

# Sea devours huge Kuakata forestland

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In recent years, forestland in Kuakata beach area, including the coconut garden, tamarisk garden, Palm trees and vast areas of Kuakata Jatiya Udyan, have been continuously disappearing due to erosion by the sea.

About 1,150 acres of forestland in the 18 kilometre beach area had been washed away in last 10 years.

In the dry season, students from different schools, colleges and universities across the county come to Kuakata beach for research work or to enjoy study tour.

Besides, a good number of Hindu devotees come here to celebrate Rash Purnima in November every year.

After the government declared Kuakata as a 'Tourist spot' in 1998, many investors have started investing in the tourist industry.

Ruman Imtiaz Tushar, managing director of Kuakata Tourist Centre, said investors are worried over their healthy investments as erosion has taken a serious turn in recent years.

Many eye-soothing spots are disappearing faster due to natural disasters like cyclone, storms and floods, he said, adding, but no steps have been taken to protect the beach from erosion.

Kuakata municipality Mayor Abdul Bareq Mollah said the government is taking many development projects, including construction of watch tower, stadium, airport and circuit house, but noth-

ing to protect the beach from erosion.

If such a situation continues all the development works will go in vain, the mayor added.

According to Patuakhali forest department, about 2,166 acres of fresh land were turned into a forest since 2010 to make the beach more attractive. Of them, nearly 1,135 acres have been washed away by the Bay and the rest may be eroded anytime.

On an average, over 100 acres of forestland are washed away every year while nearly 75,000 trees of different species are uprooted.

Patuakhali Divisional Forest Officer Ajit Kumar Rudhro said vast tracts of forestland in Kuakata zero point, Kavar Char, Gongamoti, Jatiya Udyan, Lembur Char and Khajura are reducing day by day due to continuous erosion.

They have sent several letters to Water Development Board (WDB) authorities to take steps in this regard, he added.

During a visit in 2016, Water Resource Minister Anisul Islam Mahmud said steps will be taken to protect the beach, but nothing has been done yet.

WDB Executive Engineer Abul Khayer said a study was done in 'Karalla Model' earlier but a fresh study in 'Home Model' is ongoing now.

After completion of the study they will submit the report to the ministry concerned, he said.