

**EVICTION DRIVE**  
**4 forest dept**  
**staffers hurt**  
**in attack**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,  
Ctg

Four officials and staffers of the Forest Department were injured in an attack by locals following an eviction drive on forest land in Fatikchhari upazila of Chattogram yesterday morning.

Assistant Conservator Khan Abrarul Rahman, Forest Ranger Bacchu Mia, Forest Guard Khondoker Mahfuz Ali, and excavator driver Biplob were admitted to CMCH, officials said.

The incident took place around 10:30am on reserved forest land at Dhuillachhara in the Narayanhat range under the upazila.

Angry locals also blocked the Chatogram-Khagrachhari regional highway for about an hour.

Divisional Forest Officer Shofiqul Islam of the Chatogram North Forest Division said a group of occupants, led by Shah Alam Noimi and Harun Master, had illegally cut hills and built structures in the name of a madrasa on the reserved forest land.

A Forest Department team carried out an eviction drive to dismantle them.

While returning from the site, the team was attacked by armed locals after a rumour was spread through loudspeakers that a mosque was being demolished, he added.

Forest officials fled the scene, but four members were trapped and beaten by the attackers, sources said.

After about an hour of their blockade, a joint team of the Bangladesh Army and police persuaded them to remove the barricade.

Filing of a case was underway in connection with the incident, the DFO said.

Army personnel, at the department's request, recovered the excavator and other equipment from the spot, he added.



Protesting attacks on minorities, a group of people formed a human chain at Payra Chittar in Jhenaidah town yesterday morning. They also called for immediate arrest of the perpetrators. The event was organised by organisations including the Bangladesh Hindu-Buddhist-Christian Oikya Parishad, Bangladesh Puja Udjapan Parishad, Puja Udjapan Front, and Sanatani Oikya Morcha.

PHOTO: STAR

## Roadwork disrupts classes, puts students at risk

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Road development work in front of Gobardhanpur Government Primary School in Narendrapur village of Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila has been disrupting academic activities and posing health risks to students.

The ongoing road project from Kamalganj upazila to Adampur involves daily construction work, including burning fires to melt pitch, directly in front of the school's main gate. Thick black smoke, dust and ash from the work are spreading across the school premises and entering classrooms, corridors and teachers' rooms.

During visits to the area, pitch-melting operations were seen being carried out during school hours, with smoke billowing into classrooms.

Teachers said students frequently suffer from coughing, eye irritation, breathing difficulties and dizziness, while excessive noise from construction work is also affecting their concentration.

"Many students fall sick during classes. Even after closing doors and windows, smoke and dust still enter the classrooms. This is extremely harmful for young children," said a teacher.

Headteacher AKM Manjur Moul



Chowdhury said all construction equipment had been placed in front of the school, worsening the situation.

"We have informed the upazila education officer and the engineer, but no effective steps have been taken so far," he said.

Parent Mifta Mia described the situation as "inhumane" and demanded the immediate removal of construction materials from the front of the school, calling for urgent measures to ensure a safe learning environment.

Upazila Primary Assistant Education

Officer Soma Bhattacharjee said the issue had been reported to higher authorities for immediate action.

Upazila Engineer Saiful Azam said the space was being used temporarily due to a lack of open areas along the road. He added that the school was reportedly closed earlier and that the project was now nearing completion, expected to finish within a week.

Kamalganj UNO Md Asaduzzaman said the administration was looking into the matter and taking necessary steps.

## Level playing field

FROM PAGE 3

observe processes such as voter registration and appeal procedures.

On the role of law enforcement agencies, Ijabs said electoral violence is a widespread concern in Bangladesh's political culture. He said the mission's legal analysts are examining the balance between maintaining law and order and political neutrality, an issue that will become increasingly relevant as election day approaches.

Asked about the EU EOM's perspective on the banning of the Awami League and its inability to take part in the polls, Ijabs said issues of transitional justice are painful for many countries.

"We are here to look at how to make the current process participatory, credible, and trusted by citizens, rather than focusing on past legal proceedings," he said.

On recent violent protests and killings that have created fear among the public, he said such violence is extremely worrying, as fear may discourage people from turning out to vote.

"We will pay attention to the opportunities for all groups -- including women and ethnic or regional minorities -- to participate in the polls," he said.

He suggested that law enforcement agencies maintain law and order but refrain from involvement in the political process on behalf of any particular group.

"This is a crucial

question we will pay a lot of attention to," he added.

On the role of information and disinformation surrounding the elections, Ijabs said the issue has been debated for years in the European Parliament.

"The problem is that policy regulations always lag behind technological progress," he said, suggesting greater engagement with NGOs and fact-checking organisations to counter disinformation.

He also said governments should maintain direct communication with social media platforms to ensure regulation.

On the role of free media, Ijabs said the EU EOM is concerned that political unrest is endangering media freedom, particularly following the attack on The Daily Star and Prothom Alo office buildings.

Asked if he had any message for voters, he said, "Make an informed choice and do not be afraid to participate."

"Democracy is a learning process. You must take previous decisions into account and learn from mistakes to grow and become fit for these turbulent times."

## PRAYER TIMING

JANUARY 11

Faz Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha

AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:36 7:00

JAMAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:40 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## Educating women key to a kinder

FROM PAGE 3

of Humankind; University of Tokyo President Teruo Fujii received a Doctor of Science; Japan's former First Lady Akie Abe was conferred a Doctor of Humane Letters; UK House of Lords member Janet Annie Royal received a Doctor of Arts for Leadership and Educational Equity; Bangladesh's former Education Minister M Osman Faruk was awarded a Doctor of Science in Educational Development; Japan's former Ambassador to Dhaka Ito Naoki received a Doctor of Arts for the Advancement of Peace; and Prothom Alo Editor and Publisher Matiur Rahman was conferred a Doctor of Creative, Responsible and Courageous Journalism.

Receiving his honorary degree, Matiur Rahman spoke on the indispensability of independent journalism, expressing concern over recent attacks on major

media houses like Prothom Alo and The Daily Star, but remained hopeful.

"When times are difficult, independent journalism must be indispensable. Without freedom of thought, democracy cannot survive. I do not lose hope because young people have not abandoned their hope for a humane and just society," he said.

He added, "I am not accepting this honour only for myself; I am accepting it on behalf of the journalists of Bangladesh who work every day in search of truth, often at personal risk."

Former education minister Dr M Osman Faruk called the passage of the AUW Act, which established it as an independent university free from government intervention, one of his best achievements while in cabinet.

Of the 235 graduates, 152

were from Bangladesh. The class also included students from Afghanistan, India, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Timor-Leste, Vietnam, and Yemen.

AUW Founder Kamal

Ahmad reflected on the university's growth over 18 years, expanding from 127 students to over 2,000 from 22 countries, and emphasised AUW's commitment to educating and professionally placing displaced and refugee women. "Refugee camps are not temporary stations in life. We have students who were born in refugee camps and who go back to visit their parents," he said.

Presiding over the ceremony, AUW Chancellor Cherie Blair reminded graduates that poverty, disease, inequality, and violence will continue to exist in the world, but AUW graduates respond where crises happen.

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