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Fishing the fishy way

Influential people poach 'ecologically critical' Tanguar Haor

By Shehab Ahmed

Some influential people are trying to manipulate leasing of the Tanguar Haor in Tahirpur, Sunamganj, for fishing ignoring a government directive.

The government has listed the wetland as one of the four Ecologically Critical Areas (ECA) in the country, prohibiting unsustainable fishing and hunting to maintain bio-diversity, sources concerned said.

Home to as many as 140 rare species including the Pallas's fishing eagle, a globally endangered bird, and 17 critically endangered fishes, the 9725-hectare wetland supports the last surviving swamp forest in the country. The forest consists of Hjal, Karach, Gunjikata and Chhonggrass or reeds.

It sustains a wide variety of fish and aquatic life including many exotic species and waterfowl, seasonally harbouring at least 60,000 of them apart from the resident birds. A large flock of waterfowl visits the wetland every year.

Last year, a Blacknet Stork, a very rare species, was wounded by fishermen farming the wetland. A few hundred Blacknets survive in Tibet only. The migratory birds from the Himalayas use the wetland as a transit point during their journey to and from the mountains.

Following mounting concern about the indiscriminate fishing and hunting, the government decided to include the haor to the list of the ECAs for a better wetland management policy, terminating a lease for

fisheries last December.

The National Conservation Strategy (NCS) of the Ministry of Environment and Forests has already recommended the haor be declared a Ramsar site in compliance with a declaration adopted at Ramsar, Iran. Bangladesh is a signatory to the declaration that calls for preserving the world's wetlands and letting the nature survive in pristine condition under proper management.

The NCS recommendations follow a detailed study by six-



Palla's eagle, now an endangered species worldwide.

man expert team including a wetland conservation specialist from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Wim Giesen. The other experts - SMA Rashid, AKM Nuruzzaman Khan, Anisuzzaman Khan, Syed Shafique Ahmed and Abu Naser Khan from Bangladesh - studied the lake's management, fishery, and birds, socio-economic and land tenure aspects.

The report identified the decline of fisheries production due to over-fishing, depletion of natural resources like reed lands and swamp forest which threatened the birds like Pallas's eagle, decline in the numbers of migratory birds and against such backdrop a growing threat of conflict between the local community and the leaseholder of fisheries over resources as pressing issues of Tanguar Haor.

The study prepared with the help of the satellite imageries drew a sustainable management plan for the ecosystem of the haor and its natural resources. Considering the close relation between an estimated 25,000 people living around 46 villages, they suggested an integrated conservation and management plan involving the community without leasing the lake to any individuals or groups who usually hire seasonal labour from outside.

After termination of a lease recently, a local influential having connections with high-ups in Dhaka had been trying to take lease of the wetland,

sources from the area reported.

But the environment and forests ministry officials said they have already asked the relevant ministries, departments, the local district administration and the Directorate of Fisheries to abide by the ECA guidelines regarding the haor.

Anisuzzaman Khan, one of the experts from the IUCN, says the wetland should be declared a Ramsar to preserve it for future generations. He said the unique lake, rich in bio-diversity, fits into the criteria set for declaring the wetland a Ramsar site. He also said its resources could be used on a sustainable basis with community participation.

According to an environment and forests ministry gazette notification on April 1999, three haors have been declared as ECA. Besides the Tanguar Haor, others are the Hakuluki Haor in Maulvibazar and Sylhet and Marjat Haor in Kaliganj, Jhenaidah.

The notification prohibits destruction or felling of natural forest and trees, hunting of wildlife and trapping and collection of shells, coral, turtle and other wildlife. It also bans all activities that may destroy the habitat of wildlife and plants and alter or change the natural quality of the land and water. Besides, setting up of industries or organisations that may pollute the soil, water, air and sound and any act that may harm the fish and other aquatic life, water, and air have also been banned in those wetlands.



Counter campaign

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses a public rally at Postagola in the city yesterday. —PID photo

Let's talk over tea

Hasina's public meeting call to Khaleda

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday invited Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Khaleda Zia to the Secretariat during their planned sit-in to resolve all disputes through discussion, reports UNB.

"Come inside the Secretariat instead of suffering on the street under scorching heat of the sun, have a cup of tea, and resolve all problems through talks," she said while addressing a huge public meeting at Alam Market in the city's Postagola area.

The BNP-led opposition parties have planned to stage the sit-in outside Bangladesh Secretariat on September 12 to protest, what they called the government move to provide corridor to India in the name of transshipment.

The Prime Minister suggested that the opposition leader build up movement on public issues instead of loitering in want of issues.

"Do movement on public issues, on socio-economic issues, we will accept all your demands. Do movement with issues that will benefit the people. Otherwise, people would not be involved in the movement."

Hasina said the only issue of the opposition party is to protect the killers of Bangabandhu. Post-75 governments tried to save the killers by introducing Indemnity Ordinance, and Gen-

eral Zia rehabilitated the killers by giving them jobs, she said.

The Prime Minister said the people will not take part in this movement, which is targeted to save the killers as they want justice and rule of law.

The meeting, presided over by Habibur Rahman Mollah LGRD and Cooperatives Minister Zillur Rahman, Amir Hosain, Abdul Jalil and Mayor Mohammad Hanif.

The Prime Minister felt that the opposition leader had lost her patience and "is using indecent words against the government because they have lost the chance for plundering public money that did during their rule."

She alleged that BNP had plundered people's money and was always busy in amassing wealth. "Now by not getting that chance they have become restless."

Hasina accused the opposition leader of spreading falsehood against her government and said, "she (Begum Zia) has mastered the art of spreading lies and mentioned opposition leader's allegation about CHT and Ganges water sharing treaty."

All the allegations of the opposition leader proved false, and the CHT has not become part of India, and water is

coming through the Ganges as per the accord, Hasina said adding not even "uludhani" is being heard in the mosques as apprehended by the opposition leader.

"The Prime Minister said, 'the opposition leader is trying to catch one issue after another and spreading lies against the government, but the people do not accept lies and bluffs, movement can not be forged through bluff.'"

Refuting the allegation of opposition leader that for one family crores of taka is being spent, the Prime Minister said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman did not leave anything for his descendants rather he sacrificed his life for the people of Bangladesh.

She said Road No 32 house of Bangabandhu has been turned into a museum and his village home at Tungipara has also been given for building a mausoleum.

Regarding traffic jam, she said members of the armed forces have extended help in this regard and added that they always stand beside the people at the time of need.

This government is involving the members of the armed forces in the welfare of the people, but in the past the armed forces were used for capturing and consolidating power.

CID to question six more UCBL directors

By Staff Correspondent

The CID is likely to interrogate six more directors and some other staff of the United Commercial Bank Limited (UCBL) on Sunday at its Motijheel office in connection with the vandalism at the bank's board room on August 26, a CID official said.

Five directors and a number of staff of UCBL have so far been questioned. Investigators also interrogated Akteruzzaman Chowdhury Babu, a former director of the bank and an Awami League leader, at his Motijheel office on Tuesday.

Babu allegedly stormed the UCBL boardroom with about 50 people while a meeting of the board of directors was going on in the afternoon of August 26. It has also been alleged that Babu forced Zafar Ahmed Chowdhury, who was chairman of the bank when the meeting had started, and the directors at gunpoint to resign and declared himself the chairman of the bank.

Difficult state at DU dormitory

A big chunk of concrete fell from the ceiling of a room at Jagannath Hall of Dhaka University with a big bang yesterday, creating panic among the residents of the dormitory, reports UNB.

Hall sources said the concrete materials fell on the table at room number 118 of Dr Govinda Chandra Dev Bhaban when its inmate Suman Talukder, a first year student of Physics Department, was sleeping at noon. However, he escaped unhurt.

Some 20 students, including Suman, residing in the hall at that time came out of their rooms.

They checked and found some 20 rooms and some corridors through which rainwater leaked from the rooftop.

The students said that the hall authorities temporarily repaired the worn parts of the hall time and again after the October 15 incident in 1985. Thirty-nine students were killed in ceiling collapse while watching TV drama at night.

The condition of Dr Jotirmoy Guh Thakurata Bhaban of the hall was stated to be similar to that of Dr Govinda Chandra Dev Bhaban.

However, the hall Provost Dr Durgadas Bhattacharya could not be contacted by phone.

Chemical poisoning concerns WHO chiefs

By Staff Correspondent

The World Health Organisation (WHO) Regional Committee for South-East Asia concluded its 52nd session here yesterday with a call to member states to intensify time bound action on priority health issues affecting the region.

The committee recognised the growing incidence of morbidity and mortality from chemical poisoning in some countries of the region.

It expressed concern at the high content of arsenic in groundwater and other toxic

chemicals in drinking water in some countries.

Calling for plans of action for establishment of poison information and treatment centres, the Regional Committee urged the affected member countries to undertake epidemiological studies and activities related to the prevention and management of arsenic toxicity.

The member states should also formulate strategies and policies for educating affected communities to recognise the

dangers of contaminated water.

The committee also urged the member countries to prioritise malaria control programmes recognising the burden of the disease in the region and economic consequences of poor.

Earlier on Wednesday, the committee also adopted a regional action plan against tobacco and HIV/AIDS.

It called for intensification of HIV/AIDS surveillance and adopting regional policy framework for tobacco control.

A number of recommendations were finalised yesterday in this regard.

The four-day Regional Committee session was participated by representatives from all 11 member states.

The session, organised by the WHO, also decided that in 2000, technical discussions would be held on the subjects of equity in access to public health and healthy settings.

It was decided that the 53rd session of the committee would be held in New Delhi in September 2000.

Ruling party lawmakers told to prepare for UZ polls

Ruling party MPs were yesterday advised to prepare Awami League for upazila elections and not to worry about opposition movement, reports UNB.

Sources said the directive came at a closed-door meeting of AL Parliamentary Party at Sangsad Bhaban yesterday morning ahead of prorogation of the Parliament session.

Leader of the House and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided.

"We have been asked to face the movement politically by making people aware of opposition propaganda," a ruling party MP said quoting the directive from party chief Hasina.

He said the AL President told her party legislators that the upazila elections might be held in November and political reply to the opposition would help strengthen their party.

The ruling party parliamentarian informed that the MPs were further directed by the Prime Minister to ask all parliamentarians not to get involved in

any violent incident with the opposition under any circumstances.

A major issue raised in the meeting was contradiction between local administration and elected representatives. Many local bureaucrats don't like to listen to the MPs, they complained.

As the hitch may cause further troubles, the lawmakers urged the Prime Minister to appoint a minister or an adviser to deal with the matter for the sake of development activities across the country.

However, the ministers themselves were blamed by the MPs for citing lack of funds as an excuse if any parliamentarian went to them with any development proposal.

"The ministers always say there is a fund constraint... If I go to any of the ministers with any proposal, they say bring funds, the project will be implemented in your area," Shahjahan Khan MP was learnt to have alleged.

Among them, Education

Minister ASHK Sadique reportedly came under attack from an MP that he never likes to show patience to any party colleague, who is also an elected representative.

"As soon as the Education Minister sees an MP, he puts on a sullen face as if the parliamentarian were unwanted. Even he doesn't give reply to some," alleged Ukil Abdus Sattar Bhuiyan.

Sources close to the meeting said some other MPs supported the AL legislators from Brahmanbaria. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina assured that she would look into it.

Abdul Latif Siddiqui, brother of suspended Awami League leader Abdul Kader Siddiqui, also addressed the meeting. But he didn't say anything about the tribulations of his brother.

Referring to death of M Mosharrar Hossain MP of Faridpur, Latif Siddiqui proposed to raise a fund for the families of those members who will fall in trouble after their demise.

BNP demands Nasim's departure

By Staff Correspondent

BNP has demanded resignation of Home Minister Mohammed Nasim for making 'audacious' remarks about the higher courts.

The demand was made at the party's Standing Committee meeting yesterday, chaired by party chairperson Khaleda Zia.

The meeting, held at the official residence of the leader of the opposition in parliament, said the remarks by a responsible minister on the higher courts are a serious threat to independence of the judiciary.

The party's highest decision-making body in a resolution said the government is doing this to destroy the country's most respected institution.

It said after destroying all democratic, administrative and educational institutions the government is now interfering with the judiciary.

On approval of new anti-terrorism law by the Cabinet, BNP said the government is conspiring to step up repression on the Opposition to suppress its political opponents.

The new "black" law is definitely a pre-planned conspiracy to destroy democracy and curb fundamental rights of political activists. The ruling party had introduced similar "black" law immediately after the independence.

The meeting strongly condemned "the government decision to provide corridor facility to India on the pretext of giving transshipment" and said the decision taken bypassing the people and the parliament is suicidal and a betrayal to the nation.

The Standing Committee called upon the people of all walks of life to join Sunday's sit-in demonstration in front of the Secretariat to intensify the current movement "to protect the country and its people".

Terminating the sit-in as very significant, it said the puppet government must have to be toppled through a mass upsurge.

Prayer Timings

September 10

Fajr 4:20 5:00

Zuma 12:15 1:20

Asr 4:30 4:45

Maghrib 6:20 6:23

Esha 7:45 8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

PM's UN trip, Dhaka's chances for SC seat and OIC job

By Staff Correspondent

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is leading a 51-member entourage, including nine MPs at the 54th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) which marks the silver jubilee of Bangladesh's membership in the apex world body.

Hasina will visit New York from September 14 to 21 to attend the UNGA session and will deliver her address at the General Assembly session in Bengali on September 20.

The Prime Minister will leave New York for Paris on September 21 where she will receive the prestigious UNESCO peace prize.

Addressing a news conference at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) yesterday, Foreign Minister Abdus Samad Azad informed about the details of the Prime Minister's upcoming foreign tour and replied to several other questions. Foreign secretary Shafi Sami, Director General, UN Affairs Henayuddin Ahmed and Director General of External Affairs Hossain Komol were also present at the news conference.

Asked about the budget for

the proposed foreign trip of the Prime Minister, Samad informed it was prepared in segments and had not been fully computed as yet.

When asked if sufficient efforts have been made to set up an official trip to Washington and to Paris in conjunction with the New York visit, the foreign minister replied that the Bangladesh envoys for the two capitals were making attempts to do so, but has not succeeded as yet. He, however, informed that the Prime Minister during her stay in Paris will hold bilateral meeting with French President Jacques Chirac.

The foreign minister when asked what steps were being taken to back up the bid for Commonwealth Secretary General, replied that Bangladesh was trying to step up its campaign and the missions have now been asked to give full support to the candidate as also to seek support of envoys from Commonwealth states in their resident countries. He, however, agreed with another questioner

that more required to be done.

Questioned about Bangladesh's chances for securing the non-permanent seat in the Security Council, he said "since Cambodia has opted out" and no candidate from ASEAN countries are there till now "our chances of seeking a victory was fairly good."

Said also said that Bangladesh choice of candidature of Speaker Humayun Rashid Chowdhury for OIC Secretary General was "a good one."

Rashid has been a former foreign secretary, President of the UN General Assembly and an envoy to Saudi Arabia and is a "qualified candidate." He, however, said, should the incumbent OIC Secretary General continue, then "it might be difficult."

Asked if the NAM Summit could still be held in Dhaka since there were hardly any infrastructural progress, Samad replied that "things would be completed in time" and definitely the Summit would be held in Dhaka.

Two businessmen murdered

By Staff Correspondent

Two businessmen were killed within a span of two hours at Rupnagar housing in the city's Pallabi area Wednesday night.

The dead were identified as Salauddin Ahmed Arju, 25, son of Ayub Ali, and Lokman Hawlader, 35, son of Sarif Ali, a resident of Rupnagar housing.

Arju, a wood trader of Chittagong reached Rupnagar housing at around 9 pm from Chittagong for collecting money from one Mizanur Rahman. When he reached Road No 16, a gang of miscreants swooped on him. They took him to a under-construction building and beat up him. The gang also severed wrist of his left hand.

Friends of Arju, who resided at the area, hearing the news rushed to the spot and sent him to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital where the duty doctor declared him dead.

A case was lodged with Pallabi thana accusing ten people for their alleged involvement in the killing.

Police arrested five FIR-

named accused yesterday. They are Humayun Kabir, Mahbub Alam, Saiful Huq and Ali Akber.

In another incident, Lokman, a construction material trader was shot dead by some unidentified miscreants at the east end of Road No 5 of the same housing at about 9 pm on Wednesday.

Police and hospital sources said that a gang of 12 hoodlums on board a microbus and two motor-bike appeared at Road No 5. The gang opened several rounds of shots at Lokman.

Lokman received eight bullets on his chest, back abdomen and face at about 11 pm. He was sent to the DMCH where he died at about 11:45 pm.

Hospital sources quoting a brother of the victim said that a gang of local extortionists appeared before him and claimed Tk 50,000 but were refused by him. On Wednesday, they again appeared and shot him.

A case was lodged with Pallabi thana accusing Masud, Alam, Jainal, Sahidul, Sadhu, Azad, Farooq, Ledu, Nijam and

Liakat.

Meanwhile, the body of a businessman, Abdul Jalil, son of Badal Miah, was recovered from a pond at Distillery Road in Sutrapur yesterday morning.

According to hospital sources, Jalil was called out from his Sarafat lane residence at around 9 pm on Wednesday by some local people.

Later his body was recovered at 11 pm yesterday with injuries in his head. Hospital sources quoting the doctors said that he was chopped with a sharp weapon.

Hospital sources quoting the relatives said that Jalil was killed by his rivals as a sequel to incidents of old enmity with them.

The body of the victim was sent to DMCH and later sent to Mitford hospital for autopsy there.

An uncle of the victim, Kalu Miah, lodged a case with Sutrapur thana while police arrested two people — Rana and Sakil — for their alleged involvement with the killing yesterday.

Charge hearing of Jail Killing Case Sept 23

The Dhaka Metropolitan Sessions Judge yesterday shifted the date for charge hearing of the Jail Killing Case on September 23, reports BSS.

Judge Sheikh Rezwana Ali shifted the date after hearing both the sides in the special court near the Dhaka Central Jail.

The court yesterday informed both the sides that a Division Bench of the High Court imposed an injunction on using the confessional statement by former state minister Taher Uddin Thakur till disposal of the legality of framing charge in the case.

A metropolitan magistrate recorded the statement of the former state minister under Section 161 and 164 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPc) during the investigation.

Advocate Sharfuddin Khan Mukul moved a petition for passing an order to allocate a ceiling fan in the prison cell of Taher Uddin Thakur and the court accepted it.

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