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Forest Near Kuakata Beach

Trees on 420 acres washed away in a decade

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Trunks of dead trees bear the testimony to the level of destruction of forest caused by tidal surge in Kuakata. PHOTO: STAR

Trees on 420 acres of forest land near Kuakata sea beach have been totally washed away under the impact of tidal surges from the Bay during the last one decade, making the area highly vulnerable during natural disasters like cyclones, floods and tidal surges.

In 1965, the forest department planted different species of trees including kewra and koroi in Char Dhulashar area on the sea beach, about five kilometres in the east of Kuakata, Kalapara upazila forest office sources said.

Others mangrove species of trees like chaila grew naturally there.

By 1980 the area turned into a deep forest, serving as habitat of many species of wildlife. A large grassy land was also created beside the forest and thousands of domestic animals like buffalos and cows from nearby places were brought there for grazing.

But after 2000 the forest started disappearing, as following rise of seabed in the coastal region tidal surges grew more and more intense, affecting the forest especially during high tides, said locals.

During a recent visit to the area, this correspondent saw only some roots of trees in the forestland that now gives the look of barren sandy land.

Ansar Mia, 75, a local resident, said earlier the forest protected them from different natural disasters.

“We were able to save our lives during devastating cyclones in 1970, 1980 and 1991 as the forest worked as safeguard for us. But super cyclones Sidr in 2007 and Aila in 2009 badly damaged our livelihood and assets as the forest disappeared,” he said.

“We felt safe when the forest was alive but now we are feeling helpless. Local forest department did not take proper care to save the forestland,” said Abdul Majid, a local fisherman.

Md Eaquab Ali, Kalapara upazila forest officer, said, “It was impossible to fight against tidal surges from the Bay and consequent erosion that washed away the trees in the forestland. If the place is silted again we will try to create forest there again.”

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