Authority was June. However, the government has now extended its deadline by a year to June 2024, as CWasa failed to complete the project within the scheduled time.

The project officials, however, said the STP-1 project is unlikely to be completed before 2026, as only 30 percent of the physical work has been completed so far.

“We need at least three more years to complete the project, as construction of a road and complications in land acquisition have delayed it,” said Mohammed Ariful Islam, STP-1 project director.

According to the port city’s Sewerage Master Plan 2017, CWasa divided the city into six packages to set up six STPs. They started work on Package-1 with an estimated cost of Tk 3,808 crore, said CWasa officials.

This correspondent recently visited Bakalia area of the port city and observed polluted water from the septic tanks of buildings flowing straight into Chaktai canal, which is directly linked to the Karnaphuli.

Akter Hossen, a resident of the area, admitted that they let their sewage into the canal. “We are forced to do so as we have no alternative,” he said.

The main objective of the STP project is to reduce pollution of the Karnaphuli and Halda, as both water bodies were being polluted with sewage wastes produced by six million residents of the port city, said project officials.

The per day sewage waste figures, generated by city dwellers, will rise to around 515 million litres by 2030, which will push the Karnaphuli and Halda to the deathbed, unless the waste treatment plants come into effect, according to the Sewerage Master Plan.

Experts have already warned that aquatic organisms in the Karnaphuli will be wiped out if the ongoing situation continues.

Over the last 20 years, a total of 30 species of freshwater fish have disappeared from the Karnaphuli, according to a study conducted by Prof Md Manzoarul Kibria of Chittagong University’s Zoology department.

“The Karnaphuli still survives despite the thousands of tonnes of waste being dumped into it as the tide washes the river every day. But CWwas should complete the project soon to save the river,” said Prof Kibria.

Under the STP-1, approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council in 2018, two million urban dwellers of 11 wards in the port city will be brought under the sewerage system.

A treatment plant will be set up on 165 acres of land in the city’s Halishahar area and 200 km-long pipelines will be installed. After completion of the project, no buildings will require septic tanks, as all household sewage will directly go to the STPs.

A South Korean company, Taeyoung Engineering and Construction Limited, is implementing the project.



The unfinished STP 1 project.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN