



PM for building hunger free 'Sonar Bangla'

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday called on the nation to help the government in realising the vision of a non-communal, hunger-free, prosperous "Sonar Bangla" and "Smart Bangladesh" envisioned by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

On the eve of "Mujibnagar Day", Hasina emphasised the significance of April 17, stating it as a memorable day for Bangladesh. Mujibnagar Day is celebrated on April 17 every year. On this day in 1971, the first government of Bangladesh was sworn in at Amrakanon in Baidyanath Tala, Mujibnagar upazila, Meherpur.

FORESTER KILLING Rab arrests 2, including mastermind

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two more have been arrested in connection with the murder of forest officer Sazzaduzzaman in Cox's Bazar on Monday, said Rab.

Kamal Uddin, 39, and Helal Uddin, 27, were arrested from Sitakunda in Chattogram and Kot Bazar area of Ukhiya respectively, said Lieutenant Colonel HM Sajjad Hossain, Commanding officer of RAB-15.

Forest Officer Sazzaduzzaman's murder was planned by Kamal Uddin, he said in a press briefing yesterday. This murder was planned by sand lifters who were enraged by Sazzaduzzaman's operations against hill razing. Initial interrogation of the arrested persons revealed that a gang — formed under the leadership of local Helal, Gafur and Babul in Harinmara area — had been illegally cutting hills of the reserved forest area and selling the earth, he added.

"There are about 10-12 dumpers and a few dredgers. They used to cut the hill at night in the dark and sell it for Tk 900 to

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Actions to be taken against illegal news portals

Says state minister for information

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Information and Broadcasting



Mohammad Ali Arafat has expressed solidarity with journalists regarding demands to stop the operation of unregistered and illegal online news portals. He assured them of taking measures to this end. The state minister made these remarks during a meeting with the executive committee of the Online News Portal Association Bangladesh at the Secretariat.

"There is no question of monitoring or controlling the media," he said.

He also supported demands for providing support and incentives to registered news portals.

He inspired climate advocacy in country and beyond

Speakers on Prof Saleemul Huq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prof Saleemul Huq has consistently advocated for loss and damage funds for vulnerable nations such as Bangladesh in COP negotiations, said Prof Cesar Rodriguez Garavito of New York University School of Law.

His comments came during Prof Saleemul Huq's memorial public lecture on "Promoting Climate Justice: Roles of Courts and Youth".

Speaking at the event, Environment, Forest, and Climate Change Minister Saber Hossain Chowdhury said, "We [poor countries] had the least to do with the creation of the problem [climate crisis], yet we are the most impacted. We are also being forced to choose between development and investing in trying to protect our people from the impacts of climate change."

"We don't want the young generation to just listen; we also want to listen to them. We want them to be partners in implementation," he added.

Regarding Saleemul Huq, his longtime compatriot in the global fight against climate change, the minister said, "He has inspired a generation in Bangladesh. Many of the people I see in the audience today have been touched by his sincerity, commitment, and outstanding ability to convince people, especially when he talked about climate science and attribution."

He also stressed the need to decarbonise and work collectively to combat climate change.

Among others, IUB Vice-Chancellor Prof Tanweer Hasan; BRAC University Emeritus Professor Ainun Nishat; and Bela Chief Executive Syeda Rizwana Hasan participated in a discussion following the event.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN, FIROZ AHMED

The Sheikh Russell Park on the north side of Jatrabari intersection in the capital has been turned into a makeshift market, due to rampant encroachment. Inset, this is how this park used to look in 2021, following a four year-long renovation. The photo was taken yesterday.



Coastal villagers switch to LPG from Sundarbans' firewood

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Gone are the days when cooking meals twice a day used to take a toll on Salma Begum.

Starting from lighting the chula (a traditional wood-fired clay stove) to sitting by it amid smoke and heat, the homemaker from Khulna's Dacope upazila would spend nearly four hours a day preparing food for her six-member family.

"My eyes would sting when the smoke spewed from the stove. But my bigger worry was firewood. My children would often have to go out to collect firewood," said the 32-year-old mother of two.

But now, Salma does almost all her cooking on her modern stove, fueled by a liquefied petroleum gas from a cylinder.

"The gas cylinder has made my life easy. The smoke and the tension of collecting firewood have gone away," said Salma, who uses the gas cylinder once a day.

Like Salma's family, hundreds of villagers in the Sundarbans-adjacent areas now use LPG cylinders. Even five or six years ago, most villagers in the area used to cook using firewood, especially wood collected from the local Sundari and Kakra trees.

In a number of villages close to the Sundarbans, such as Kalabogi, Nolian, Sutorkhali, and Laudob, LPG usage has changed the lifestyle pattern of the inhabitants.

People in Dacope, Paikgacha, and Koyra upazilas say that life without LPG is not an option now as most homes have removed traditional fireplaces. Sources of firewood have become restricted as well, which in turn reduces the pressure on the Sundarbans. However, they have to count extra money to bring about this change in fuel consumption.

On a visit to Kalabagi Jhulantpara village in Dacope upazila, Khulna, this correspondent saw the Bhadra River to the east of the village and the Sibsa river to the west, with the



Sundarbans visible beyond the village on the other side. Not a single house in the entire village is built on the ground. The villagers live in huts made on a base of Kakra poles, Raintree wood planks and Golpata fences from the Sundarbans.

There were nets and boats lying idle near almost every house, hanging toilets attached to each room. Almost all the houses in the village have LPG cylinders and stoves in their kitchens, even though they do not have electricity.

The village of Kalabagi is made up of 460 families. According to villagers, 450 of them use LPG for cooking.

The villages around the Sundarbans are mostly poverty-stricken, and the livelihood of those who live there involve collecting shrimp and lobster fry from the river, or catching fish. Many of them collect wood, Nipa palm leaves,

and honey from the Sundarbans.

Mina Begum, 42, of Nolian village has been using gas instead of wood for cooking for four years now.

"Those who cannot afford to buy gas resort to buying firewood from local poachers for Tk 100 to 160 per maund. But that is a very small group. The gangs are not able to collect wood anymore due to surveillance by the forest department. So locals are forced to turn to gas.

"There is a lot of smoke while cooking with wood. Now I can cook comfortably using gas. A gas cylinder lasts a couple of months for a family of four," she said.

However, they have to pay prices that are higher than what is fixed for LPG. Mina Begum informs that she recently bought a 12 kg LPG cylinder for Tk 1,540.

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Greece regularises 10,000 Bangladeshis

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Greece has regularised some 10,000 Bangladeshis and is likely to do more.

This was communicated during a bilateral meeting between Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud and Greek Foreign Minister George Gerapetritis on the sideline of the 9th Our Ocean Conference in Athens yesterday.

According to foreign ministry officials, there are around 25,000 Bangladeshis in Greece.

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud thanked the Greek government for legalising the Bangladeshi nationals who were living in Greece under a MOU on Migration and Mobility, a foreign ministry statement said.

He requested the Greek Minister to regularise the rest and recruit more Bangladeshis to the European country.

The Greek foreign minister said Greece plans to hire Bangladeshi professionals in sectors like agriculture, tourism, hospitality, and construction in the near future.

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BANGABAZAR DSCC dismantling makeshift shops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In line with a "previous announcement", Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) dismantled the makeshift shops at the site of Bangabazar Shopping Complex for the second consecutive day yesterday.

Approximately one-third of the makeshift shops were dismantled using excavators during the eviction drive that started on Monday.

DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh had earlier announced that the construction work of Bangabazar market would start after Eid. On April 4 last year, the iconic clothes market was burnt to the ground in a fire.

Yesterday, shop owners and shopkeepers were

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Storm destroys their homes, bus takes their lives

UNB, Faridpur

The family's struggle started when their home was destroyed in a recent nor'wester in Faridpur on March 28.

After enduring a really difficult time for over two weeks, which included Ramadan days and Eid-ul-Fitr, the family finally saw a ray of hope.

The family got enlisted to receive government relief to build their home again, making them believe their days of suffering would finally be over.

With that dream, Rafikul Islam Milon Mollah and his family were on their way to receive corrugated iron sheets from the relief wing of Faridpur DC office.

He, along with his wife Sumi Begum, 35, sons — Ruhan, 9, Habib, 6 — and grandmother-in-law Morjina Begum, 70, left their village in Boalmari upazila yesterday morning in a pickup van.

But fate had other plans, as just before reaching the destination, their van collided head-on with a bus on the Dhaka-Khulna highway at Faridpur Sadar upazila.

All of them died in that collision, and so did their dreams of starting their lives anew by rebuilding their homestead.

At least 14 people were dead and 15 others injured in the head-on collision between the pick-up and the bus yesterday morning.

The accident occurred when the Magura-bound bus of Unique Paribahan from Dhaka collided with the pickup carrying Milon's family.

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PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

A rickshaw-puller and his passengers cover their noses to avoid thick dust clouds on Khulna city's BDC Road yesterday. The air pollution in the area has led to widespread health concerns, particularly among vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly.