



Parki Beach, once dubbed “Mini Cox’s Bazar” by visitors drawn to its natural beauty, is now a shadow of its former self. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

PARKI BEACH IN CHATTOGRAM

From ‘Mini Cox’s Bazar’ to vanishing shoreline

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

Arafat Hossen once owned Hotel Fultoli, a small establishment at Parki Beach on the Anwara upazila coastline.

In 2019, coastal erosion destroyed his business, about 35 kilometres southeast of Chattogram city. He is among the small business owners displaced by the advancing sea over the past 15 years.

Today, he works as a chef at Hotel Sagarika.

“The erosion turned me from an owner into a worker. It destroyed my livelihood and pushed me into a daily struggle,” he told The Daily Star.

Parki Beach, once dubbed “Mini Cox’s Bazar”, is now a shadow of its former self.

Rows of tamarisk trees, locally known as jhau, once fringed the shoreline, while red crabs scuttled across the wide sandy stretch. That landscape is disappearing fast.

Although the beach stretches for nearly 13 kilometres, tourism and business activity are concentrated in a 2.7-kilometre stretch, which has borne the brunt of erosion.

Over the past 15 years, the Water Development Board estimates that 4.18 lakh square metres of

land in this tourist zone have been submerged.

On average, around 155 metres of shoreline have been lost, with erosion reaching up to 250 metres in the worst-hit sections. At least 250 jhau trees have been damaged or uprooted, according to Forest Department data.

During a recent visit, this correspondent found that the southern stretch, from the public toilet area to Lusai Resort, has largely collapsed into the sea.

Uprooted trees lay scattered along the waterline, while the lone public toilet stood dangerously close to the edge, its protective wall weakened by erosion.

In several areas, the beach has become unsafe for visitors. Red crabs, once a major attraction, are now increasingly rare.

“We visited in 2014 when there were rows of jhau trees and stunning natural beauty,” said Salauddin Raihan, a teacher. “Now it feels unsafe to move around. Several parts have already gone into the sea.”

The economic toll has also been severe.

The beach currently supports around 62 permanent shops, 35 floating vendors and four

resort-restaurants, catering to an estimated 2,000 to 3,000 visitors a day.

But as erosion eats away at access points and usable land, small traders and hospitality workers are coming under growing threat.

Md Riduwan, owner of Bhai Bhai Hotel, has had to relocate his shop three times in the past decade.

“Erosion has severely affected my business. I am now burdened with two loans,” he said.

According to the Parki Beach Businessmen Welfare Association, at least 15 to 18 businessmen have lost their establishments entirely to erosion over the years.

Md Kashem, president of the association, said, “If the government does not take steps soon to protect Parki from severe erosion, we may lose both the beach and our livelihoods.”

Showkat Ibne Shahid, executive engineer of the Water Development Board in Chattogram, said they had submitted a project proposal to protect Parki.

“A meeting was held, and higher officials suggested revisions,” he said. “The proposal will be presented again after incorporating those changes.”

Momtaz gets bail from HC in 3 cases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted ad-interim bail to former MP and singer Momtaz Begum in three cases filed over the killings of two persons and an attempted murder during the July 2024 uprising.

At the same time, the court issued three separate rules asking the state to explain why Momtaz should not be granted permanent bail in the cases filed with Mirpur and Ashulia police stations.

The verdict was delivered by the bench of Justice Md Khairul Alam and Justice AKM Rabiul Hassan after hearing three separate bail petitions filed on behalf of Momtaz.

However, she will not be released from jail despite the HC bail orders, as she is also implicated in three other cases, her lawyer Md Motaheer Hossain Sazu told The Daily Star.

Motaheer and Barrister Sara Hossain, along with Advocate Mosammat Khairun Nesa, represented Momtaz during the hearing, while Deputy Attorney General Nahid Hossain Liza appeared for the state.



BHALUKA IN MYMENSINGH

Fragile bridge puts hundreds at risk



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Hundreds of people from several villages have been using a risky wooden bridge in Mymensingh’s Bhaluka upazila for years.

The bridge was built around 15 years ago over the Neoranjura canal on local initiative. Residents repair it every season, but it has now become highly risky, they said.

The canal on the Angargara-Katlamari road flows through villages, including Katlamari, Panchgaon, Angargara, Dhalua, Dumnighat, Mallickbari, Awliarchar and Dhakatia.

“The wooden bridge shakes and sways. When an auto-rickshaw gets on the bridge, we get scared. We fear that it might collapse at any moment,” said Shahadat Hossain, an auto-rickshaw driver from Dhalua village.

Hossain Vendor of Baliagara village said hundreds of people, including

school and college students, face the risk every day.

The situation becomes more dangerous during the monsoon, when water flow in the canal rises with strong currents, he said.

Locals alleged that political leaders had pledged during different elections to ease their suffering by building a concrete bridge. But there has been no development in this regard.

The remote road is the only route for transporting poultry feed to farms, marketing eggs and chickens produced there, and for the daily movement of workers employed in different factories, he said.

Contacted, Abu Bakar Siddique, upazila engineer of the Local Government Engineering Department in Bhaluka, said they had already visited the site and started preliminary work to construct a concrete bridge there on an urgent basis.

Govt planning a body like Ofcom, FCC

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the guise of journalism to promote fascism over the past 15-17 years. Mahmudur specifically called for the criminal trial of “murderer and instigator” journalists.

The NEC was formed on June 2 with veteran journalist Shafik Rehman as convener and Mahmudur as joint convener. The platform includes editors from several newspapers, such as Naya Diganta, Kaler Kantho, Jugantor, Protdiner Bangladesh, Sangram, New Nation, and Waadaa. The seminar was marked as the council’s inaugural event.

Speakers at the event recounted how the media was gagged during Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s BAKSAL era and Sheikh Hasina’s Awami League regime.

Shafiqul Alam, a council member and editor of Waadaa, said that all but

four government-managed newspapers were shut down on June 16, 1975, to suppress news of 1.5 million deaths during the 1974 “man-made” famine.

Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) Director General Faruk Wasif compared fascism to a “pathorkuchi” plant that can easily regenerate.

Several speakers also strongly criticised the Editors’ Council (Sampadak Parishad), labelling it an “elitist organisation”.

Mokarram Hossain, editor of The New Nation, expressed hope that NEC representatives would now receive the same regular access to the head of state and ministers as the Editors’ Council enjoys.

Elaborating on the proposed media commission, the minister

suggested it should be led by a former chief justice, taking cues from the previous Press Commission report headed by former prime minister Ataur Rahman Khan. He proposed that the commission could include representatives from the information and law ministries, the NEC, various journalist trade unions, and the Jatiya Press Club.

Calling for media unity to facilitate this process, the minister noted that while journalists naturally hold different philosophies and compete ideologically, they must unite for the prosperity of the country and humanity.

In response to the minister’s call for unity, Mahmudur set a strict condition in his closing

remarks.

“We also want unity, but there is a precondition. Those who assisted in establishing fascism must go through self-purification. Furthermore, there is no scope to include those involved in murders or those who justified the July massacre. They must face criminal trials.”

Jugantor Editor Abdul Hye Sikder moderated the seminar. Other speakers included Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists (BFUJ) President Obaidur Rahman Shahin, Naya Diganta Editor Salahuddin Babar, and Dhaka Union of Journalists (DUJ) President Shahidul Islam, along with editors and journalist leaders from various districts.

Take strict action

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The programme ended with a procession from Shahbagh to Matsya Bhaban, Jatiya Press Club, and Paltan.

In his speech, Porwar said, “We respect India’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity. Likewise, India should also show equal respect for Bangladesh’s independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity.”

He alleged that border killings, torture, and illegal push-ins continue unabated. He also described attempts to push people into Bangladesh under the pretext of citizenship verification and allegations of torture at the border as violations of international law and human rights.

Porwar said people of Bangladesh remain united in protecting the country’s borders, independence, and sovereignty and described the stance of people in border areas as “a courageous resistance”.

He urged the

government to take stronger steps to address border killings, push-ins, and issues related to sovereignty.

He also called for relations with India to be based on equality in areas such as water sharing, border management, and trade.

Hamidur Rahman Azad said one of the key aspirations of the July uprising was to stop border killings, but the situation has not improved.

He claimed that 19 Bangladeshis were killed and 41 others injured in border shootings over the last three months.

He said a parliamentary discussion on border issues was postponed, which he said runs contrary to public expectations.

He also announced the continuation of the movement against border killings and push-ins.

NCP leader Nasiruddin Patwary also demanded an immediate end to border killings, firing incidents, torture, and push-ins.

Search

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“Some of you may have thought the government was not sincere. But the government sent letters seeking the formation of the search committee. We did not receive the necessary cooperation until yesterday,” he added.

He said the search committee will now be formed, followed by the reconstitution of the ACC.

Earlier, independent MP Rumeen Farhana criticised the government for not ratifying the ACC ordinance, which was passed by the interim government.

In Bangladesh, the two professions most associated with corruption are politics and bureaucracy. Politicians top the list, followed by civil servants, she said.

Rumeen said Bangladesh had witnessed major corruption scandals over the years, including irregularities in banking, mega projects, recruitment, promotions and public procurement.

“After August 5, we expected the ACC to be transformed from a toothless tiger into a strong institution in the era of ‘New Bangladesh,’” she said.

Islami Bank’s new head reassures

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the bank efficiently. Hopefully, you will soon see a balanced and independent board,” said Zahir, an executive director at Bangladesh Bank.

He is serving as a one-member board temporarily to ensure uninterrupted operations during the transition period.

On Sunday night, BB dissolved the entire board of directors of Islami Bank amid massive deposit withdrawals, protests and political controversy triggered by the appointment of Md Khurshid Alam, a former deputy governor of the BB, as its chairman.

“This is an initial victory,” said Nur Nabi Manik, representative of the Conscious Customers Forum, at a briefing yesterday.

The forum has been staging protests since June 1 against Khurshid’s appointment, which eventually contributed to severe liquidity stress at the bank.

Manik presented a seven-point demand, including the immediate formation of a full-fledged board comprising honest, competent and professional individuals through consultation and reinstating Md Omar Faruk as the managing director.

He also demanded that shares allegedly taken forcibly from previous owners be returned.

The protesters will submit a memorandum about their seven-point demand to the BB governor today.

Zahir, however, said Faruk cannot be reinstated as he had already resigned.

“As his resignation has been accepted, there is no

scope for bringing him back,” he said.

Meanwhile, large crowds of customers were again seen at various branches yesterday, although Acting MD Md Altaf Hossain said withdrawal pressure had eased somewhat compared with previous days.

To help the bank meet withdrawal demands, BB yesterday provided an additional Tk 2,500 crore in liquidity support, which was not exhausted entirely.

He expressed hope that customers who had withdrawn deposits out of panic would return, noting that account closures at a major branch had fallen by around 75 per cent, indicating a gradual recovery in confidence.

The bank has instructed its branches to reactivate certain deposit accounts that were closed and encashed before maturity and to encourage account holders to resume banking transactions in a bid to strengthen cash flow and restore normal banking operations.

In an internal circular issued on Monday, the bank said many customers had become inactive due to the recent situation surrounding the bank, resulting in the closure or dormancy of a number of MTDR (Mudaraba Term Deposit Receipt), MSB, MMPDS and MSS accounts.

Customers whose MTDR, MSB, MMPDS and MSS accounts were closed between June 1 and June 15 will be allowed to reopen those accounts within the next seven working days upon application.

Once reactivated, the accounts will enjoy all regular operational facilities.

The bank has directed all divisions, zones and branches to take immediate steps to contact affected customers through mobile phones and other available means and encourage them to resume transactions.

Earlier yesterday, protesters under the banner of the Conscious Customers Forum held a press conference, describing the central bank’s decision to remove the board as an “initial victory”.

The forum has been demonstrating against the appointment of Islami Bank’s former chairman since June 1. The protests eventually contributed to severe liquidity stress at the bank. Meanwhile, the Association of Bankers, Bangladesh (ABB) welcomed the BB decision to dissolve the Islami board and facilitate a fresh start for the institution.

In a statement yesterday, ABB Chairman Mashrur Arefin described the move as timely and prudent.

“As the Islami Bank issue had acquired political overtones and given the bank’s systemic importance, ABB expressed its concerns to the governor on June 10.”

The situation was no longer confined to a single institution, and its impact was being felt across the banking sector, it said.

“We believe the decision taken by the central bank is commendable and hope it will restore stability and rebuild the confidence of depositors, investors and other stakeholders.”

ABB said it expects significant progress in governance, accountability, reducing political influence in banking and the recovery of defaulted loans.

Football’s flow

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“I was obviously watching almost all of the games up until today. I think every time going to commercials is not really something that I like,” added the Liverpool defender.

Van Dijk’s concerns echo those of his former club manager Jurgen Klopp. The German master tactician had launched a far more scathing attack, accusing “executives in air-conditioned offices of holding the game hostage” while speaking to German television channel ZDF.

Stripping away the corporate side of things, US women’s national team manager Emma Hayes focused purely on the psychological impact, branding them “momentum breaks” that are only welcomed by teams chasing a game.

On a similar note, former Spain midfielder and World Cup winner Juan Mata suggested players universally prefer matches to flow uninterrupted. “When you’re losing, you want to score, and when you’re winning you want to keep the ball. I think they break the momentum,” Mata told ITV Sport.

Yet, the policy does not lack defenders. Spain coach Luis de la Fuente remains highly supportive of the measure, arguing that player welfare must remain paramount. “In my opinion, the best thing to do is to drink lots of water,” De la Fuente said. “Take a break, let them breathe for a few seconds.”

But where De la Fuente sees a rest, others see an opportunity. US coach Mauricio Pochettino turned a simple water stop into a high-tech touchline seminar during his side’s 4-1 win over Paraguay, deploying a laptop in full force to

deliver instructions. Beyond the debate, the breaks have already influenced matches.

Brazil provided perhaps the clearest example. Trailing Morocco 1-0, coach Carlo Ancelotti used a hydration break to reorganise his side and deliver fresh instructions. Within minutes of the restart, Vinicius Junior had equalised. “You can explain a problem to the players,” Ancelotti said afterwards. “You can make a tactical adjustment that can be very good.”

Canada also equalised shortly after a second-half cooling break against Bosnia and Herzegovina, while Scotland and Australia both scored decisive goals soon after play resumed in their opening matches.

Others have found themselves on the wrong side of the interruptions. Debutants Curacao matched Germany before such a break in the first half, only to concede three more soon after and eventually losing 7-1. Czechia lost momentum against South Korea following a stoppage, while the Netherlands surrendered a lead against Japan after the second-half hydration break.

Whether viewed as hydration breaks, cooling breaks or, as Hayes calls them, momentum breaks, the traditional, uninterrupted flow of World Cup football is facing a profound existential threat.

And it is no longer just the water bottles causing the friction. The expanding use of lengthy Video Assistant Referee (VAR) reviews, often stretching several minutes at key match-defining moments, has added another heavy layer of interruption.

Will this compounding slowdown change the sport for good, or for the better?

Relocate 4 bus

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The premier also instructed the authorities to quickly relocate scattered bus counters to designated locations, the deputy press secretary said.

Tarique also reviewed measures to modernise Dhaka’s traffic management, including the installation of AI-powered cameras, and expressed satisfaction over the benefits already achieved from their deployment,

Shiplu said.

He sought updates on the overall progress of traffic management initiatives.

The meeting also discussed the removal of old and unfit vehicles from Dhaka’s roads, and the prime minister issued a number of directives in this regard.

This was his third meeting on Dhaka’s traffic congestion and traffic management.