

MARINE DRIVE IN TEKNAF

Jhau forest faces rampant tree theft

Locals allege illegal logging; officials point to natural causes



MOKAMMEL SHUVO, Cox's Bazar

At Nidania in Ukhiya, alongside the Teknaf Marine Drive, a group of women were seen collecting branches from felled Jhau trees.

When asked about the tree cutting, one of them, Khurshida, said, "The trees were cut down to widen the road, and we are just gathering the leftover branches."

However, deep inside the nearby forest, numerous stumps of cut trees could be seen. Asked who cut them down, she replied, "They do it at night; we don't know who they are."

The area still has a dense Jhau forest, though signs of illegal tree cutting are clearly visible in many places. During the monsoon season, tidal surges often submerge parts of the forest.

Forest officials claim that strong tides are a primary reason for trees being uprooted, but they also admit that theft contributes significantly to the deforestation.

A visit along the Marine Drive reveals makeshift shops, restaurants, and

various structures have been set up inside the forest and other parts of the beaches. This type of encroachment is particularly noticeable in the Ukhiya and Ramu sections of the coastal belt.

A few days ago, local journalists captured footage of Jhau logs being transported by truck from the Teknaf beach.

Journalist Abdur Rahman of Teknaf said, "The truck driver claimed the trees were already uprooted by the tide."

However, locals allege that tree theft is being committed regularly under the pretext of storm damage.

Bashir Ahmed, ranger of the coastal forest division in Teknaf, said, "The trees uprooted by tidal surges were being brought to our office."

He also admitted to the problem

of illegal logging, attributing it to a shortage of manpower.

Stretching nearly 80 kilometres from Cox's Bazar to Teknaf, the Marine Drive is a popular tourist route, and the Jhau forest adds to its scenic appeal.

Dipak Sharma Dipu, president of the Cox's Bazar Forest and Environmental Conservation Council, said, "These trees were originally planted to enhance natural beauty and protect the coast from strong wind. But now, the forests are being steadily destroyed."

He accused influential individuals of systematically clearing the trees in order to occupy the coastal land.

"Around 3,000 illegal structures have already been built," he added, "yet the authorities have taken little action."

Firoz Al Amin, ranger of the Inani forest range in Ukhiya, said, "Most of the trees are uprooted by excessive tides. We collect those trees and store them. Last year, uprooted trees worth around Tk 7 lakh were sold through auction."

He added, "Theft is the second cause of the destruction of the Jhau forest. We filed three cases this month for stealing the Jhau trees, and one was held on Wednesday in this connection."

Shahinul Islam, assistant conservator of Cox's Bazar South Forest Division in Ukhiya, said protecting the Jhau forest along the Marine Drive requires coordinated efforts from several government agencies.

"We are currently preparing a list of illegal structures inside the forest, and steps will be taken to remove them," he said.

However, he said makeshift huts used by local fishermen to store fishing gear are not demolished out of humanitarian concern. These fishermen, he said, also contribute to protecting the forest.



July the deadliest month so far

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Syndrome. It involves critical damage to organs such as the liver, brain, heart, kidneys, and central nervous system.

Dr Ahsan said patients with comorbidities such as hypertension, diabetes, or chronic lung and kidney disease are particularly vulnerable.

Many patients fail to recognise warning signs like severe abdominal pain, breathing difficulty, bleeding, extreme weakness, or a sharp drop in urination and platelet count. By the time they reach the hospital, their condition has often deteriorated significantly, he said.

He recommended immediate hospitalisation for any patient displaying these warning signs. Additionally, he advised patients with comorbidities, the elderly, and pregnant women to be admitted at the onset of dengue fever to minimise the risk of death.

Dr Ahsan also warned about the dangers of cross-infection from different

dengue serotypes, which can cause more severe outcomes if medical intervention is delayed. Anyone experiencing fever should consult a doctor immediately and follow the prescribed treatment, he advised.

He said many patients from Dhaka arrive at hospitals late — often without having received adequate fluid therapy during transport. By the time they get here, many are already in shock. Early intervention could have saved many of these lives, he said.

Public health expert Dr Mushtaq Hussain said decentralising the healthcare system is vital to reducing dengue-related deaths.

If patients can access early treatment, they are less likely to reach a critical stage, he said.

While the healthcare system outside Dhaka includes community clinics, union health centres, upazila health complexes, and district hospitals, it often lacks

essential equipment. In contrast, Dhaka lacks a functional multi-tiered system altogether, he observed.

In Dhaka, there are no proper primary healthcare centres, and the few secondary hospitals that exist are often underutilised due to a lack of basic facilities.

He said complications from dengue usually arise after the fever subsides, but early symptoms are often ignored, as many assume they are recovering.

He stressed the need for a tiered treatment model dividing care into primary, secondary, and tertiary levels to improve case management and reduce deaths. "A stronger primary healthcare system is essential, especially for low-income communities."

He also called for more blood collection centres and expanded secondary care services within Dhaka.

A clear policy decision is urgently required to implement this decentralised model, Dr Mushtaq added.

Frugal Innovation

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disproportionately affecting those in the Global South who are least able to cope. He underscored the need for conversations on climate adaptation to go beyond survival — and speak equally to livelihoods, dignity, and inclusive growth.

Mohamed Nasheed, secretary general of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, delivered the keynote virtually. He criticised the current international financial system for failing

Govt begins destroying

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93,78,900 saplings. The initial budget allocation stands at Tk 37.6 million.

Cox's Bazar leads the list, with 1.73 million saplings being destroyed in the first phase. Other high-figure districts include Bandarban (792,100), Gaibandha (784,300), Chattogram (738,400), and Tangail (728,000).

In the greater Chattogram region — which includes Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Noakhali, Feni, and Lakshmipur — the DAE reported a combined stock of 6.31 million saplings. In Cox's Bazar alone, 1.73 million of the 4.07 million

vulnerable countries, noting that high borrowing costs are pricing developing nations out of critical investments in clean energy and resilient infrastructure.

The forum emphasised how communities can lead resilience-building efforts by drawing on local knowledge and limited resources.

Since its inception in 2013, the FIF has served as a key platform for exploring innovation and sustainability from the perspective of the Global South.

Deep depression formed

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The monsoon trough extends from Rajasthan through Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, and the centre of the depression in Assam, stretching across the southern part of Bangladesh.

The monsoon is active over Bangladesh and strong over the North Bay, read the BMD updates.

Moreover, the Met office has forecast light to moderate rain in all divisions, including Dhaka, of the country in 24 hours

commencing 9:00am yesterday.

"Light to moderate rain or thunderstorms accompanied by temporary gusty wind are likely at most places over Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram and Sylhet divisions and at many places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka and Mymensingh divisions with moderately heavy to very heavy falls at places over Khulna, Barishal and Chattogram divisions," said a Met office bulletin.

Meanwhile, a mild heat wave is sweeping over

Rangpur division and it may abate.

Day and night temperatures may fall slightly over the country, according to the BMD.

Khulna's Koyra experienced the highest 92 mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours, till 6:00am.

The country's highest temperature 37.2°C was recorded in Tetulia over the past 24 hours till 6:00pm on Thursday, while the lowest temperature 20.5°C was recorded in Bandarban till 6:00am yesterday.

Global operator, foreign tech

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The government is currently in talks with UAE-based DP World to operate the terminal.

"What we are going to do is only to appoint a new operator replacing the old one. And the purpose is only for enhancing the efficiency. Because I have seen global port operations while visiting those. I do not have any personal interest. I am not even a dweller of Chattogram," said the adviser.

About the outgoing private operator, he said, "The private operator that ran NCT and another terminal for the last 17 to 18 years did good job. But the government has now taken initiative to run this

terminal more efficiently compared to them."

Sakhawat opined that Chattogram Port is lagging behind many global ports.

Citing his visits to international facilities, he noted, "A good portion of the country's export containers are sent to the Port of Singapore for transshipment. Those containers cannot stay in the Singapore port for more than two days."

He added that most ports in Singapore and many other countries are operated by private entities.

"It is necessary to bring technological know-how from abroad in order to enhance efficiency," he

said. "Currently, we are running our ports inefficiently. But for enhancing efficiency more we need to step into international arena," he remarked.

According to the adviser, a port would truly enter the global arena only when a global operator is engaged.

Commenting on recent improvements in NCT's performance, Sakhawat said container handling at the terminal has increased by an average of 30 percent since CDDL took over.

He expressed hope that the next appointed operator would maintain this improvement.

Polls delay to invite

FROM PAGE 3
although the country is going through various crises, the government's actions are barely visible to the public. "People don't even feel its presence."

He questioned whether government officials, apart from the advisers, are attending their offices regularly or properly carrying out their duties.

He alleged that corruption is continuing unchecked, just as it has over the past 17 years, and in some areas, it has even increased.

Gayeshwar said the current government

is unable to function effectively due to a lack of coordination and governance experience. "Had they asserted their authority properly, many of these controversies might not have happened."

He said BNP does not intend to criticise the interim government harshly, as it is a non-partisan administration. "Only an elected government is accountable to the people — not an unelected one."

Gayeshwar warned that without an elected government in place, the country is likely to face further uncertainty.

S&P sees stable

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"... a US tariff rate of 35 percent that will potentially apply to Bangladeshi imports into the US beginning 1 August 2025 could affect labour market conditions if the two countries fail to reach a more effective agreement."

S&P said the country's garment industry remains highly competitive, with low unit labour costs and an ample supply of labour.

But the proposed US tariff would undermine Bangladesh's competitiveness in that market and potentially disrupt its RMG industry. S&P said Bangladesh's real growth rate per capita is very strong compared with those of peers and that downside and upside risks to its external balance sheet have now become broadly balanced.

"This is despite headwinds in the next 12-18 months stemming from external trade conditions." S&P also said it could lower its ratings on Bangladesh if the country's external position worsens.

The agency said Bangladesh is receiving increasing external financial support, stemming from deep engagement with bilateral and multilateral development partners, consistent remittances from overseas Bangladeshi workers, and solid export receipts from its globally competitive garment manufacturing sector.

Bangladesh's real economic growth rate decelerated meaningfully over the past two years. It may pick up pace should political and external stability solidify over the next 12 months, said S&P, forecasting about 6.1 percent growth in the next three years if these conditions materialise.

It said elections tentatively scheduled for April 2026 could be a milestone in that process.

"Bangladesh's volatile political situation may stymie the predictability of policy responses."

"Mooted elections in the first half of 2026 are likely to be a critical pivot point for more lasting political stability following the abrupt collapse of the government in July 2024," it said in the latest report.

Should the establishment of an elected government lead to a more stable political environment, it could help to alleviate persistently low foreign direct investment inflows and set the foundation for long-term structural reforms, it added.

"Nevertheless, investors will likely continue to face challenges, including evolving institutional settings, infrastructure deficiencies, and bureaucratic inefficiencies."

S&P said its assessment on Bangladesh's banking risk is negative.

It classified Bangladesh's banking sector in group '9' (with '1' being the highest assessment and '10' the lowest). "That said, the sovereign faces limited contingent liabilities from the banking sector."

It said although private sector banks are in better shape, there are notable risks in the state-owned commercial banks.

The agency said state banks account for less than 30 percent of total banking sector assets but their nonperforming loans ratio is much higher than that of peer commercial banks, standing at about 40 percent according to the IMF.



Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-20	12-45	5-00	6-50	8-15
JAMAAT 4-55	1-15	5-15	6-55	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



NCP procession in Sunamganj.

PHOTO: STAR

Hasina left us a dysfunctional

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"People have overthrown Sheikh Hasina through their struggle against authoritarianism, but our fight is not over yet. We must continue until a new Bangladesh and a new political arrangement are established," he said.

"We will work to rebuild Sunamganj as part of this broader transformation," he added.

Nahid and other NCP central leaders reached Sunamganj after a road march in Habiganj on Thursday.

In the morning, they met with families of those killed and injured in the July uprising. Following Friday prayers at the town's central mosque, they joined a procession and rally at Allat Square.

Also addressing the rally, Hasnat Abdullah, chief coordinator (South) of NCP, alleged that supporters of the party were being threatened.

"We've heard of people facing intimidation for supporting NCP. I urge everyone to strengthen the party in every ward," he said.

Hasnat encouraged residents to work with existing local leaders. "Support them, build ward and upazila committees under their guidance," he said.

He also addressed local economic concerns and said, "Sunamganj has long suffered from a lack of employment opportunities. Governments have come and gone, but little has changed here."

"For meaningful change, you must organise yourselves and act collectively."