



A garden of botanical marvels

SAHIDUL ISLAM NIRAB, *Jamalpur*

Rokto Chandan, Ashoka, Toona, Hijal or Tomal -- imagine a garden where all of these unique and rare native plant species live, breathe, and flourish. Now stop imagining, because it really exists!

Md Hasmot Ali's eco reserve in Sarishabari, Jamalpur, is a rare oasis of biodiversity, home to over 600 unique trees, including species on the brink of extinction. Named Dwijen Sharma Garden, after the renowned Bangladeshi naturalist, it spans four acres and houses 150 endangered plants alongside rare fruits and flowers.

Hasmot, a lecturer at Alhaj Farhad Ali Memorial Degree College in Sirajganj, developed his love for trees from childhood, inspired by Prof Sharma's work.

He began by planting seedlings at every

nook of the front yard of his house.

His garden, established in 2020, boasts species such as the Indian trumpet (*Oroxylum indicum*), Boilam (*Anisoptera scaphula*), and bishop wood (*Bischofia javanica*). It also includes 20 types of bamboo, 50 varieties of orchids and cacti, and numerous foreign and local fruit species.

The garden was created on his ancestral land at a cost of Tk 25 lakh. It requires meticulous care, so Hasmot took training at the Bangladesh National Herbarium to further his expertise.

In addition to preserving trees, Hasmot has collaborated with butterfly expert Prof Manowar Hossain from Jahangirnagar University to establish a butterfly sanctuary within the reserve. Visitors can observe around 30 species of butterflies, supported by the pollinator-friendly plants in the area.

"Butterflies play a vital role in ecological balance," said Hasmot, who was awarded the National Butterfly Award for his efforts last year. He also received a National Award for his contributions to environmental conservation and raising awareness.

Looking ahead, Hasmot hopes to expand the reserve and inspire others to follow in his footsteps. His daughter, 16-year-old Niladri Nuzhat, shares his passion for the sanctuary.

"I love living here -- gardening and spending time with the animals. They are like my family. My friends love to visit our house too, as they find it beautiful and peaceful," she added.

Anup Singh, the local agricultural officer, praised Hasmot's initiative, saying, "If nature is not conserved, humans will become extinct." He pledged support for Hasmot's future projects.

Efforts on to include Idrakpur fort in heritage list

Says law adviser

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Munshiganj*

Law Adviser Asif Nazrul yesterday said efforts were underway to include the Idrakpur fort in the list of world heritage sites.

"We are trying to include Idrakpur fort and other forts in the list," he said.

Nazrul went to Munshiganj yesterday morning to visit the archaeological sites. At around 10:30am, he visited Idrakpur fort, a monument of the Mughal period.

There, he told reporters, "These ancient monuments will be preserved. I have come to see these monuments with my own eyes in order to create a conservation policy. I think it is time for us to pay attention to this matter."

He said action will be taken against encroachers.

Later, he visited Raja Harish Chandra's Dighi in Munshiganj, Mirkadim bridge, Baba Adam Shahi Mosque, Sonarang Zora Math and scientist Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose's house in Srinagar.



Survey at Patharia forest begins after 103 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Moulvibazar*

Despite being declared a protected area in 1920, the Patharia Hills Reserve Forest in Juri upazila of Moulvibazar has never been surveyed, leading to multiple disputes and numerous instances of encroachment.

After 103 years, the Land Record and Survey Department initiated digital survey work of the reserve forest recently.

"The reserve forest stretches across 30km from Lathitila in Juri to Bobartal in Barlekha upazila, covering 23,520 acres. Several tea gardens are located within the area. It is also home to several ethnic groups' settlements," said Shekhar Ranjan Das, range officer in Barlekha upazila.

In 2023, the Department of Land Records and Survey established 70 geodetic control points (permanent reference markers) across the forest using satellite technology for the digital survey, said Nazmul Hossain, range officer in Juri upazila.

"The survey team comprises 20 members, divided in five groups," he added.

Shahid Khan, a local resident, said numerous disputes over land ownership emerged over the years as no survey was conducted. He hoped the survey will pave the way for resolving the disputes.

Humayun Kabir, divisional forest officer, said the survey will not only resolve land disputes, but also facilitate development of forest management strategies.

Waste disposal plant struggles to meet deadline

8 months past initial deadline, progress only 30pc

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

The Khulna City Corporation's waste disposal project is facing significant delays, with only half of the work completed despite being eight months past its initial deadline.

Initially scheduled for completion by January 26 this year, the project's real progress is now estimated to be only 25-30 percent, according to officials.

This initiative, launched in 2019, aimed to convert Khulna's waste into valuable resources such as fertiliser, electricity, and diesel.

After years of approvals and tenders, the contract was awarded to Mahbub Brothers Pvt Ltd, with a deadline of January 26.

However, three missed deadlines later, the project remains far from complete, even with multiple extensions, the latest being December 31, 2024.

According to KCC, Khulna generates approximately 1,200 tonnes of household waste daily, with 800 tonnes being collected and dumped.

The waste disposal plant, located in Shalua, Dumuria, 15km from Khulna city, is designed to process 375 tonnes of waste per day, generating 15 tonnes of bio-fertiliser, 300 kilowatts of electricity, and 5,000 litres of diesel.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Despite its promising potential, vital components like the imported chimney have yet to be installed.

The project, officially named the "Integrated Landfill and Resource Recovery Facility Shalua", is part of the Local Government Engineering Department's Second City Region Development Project, funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) with a budget of Tk 52.70 crore.

KCC Chief Conservancy Officer Md Anisur Rahman said 12-14 tonnes of clinical waste are produced daily in Khulna, yet only 7-8 tonnes are collected from hospitals and clinics.

Dr Sheikh Baharul Alam, president of the Bangladesh Medical Association in Khulna, said

improper clinical waste disposal poses severe risks, including the spread of contagious diseases.

Locals are frustrated by the project's slow pace. "This project could have greatly benefited Khulna by turning waste into resources, but we are disheartened by the delays," said Monowar Ali, a resident of ward 3.

Mahbub Brothers Pvt Ltd's project manager, Robiul Hossain Bidyut, cited complications in transporting sand and materials via the narrow Sahapur Road as a key reason for the delays.

He said they are hopeful that the project would be completed by December 2024.

KCC Chief Engineer Mashiuazzaman Khan expressed frustration with the contractor.

He said the firm will be blacklisted if the work is not completed by this year.



Officials from the Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection distribute leaflets during a market inspection aimed at regulating retail and wholesale hilsa prices in Barishal. The photo was taken at the Port Road District Wholesale Fish Landing Centre recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

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