

Ravaging a forest for fish farming

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

Encroachers have destroyed 95 acres of the Gohira mangrove forest in Chattogram's Anwara upazila and turned the area into fish enclosures.

They began chopping trees, digging ponds and building dams for this purpose six years ago, said locals. These are all punishable offences under the Forest Act, 1927.

Despite knowing what is going on, the forest department has not taken any action to evict the encroachers of the 250-acre forest it had earlier developed to protect the upazila from natural disasters like cyclones.

The department planted 10,000 trees, including Keora, Gewa, and Bain, on the Bay of Bengal and the Sangu sections of Raipur union in 1991-92 to build the forest.

The forest is under the process of being made into a natural reserve. But this correspondent, during a recent visit, observed that there might not be any forest left if tree felling continues any longer.



The waterbodies in the picture were once the Gohira mangrove forest in Chattogram's Anwara, rich in Keora, Gewa, and Bain trees planted by the forest department to protect the area from natural calamities. However, a syndicate has chopped down trees and dug up ponds for fish farming.

PHOTO: STAR

field staffers did not notify me."

The DFO said he would take action against the culprits and send letters to local administration to evict them.

Imran Hossain, a local journalist, said, "The embankment built in the area is also collapsing as the waves of the sea are hitting it directly since the forest has been destroyed there."

Mohammed Bakhtiar, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Chattogram chapter, said every year, many residents of the

coastline lose their properties and homes to the sea due to the absence of mangrove forests.

Raipur Union Parishad Chairman Amin Sharif said, "The forest is dying because of the grabbers. The forest department must act on it."

Shafiqul Islam, ranger of the Banskhali range of Chattogram Coastal Forest Division, said, "We have only two forest guards in the Premasia beat office. It's not possible to keep an eye over thousand acres of forestland with such

small manpower."

The forest department should take legal action against the culprits, he added.

Mohammad Kamal Hossain, former professor at the Institute of Forestry and Environmental Sciences at Chittagong University, said, "The roots of mangrove trees protect soil from erosion. The forest also absorbs storm surges caused during extreme weather events such as cyclones. Besides, these trees provide habitats for fish, birds, and reptiles."

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Wrongdoers will be brought to book

Says IGP on recent violence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun yesterday said legal action would be taken against those involved in violent incidents centring Saturday's BNP rally and its aftermath.

The IGP said this while visiting injured police personnel at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital in the morning.

"Journalists perform their duties on the ground, just like the police force. They risk their lives to do their duty. Similar to the police, they were attacked while collecting news. The wrongdoers don't want the pictures and information they have gathered to go against them," said the IGP.

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JS passes New Development Bank Bill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The New Development Bank Bill, 2023 was passed in Parliament yesterday to welcome funds from the lending arm of the BRICS.

Law Minister Anisul Huq, in absence of Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, placed the bill before the House.

The bill was passed by voice vote.

According to the objective of the bill, the BRICS alliance consisting of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa established a multinational bank called the New Development Bank (NDB) in 2014 by signing an agreement in the regard.

Currently, there are five founding members, and a total of eight countries including Bangladesh, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt are its members.

Bangladesh became a member of NDB on September 16, 2021 by signing the "Instrument of Accession". The main objective of establishing NDB is to provide financial support to developing countries for implementation of infrastructure and development projects.

4 private airlines owe Tk 1,282cr to CAAB

RASHIDUL HASAN

Despite huge investments, eight passenger and over a dozen cargo airlines have declared bankruptcy in the last 30 years for various issues like uneven competition, high aeronautical and non-aeronautical charges, and high jet fuel rates.

Mofizur Rahman, secretary general of Aviation Operators Association of Bangladesh and managing director of Novoir, said this at the meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on civil aviation ministry yesterday.

In the meeting chaired by Awami League lawmaker RAM Obaidul Mukhtar Chowdhury, Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh informed that four private airlines -- Novoir, Regent Airways, United Airways, and GMG Airlines -- owe Tk 1,282 crore to CAAB.

Of the four, only Novoir is currently operational.

Mofizur, in a written statement, said private airlines are ceasing to exist due to uneven competition with Biman.

"Private airlines cannot survive due to the government's subsidised aircraft operating policy with many unrestricted privileges. A solution to this unequal competition is

urgently needed," he said.

The Novoir MD said Biman has been fixing airfares at lower prices than the actual rate, compelling private airlines to operate flights with low fares as well.

Private airlines will not survive even if Biman survives with huge government subsidies. In this case, determining actual airfare is essential, he added.

Private airlines cannot survive due to the government's subsidised aircraft operating policy with many unrestricted privileges. A solution to this unequal competition is urgently needed.

MOFIZUR RAHMAN
Secretary General of AOBAB

Around 40-46 percent of an airline's operating cost is spent on fuel. If jet fuel is bought at a price 30-40 percent higher than international market and private airlines are forced to transport passengers at a low price, they will not survive. So, the price must be aligned with global market, Mofizur also said.

Mofizur claimed if the situation doesn't improve, the existing private airlines will gradually close down.

11.66 lakh women workers went abroad so far

Minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 11.66 lakh female migrant workers went to different countries so far, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad told parliament yesterday.

In reply to a query of Awami League MP, Adiba Anjum Mita, the minister said that Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Mauritius, Lebanon and Bahrain are among the countries with high demand for female workers.

"The government's vigilance and initiatives continue to ensure that women migrant workers do not suffer any discrimination," he said.

Imran Ahmad added that there are six safe zones opened in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Oman and Lebanon to protect women migrant workers.

In response to Jatiya Party MP Syed Abu Hossain's question, the minister said that 4,53,337 workers have so far been sent to different countries till October of the current financial year.

In 2022-23 financial year, a total 11,25,825 workers were sent abroad, he added.

GOVT SPENT TK 9,376CR FOR ROHINGYAS SINCE 2017

State Minister for Disaster Management Enamur Rahman told parliament yesterday that the government has spent Tk 9,376 crore for Rohingyas in last six years since 2017.

In addition, the extent of loss to forest resources and biodiversity caused to accommodate the Rohingya refugees has been worth Tk 204.67 crore, he said.

According to the joint verification

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Seven injured in AL factional clash in Natore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

Seven people, including a municipal councillor, were injured in a clash between two groups of the Awami League over establishing dominance in Natore.

The confrontation took place at Harishpur Bus Terminal around 11:30am, where supporters of Ward-9 Councillor Rana Hossain clashed with followers of AL leader Rashedul Islam Koyel, said locals.

According to police, the supporters of councillor Rana and Rashidul were separately protesting against the blockade called by BNP-Jamaat at the bus terminal.

At one stage, they started to fight. Both of the groups used weapons and sticks in the clash that injured seven people -- including Rana Ahmed, said Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Nasim Ahmed.

The injured were undergoing treatment at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

When asked about the weapons used in the clash, the OC said he did not see anything like that and did not know about it.

A few days ago, the two groups also clashed at Bonbelghoria over establishing supremacy in the area.

Both Rana and Koyel blamed each other for the attack and demanded justice.

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