

Migratory birds in Hakaluki Haor reduce drastically

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The number of migratory birds in Hakaluki Haor fell drastically this year.

About 46,700 birds of different species flocked to the country's biggest natural lake this winter against 1,42,000 last year. The number of species of the birds also declined. These were found during a two-day field survey in the Haor done on February 12-13 by a team under the Coastal and Wetland Biodiversity Management Project (CWBMP) of the Department of Environment.

Hakaluki Haor comprise over 18,000 hectares of water body spread over five upazilas in greater Sylhet. It was declared an

Ecologically Critical Area (ECA) in 2000 to protect its bio-diversity.

Eighteen experts and 28 researchers, divided in five groups, conducted the survey covering the entire Haor, according to CWBMP official Mohammad Shibli. The teams visited all the 20 beels (water bodies) in the Haor.

Shibli told this correspondent that this year they counted only about 46,700 birds-- 9180 of them local and 37,520 migratory-- against 1,49,000 last year. Only 49 species of birds were seen this year, 23 local and 26 migratory, he said.

They include Pintail (locally called Lenja), Common Teal (Patari), Tufted Duck (Bamnia), Ruddy Shelduck (Chokha),

Whistling Duck (Sorali), and Openbill Stork (shamuk khol), Shamukbhanga, Nakta Hansh, Kalo Hash, Piang Hansh, Bali Hansh, Pandamukhi, Kadakhocha, Bhuti Hansh and Pankoudi.

Over 1000 wild ducks (Buno Hansh) each were found in Nagua, Hawa-Banya, Pingla and Porti beels, which are bigger in size.

Shibli said the cause behind the fall in the number include killing of birds by local people, scarce food and noisy fishing by using mechanised boats. Besides, vast patches of the water body dried up earlier this year than last year, which may be another important cause for the decline, he said.

If there is less rainfall in

September-October, many areas dry up early, he said.

Migratory birds are gradually losing their natural sanctuaries because of fishing, he said.

Moreover, use of 'poison traps' for bird hunting in the Haor is also another threat to migratory birds.

The environment experts appealed to the authorities to keep at least 10 beels in the Haor free from leasing to fishermen so that they can be kept as undisturbed natural sanctuaries.

This will also increase fish resources, the main food of aquatic birds.

Bird hunting should also be strictly prohibited, he said.



A human chain, organised by Nabiganj-Habiganj Students Unity in Sylhet, was formed in front of the Shaheed Minar in the city on Thursday demanding pipeline gas supply in Nabiganj upazila from Bibiyana gas field.

PHOTO: STAR

Give indigenous 'laws' in CHT hills a legal cover

Shantu Larma tells workshop in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Traditional and customary 'laws' followed by indigenous people in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) should be given some sort of legal cover to ensure their access to justice, CHT Regional Council Chairman Jyotirindriya Bodhipriyo Larma alias Santu Larma has said.

Laws in the hill, inhabited by indigenous people of different cultures and traditions, should be in conformity with the realities, he said while addressing a seminar titled "Personal and Family Laws of Indigenous Peoples of CHT", held at the RHDC auditorium here on Thursday.

It was organised by Kapo Seba Sangha (KSS) and Manusher Jonno, two NGOs.

The workshop marked launching of a programme by the two NGOs to put in black and white all

traditional and customary laws of indigenous people in the hills.

The government should realise the reality and come forward to preserve these conventions and traditional practices in the interest of maintaining peace and harmony, Santu Larma said.

On woman's rights, he said their rights are often violated in a male dominated society. "Personally, I believe in equality of man and woman in the eye of law".

Woman enjoy one forth share of paternal properties in Bandarban, but they are deprived in Rangamati and Khagrachhari, he mentioned.

With Chakma Circle Chief Raja Devashish Roy in the chair, the workshop was addressed by representatives of all the 11 ethnic communities in CHT, civil society members and political leaders.

Other speakers suggested that the issue should be discussed at a joint meeting of the three Hill District Councils (HDCs) and the

CHT Regional Council (CHTRC).

The seminar also discussed the findings of a of one-year study on the traditional and customary laws. Advocate Protim Roy Pampu, a member of three-member research team which conducted the study, presented the keynote paper in this regard.

Rangamati Hill District Council Chairman Dr maniklal Dewan said the Ministry of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs and the CHT Regional Council can play a vital role to protect rights of indigenous people.

The seminar was addressed by, among others, former chairman of Rangamati local government council Goutam Dewan, Nirmolendu Tripura, Ching Keu Roaza, Rangamati Sadar Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md. Mohiuddin, Manusher Jonno Programme Manager Wasiur Rahman Tanmoy and Tuku Talukder, Co-ordinator of Bangladesh chapter of HIMAWANTI.

2 listed terrors arrested in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Listed terrors and wanted criminals Sujan Mridha alias Shadin, 24, of Patuakhali town and Safiqur Rahman alias Shimul of Baufal upazila were arrested by Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) from Jainkathi area of the town on Wednesday, police said yesterday.

Alleged drug lord Sujan Mridha, nephew of former pourasabha chairman Sultan Ahmed Mridha, was arrested in a raid on his house. Police said he led a gang and was also involved in various other crimes including toll collection. He led the gang after its ringleader Uzzal was killed in a crossfire in February last year. He faces four criminals cases lodged with the Sadar thana.

Shimul, an alleged cadre of ruling BNP in Baufal upazila town, faces five cases, four of them lodged with Baufal thana. They are being interrogated, police said.

The two listed criminals were involved in various crimes and anti-social activities in their areas, police said.

FERTILISER, POWER CRISES IN SATKHIRA Boro yield may fall short of target

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The official boro cultivation target may not be achieved this year in the district due to fertiliser and power crises as well as lack of irrigation, feared paddy farmers.

The Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE), Satkhira has fixed a target to cultivate boro on 55,070 hectares of land in the district this season.

As of February 23, farmers have transplanted boro saplings on 40,000 hectares of land.

The DAE officials said, they office had sought 9,550 metric tons of fertiliser for the district during the current Boro season.

But only 4,586 metric tons of fertiliser has been supplied so far, the DAE office sources said.

Now each bag containing 50 kg of urea is being sold at Tk 400 in stead of government fixed

price of Tk. 300.

Abdur Rahim of Katia, a leader of the district Fertiliser Dealers' Association said, acute scarcity of fertiliser persists in the district because of lesser supply than the demand. He denied market manipulation by a section of dealers.

When contacted, Satkhira Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md Ilias said, the situation has been created due to transport problem resulting in delay in carrying fertiliser from the Chittagong command area.

However, he said, the situation will improve within three or four days.

The DC disclosed that monitoring cells have been formed at district and upazila levels to keep vigilance over the situation. "Three dealers were arrested for realising exorbitant prices from farmers," he said.

Bangladesh now a dysfunctional state, says Tofail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Bangladesh has become a dysfunctional state as corruption and acute crisis of power and fertiliser have crippled the industrial and agricultural sectors, Awami League (AL) Presidium member Tofail Ahmed has said.

He was addressing a preparatory conference of the divisional councillors of 14-party Alliance here on Thursday.

The conference was organised to make the Barisal divisional grand rally scheduled to be held on March 6 a success.

Tofail said the men of 'Hawa Bhavan' are unable to see any crisis and poverty because they are earning cores of taka.

Presided by City AL convenor and Barisal divisional co-ordinator of 14-party Alliance Advocate Shawkat Hossain

Hiron, the gathering was participated by about 800 councillors.

In his address, Workers' Party leader Rashed Khan Menon said the Alliance government is trying to hold a pre-stage election which will not be recognised by people and participated by opposition.

Delwar Hossain and Mahbubur Rahman, two opposition lawmakers including Dharendra Devnath Shamvu, ASM Firoz, Manirul Islam Moni and former lawmakers, Jahangir Kabir Nanak, chairman of Awami Jubo League, Md Mohsin, JSD central vice president, Advocate Yusuf Hossain Humana, Enayet Pir Khan, Majibur Rahman, Abdul Hye Mahmub, Dr Mokhlesur Rahman, Prof Abdus Sattar, Master Nurul Islam and other 14-party Alliance leaders addressed the gathering.

Timber traders call 48-hr hartal in 2 hill dists

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Timber traders in Rangamati and Khagrachhari yesterday called a 48-hour hartal on Sunday and Monday in the two hill districts to press their 10-point demand including resumption of issuance of transit permit to take timber to other districts from the hills.

They are also demanding removal of Chief Conservators of Forests of Rangamati and Khagrachhari Forest Circles, according to our correspondents.

Leaders of timber traders in the two districts made the hartal call at press conferences held in Rangamati and Khagrachhari.

The leaders said about two lakh families involved in timber extraction, processing, trading and carrying are unemployed for about a year and half following suspension of transit pass (TP) for timbers extracted from private lands.

The people involved in timber trade recently formed associations styled Sadharon O Jalani Kath Baboshayee Sangram Parishad (KBSP) in the two hill districts to press their demand.

The KBSP leaders claimed at the press conferences that suspension of TP violates the Chittagong Hill Tracts Forest Transit Roles 1973.

Private tree planters also suffering for long due to the suspension, they said. "We are placing our demands to resume the transit of timbers as per rule since the suspension come to enforcement but the concern minister and top forest officials did not pay any heed to our legitimated demands. Rather, they are delaying to hear us cordially", told the conference.

"As result, the traders and numerous number of private planters of this

AL-backed panel sweeps Satkhira Bar polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Awami League (AL) backed panel swept the Satkhira Bar Association polls held yesterday. It bagged eight posts including those of the president and the general secretary (GS) of the association.

The panel backed by the ruling four-party alliance got seen posts including that of a vice-president.

Tapan Kumar Chakraborty and Shah Alam have been elected president and general secretary of the bar association, sources said.

Jhalakathi SP transferred

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Jhalakathi Police Superintendent Mahfuzul Islam has been transferred to Chapainawabganj.

He will be replaced by Luthfar Rahman, Additional Police Superintendent in Comilla.

Sources at Barisal Range DIG office said this is a routine transfer but other sources claimed that he was transferred for alleged failure in maintaining law and order in the district and lax police investigation of the judges murder cases.

10X4

7X3