



Activists held a rally at Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka yesterday, demanding a stop to violence against women and children across the country.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

A move to protect endangered wildlife

Satchhari National Park in Habiganj to be expanded by 600 hectares

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

A proposal to expand Satchhari National Park in Chunarughat upazila of Habiganj by 600 hectares has been approved recently.

At present, the park covers a forest area of just 243 hectares, making it the smallest reserve forest in Bangladesh.

With the expansion, the park will have a total area of 843 hectares, allowing protection and preservation of its diverse ecosystem and some of the country's most critically endangered wildlife species, including bears, wild dogs, and different birds and other mammals.

According to the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department, the proposal was submitted by the Satchhari Co-Management Committee, in collaboration with the Forest Department, and was recently approved by the Ministry of Forest, Environment, and Climate Change after extensive consultations with experts and a review of the park's current wildlife management needs.

"Located along the border with India's Tripura state, Satchhari National Park is a mixed evergreen forest surrounded by seven hillocks, with nine tea gardens nearby, including Satchhari Tea Garden to the west and Chaklapunji Tea Garden to the east. It is home to an impressive array of wildlife species, including nearly 200 avian species within a one-kilometre radius," said

Satchhari range officer Abdullah Al Mamun.

"The forest also shelters some of Bangladesh's most endangered species, including northern pig-tailed macaque, western hoolock gibbon, Phayre's langur, and barking deer, among others," he added.

Muntasir Akash, a zoologist and an assistant professor of Dhaka University, opined that the park's expansion is a critical move to

added.

The park is also home to around 28 species of reptiles and 10 species of amphibians, including the green pit viper, king cobra, python, and different species of frog. It also boasts a colourful array of 190 species of butterflies.

"Satchhari's current area is insufficient for wildlife management. Its expansion is expected to improve habitat quality, provide better food



protect the endangered species by allowing more available space for them while enhancing their conservation prospects.

Dr Inam Al Haque, founder of the Bangladesh Bird Club, said the forest is the only place in the country where such a high number of bird species can be found within a small area.

"As the forest grows, food sources will become more available, benefiting the bird population," he

sources, and ensure more secure movement for its wildlife," said Dr Jahangir Alam, divisional forest officer in Sylhet.

Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon's Habiganj unit, welcomed the decision, saying it will help protect the forest area, providing a safer environment for the animals' reproduction and movement, which is crucial for maintaining its rich biodiversity.

Teacher recruitment process to begin soon

Says adviser to Ministry of Primary and Mass Education

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The recruitment process for vacant teacher and officer positions in the primary education sector will begin soon, said Prof Bidhan Ranjan Roy Poddar, adviser to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education.

He was inaugurating a training programme organised by the Directorate of Primary Education at the conference room of the Patuakhali Deputy Commissioner's (DC) office.

"Teachers and officials must always remember that everything we do is aimed at ensuring quality education for children," the adviser said.

Regarding the transfer and posting of primary education teachers, he noted, "The government is working to make the teacher transfer process more transparent. The system has already been brought online to ensure fairness."

The event was presided

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TANGAIL MUNICIPALITY

Lack of animal screening threaten public health

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Public health in Tangail is threatened due to a lack of screening of livestock and the absence of any dedicated slaughterhouse in the kitchen markets of the town.

Since the municipality and livestock department authorities have no effective mechanism of supervision, meat traders have been slaughtering animals unhygienically in the open, often on the roadsides in front of their shops.

There used to be a shed for slaughtering animals near Tangail stadium, which was abandoned following complaints by locals in 1988.

T a n g a i l Municipality later built a smaller shed at the town's Park Bazar (market) for this purpose. However, when they started developing it further in 2012, the work had to be suspended over a land dispute between the municipality and the upazila Land Office.

Since then, animal slaughtering is being done by butchers at any place they consider convenient for them, ignoring concerns for public health.

According to rules, veterinary doctors from the Department of Livestock and inspectors from the municipality's sanitation department are supposed to inspect and issue health certification for all animals

before those are slaughtered.

The livestock department in Tangail said they do not have necessary personnel for the job, while the Tangail municipality authorities claimed their inspectors screen animals at the town markets every day.

"I inspect the animals at the markets daily to ensure that meat traders do not slaughter sick animals. However, it is a visual inspection since we do not have the necessary tools for the purpose," said Sohel Hossain Raju, butcher shop inspector of Tangail municipality.

Several meat traders at Park Market, however, said they never saw any inspectors where they slaughter animals.

A team of local journalists during a recent visit to different kitchen markets in Tangail town observed animals being slaughtered in front of the butchers' shops at the markets and on adjacent roads.

"Without any dedicated slaughterhouse or proper inspection of animals, consumers have no way of knowing what kind of meat they are buying or whether it is safe for consumption," said Rubel Hossain, a resident of Adalat Para.

"Besides not maintaining hygiene while slaughtering animals, the meat traders often display and sell mutton and beef side by side," said Sanjoy Saha, a shopper at Park Bazar.

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PROTEST AGAINST MISLEADING NEWS ABOUT MAX GROUP

Recently it has been noticed that misleading news are being published in several newspapers about the MAX Group. Reading these news stories filled with misinformation, it may seem that some domestic/foreign groups are involved in a conspiracy to unjustly destroy a successful local company like MAX. As a result of these misleading news, on the one hand, the business reputation of MAX Group has been tarnished while on the other hand, the people of the country have also been misled.

In this context, MAX Group strongly protests all news that is not factually accurate and truthful, and humbly submits actual, truthful and objective opinions for publication in the newspaper.

It is worth noting that MAX Group is a non-political commercial and professional organization. Since its establishment in 1984, MAX Group has been working consistently with hard work, dedication, and quality. All relevant domestic and foreign business organizations, international development partners, banking institutions, and relevant engineers are aware of this fact.

MAX Group established its first industrial plant in Manikganj in 1985 by setting up a factory to manufacture automobile parts (leaf springs). In 1990, it started manufacturing various fittings used in the construction of rail track lines in Noakhali. In 1997, engaged by the French company TSO-France as a subcontractor for the Jamuna Rail Bridge project, MAX began its journey of track construction work on the Jamuna Bridge. TSO of France played a key role in transforming MAX into a capable rail track construction company through its transfer of technology process and subsequently when TSO left the country, it sold all its specialized equipment to MAX back in year 2005.

Subsequently, by 2003, MAX Group was able to establish itself as an international standard rail track installation company by successfully executing two railway projects in Sylhet - Akhaura, awarded through International Competitive Bidding, in a joint venture with TSO-France.

During 2003-2005, MAX, engaged solely through International Competitive Bidding, executed the Laksam-Noakhali Railway Track Reconstruction, with a Contract value of Tk 72 crore, which was the first turnkey project tendered by the Bangladesh Railways and it was completed successfully.

In 2009, MAX established a state-of-the-art concrete sleeper manufacturing factory in Panchagarh, thereby gaining further qualification. By manufacturing various rail track fittings, steel bridge girders, and concrete sleepers in its own multiple factories, MAX emerged as a competitive bidder in any international tender for railway works.

Construction of any infrastructure, especially rail track construction, is a specialized sector, where to survive, a contractor has to work for a long time and gain competence, which is not possible in 2-5 years. Due to lack of adequate experience and qualifications, and due to lack of their own specialized construction equipment, many of the country's renowned companies have failed after facing losses when they came to work in mega infrastructure projects. But due to its extensive experience, specialized equipment and necessary qualifications, such did not happen in MAX's case, but rather its experience and qualifications increased day by day. MAX did not get any work without qualifications.

MAX not only specializes in track fitting, sleepers, wagons, ballast wagons and track construction works, but also possesses a working train with rail locomotive, that is essential for executing rail works. Additionally, it possesses specialized and expensive equipment, used only in rail works, such as tamping machine, flash butt welding machine, gang car etc. which are not available with most local companies and also not with many foreign companies as well. Accordingly, MAX has not become successful in the rail sector overnight but such success has come through long term planning, prudent investments in factories and equipment and dedicated work. Presently, MAX is not only the leading construction company in the railways sector but also has significant involvement and success in other infrastructure sectors of the country.

But, both publicly and privately, many people have been spreading baseless misinformation and rumors against MAX for a long time, which is why the news media is being misled.

MAX, both individually and in joint ventures with local and foreign companies, having been selected through international competitive bidding, based on its decades of hard-earned experience and qualifications, has successfully execute some of the most significant railway projects in the country. If the value of completed and ongoing projects of Bangladesh Railways from 2008 to 2024, executed by MAX solely/ as a joint venture/as a local representative of a foreign company, is calculated, it can be seen that the total value of all such projects including the share of partners is approximately Tk 10,513 crore, out of which share of MAX is approximately Tk 6,378 crore. Therefore, the information that MAX has received work worth Tk 30,000 crore in the railways sector is completely wrong. Similarly, the information that MAX has received work worth Tk 60,000 crore in the development sector is also completely wrong and misleading.

Most of the projects awarded to MAX are projects mainly funded by internationally recognized development partners, where contractors are engaged through a legal international competitive bidding process, only after thorough evaluation of bidder qualifications are conducted jointly by the employer, development partner and highly technical and nationally and internationally acknowledged impartial consultancy firm. There is no scope for any influence or fraud in this complex process. In this context, all the allegations against MAX of getting work unethically, getting work despite not being qualified, or getting work through fraudulent practice or by dint of political assistance etc. are completely baseless.

In the last 25 years, the volume of work done by MAX in the railways sector has approximately been less than 15% of the total work in the railways sector, of which the foreign partners had the majority of the shares of work in the mega projects. It is worth noting that all these works were won by MAX through competitive tenders. Therefore, the information that MAX has done or won 90% of the work of the railways as mentioned in some media is completely wrong.

Regarding the news of the Tk 18,000 crore railways project from Dohazari in Chittagong to Cox's Bazar, in the project, excluding land acquisition and other costs, the construction work was carried out by two joint ventures of four companies, two Chinese and two local, namely CREC-Toma JV (Lot 1) and CCECC-MAX JV (Lot 2), through two separate contracts, with a total construction cost of approximately Tk 7,000 crore, out of which the value of work of MAX is estimated to be only Tk 2,000 crore. The information that the total Tk 18,000 crore value of the project has been executed by MAX is completely wrong.

MAX's name is being baselessly linked to some politically controversial individuals, which is completely false. MAX never had any business connection with them, but they have regularly harassed MAX in various ways. Due to the influence of these individuals and their associates in the last 10-15 years, despite being evaluated and approved as the lowest bidder by Technical Evaluation Committees, MAX was not awarded many projects worth an estimated Tk 4,000 crore. Thus, MAX has been subjected to political discrimination at every level, as a result of which, MAX has not been awarded any projects of Bangladesh Railways in the last five years, apart from one project worth Tk 50 crore.

The issue of experience and certificate of the Laksam-Chinki Astana project are being discussed in the wrong way. In compliance with Joint and Several Liability provisions and rules and regulations of the internationally recognized FIDIC contract and maintaining all process, 100% of the Laksam-Chinki Astana project was successfully completed by MAX, after thorough verification by Bangladesh Railway, international consultants and engineers at every step, and accordingly MAX acquired work-related experience and certifications with the full knowledge and acceptance of international development partners. MAX has, in its possession, written approval and declaration of acceptance, following the investigation of the international development partner in this regard.

Attainment of capability of Bangladeshi companies in executing government mega projects currently, including in the railways sector, instead of relying on foreign companies, should be applauded. However, instead, MAX's hard-earned certificate as a domestic contractor, which was completed 100% successfully, is being purposefully tarnished, which is both wrong and an obstacle to the development of domestic companies. If MAX was not capable enough, these projects would have been carried out by foreign companies in which case Bangladeshi manpower would have missed many domestic job opportunities and Bangladesh would have lost considerable GDP growth and government would have lost significant crores of money because of higher price.

Other countries have various mechanisms to protect and support their own country's contractors to increase their local capabilities. But today, after many years of sacrifice, struggle, skill and successful work, when MAX has established itself as a capable and strong contractor in the railways sector of Bangladesh, the success of MAX as a domestic company has become a cause of resentment for many, and they are spreading lies in the name of MAX, which at the end harms the country itself.

As of today, MAX has not defaulted on any loans and has no record of abandoning or unsuccessfully leaving any project incomplete. If a domestic company does significant work in the country's infrastructure sector, works competently, works successfully, and contributes to the livelihoods of thousands of families, facilitates the country's economic growth, keeps the country's money in the country, and provides employment for local engineers and other qualified professionals, ensures sustainable use of local technology, breaks free from dependency on foreigners and serves the country by increasing its own capabilities - upstanding citizens of the country should introspect deeply on whether such a company should be supported, or be maligned with false, fabricated and provocative propaganda to hinder its growth.

MAX Group Chairman, Engineer Golam Mohammad Alamgir, graduated from BUET in Mechanical Engineering in 1978 and has been working tirelessly for the past 45 years, gaining experience in jobs and business both at home and abroad. He has built one of the most renowned construction companies of the country and an industrial and diversified group, employing more than 400 engineers and almost 10,000 officials and employees, directly and indirectly. By the grace of Allah, the livelihood of about fifty thousand people, including their families, is being supported through the Max Group.

On the other hand, MAX Group is making a significant contribution to the state treasury by paying an estimated Tk 300-400 crore in VAT and taxes annually.

By not supporting such a successful local company and spreading lies against it, nothing good will be achieved for the country. We are saddened today, but we have not lost hope. We dream of a Bangladesh where everyone is busy in activities that are good for the country, beneficial for the people of the country, and necessary for the country's economic growth.

In conclusion, MAX denies all rumors and misinformation published in its name and strongly protests all misleading news being published. At the same time, MAX is humbly requesting all media outlets to refrain from publishing false news and any information that has not been independently verified.

MAX GROUP