

Rare bird spotted in Sundarbans

KHOSRU CHOWDHURY

Mangrove pitta, one of the five Pitta species found in the Indian subcontinent, was recently spotted in the Sundarbans.

One of the most colourful birds of the world, the short-tailed colourful ground-dwelling birds are very secretive in nature and prefer dense, well-shaded foliage. They eat insects by turning up decomposed litters of the mangrove.

In the record book of the birds of the sub-continent, presence of mangrove pitta is unclear. Very few people have ever seen these birds and none had ever photographed them. They birds are, however, commonly available in the forests of Malaysia.

These birds are called nowrangi, meaning of nine hues, in Hindi. In Salim Ali's pictorial guidebook of Indian sub-continent, these birds and mentioned as Barisal pitta but Grimmett mentioned them as man

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PHOTO: KHOSRU CHOWDHURY

A mangrove pitta perched on the branch of a kewra tree at Jantali Khal near the Katka sanctuary office of the Sundarbans.

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Was Powell mission pre-destined to fail?

Column: Perspectives

M Abdul Hafiz

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G7 endorses plan to ease debt crises in emerging markets

Speedy trial courts 'violate SC rule, Constitution'

ZAYADUL AHSAN

The appointment of the magistrates to the speedy trial court has gone against both the Constitution and a Supreme Court verdict, legal experts said.

A section of lawyers are going to challenge the very law, namely the Law and Order Disruption Crimes Act (LODCA), for enforcement of which the trial courts have been formed.

Nine new speedy trial courts have started operating yesterday. More such courts would be set up in all districts within this week.

Legal experts say the law that

has been framed to book criminals caught in the act within 30 days and if not then in 60 days, violates the Constitution's Article 116.

Moreover, questions are being asked about the legality of appointing, controlling and transferring magistrates in such speedy trial courts and in other courts under this law.

The experts also doubt whether the magistrates already burdened with loads of cases could effectively discharge additional responsibilities. As many as four lakh cases are pending with the magistrate courts across the country.

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Directive to check misuse of money during PM's tour inside country

BSS, Dhaka

A number of important decisions were taken yesterday at the directive of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to check misuse of money and time as well as excesses in the formalities during her official tours inside the country.

According to the decisions, erection of any kind of welcome-arches by government, semi-government, autonomous bodies or at the initiative of private organisations has been prohibited during the tours. But if the local people spontaneously come to greet the prime minister, they are not to be obstructed to do so.

To avoid excesses in the name of formalities, presentation of any address of welcome, gift, bouquets and garland and even spraying of flower petals have been prohibited.

However, cautious presentation of one or two flowers can be made and written papers containing local issues and genuine demands of the

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Shazneen's fourth anniversary of death tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fourth death anniversary of Shazneen Tasnim Rahman will be observed tomorrow.

Shazneen, 15, youngest daughter of Latifur Rahman, chairman of Transcom Group, was brutally killed at their Gulshan residence in 1998. She was a student of Scholastica school in the city.

The Shazneen rape and murder case has been included in the gov

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Armed forces to patrol 3 cities from today

NAZRUL ISLAM

The deployment of armed forces and other security agencies starts today in a bid to allay public fears of violence ahead of and during city corporation elections.

This will be the first ever troops deployment for any local government elections in the country.

The Election Commission (EC) has finalised a massive security plan for Dhaka, Rajshahi and Khulna metropolises for the April 25 city polls with the most wanted criminals still at large.

According to the EC plan, almost half the 1,713 polling stations have already been perceived as violence-prone due to large numbers of criminals in the election fray.

Operation of cell phones and plying of five types of motorised vehicles, including motor bike, microbus, pickup van and auto-rickshaw and mechanised boat would be banned on the polls day,

according to the security plan.

A total of 19 companies of the army – 10 for the capital city, five for the port city of Khulna and four for the northern Rajshahi city – are to report to their respective authorities within this evening.

From the next day, they would be divided into groups, each comprising 150 members on average under the supervision of a magistrate, and be deployed at different city points.

"The army would be deployed in aid of the civil administration and stationed for four days till April 26," said an EC official, requesting anonymity.

The troops deployment has seen the expenditure of the election commission up to nearly Tk 1 crore. The government on request of the EC has allocated over Tk 5.89 crore, of which Tk 2.83 would be spent on the security arrangements and on conducting the polls in the three local bodies.

In the capital city, where a large number of candidates facing crimi-

nal charges are running the race and where 278 polling stations have been identified as 'most vulnerable', and 600 as 'vulnerable', the troops would be deployed in 19 groups. There are a total of 1,342 polling centres in Dhaka.

In addition to normal security arrangements, the EC this time has decided to station some 487 groups comprising paramilitary BDR, Armed Police Battalion (APBN) and the police acting as mobile and strike forces in the city. One hundred and twenty groups of the paramilitary BDR, 87 groups of the APBN and 280 groups of the police would patrol the city roads.

Each vulnerable polling station will have 24 security personnel, of them ten policemen and two APBN members and one ansar with arms and 11 ansars with batons. And the number of security personnel to be deployed at non-risky polling stations is 22, said the EC officials.

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Jamal's alleged death in police custody Probe within 5 days ordered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The home ministry yesterday formed a two-member committee to probe into the death of Jamaluddin Fakir, a meritorious student and activist of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), of Kapasia in Gazipur on Thursday morning.

The committee comprising Additional Divisional Commissioner, Dhaka Akram Ali Mridha and Additional Inspector General of Police (AIG), Security Cell of Police Headquarters, Md Delwar Hossain, was asked to submit its report within the next five days.

Jamaluddin, a member of Kapasia unit of the BCL and president of Shaheed Tazuddin Ahmed Smriti Library, was picked up by the police and allegedly tortured to death at the Kapasia Police Station.

According to family members, a team of Kapasia police led by Officer-in-Charge (OC) Gazi Mainuddin went to Jamal's Targaon village in Kapasia at about 1:30am on Wednesday and arrested him for his suspected involvement in a robbery case. Police told his family members that they were taking him

to the police station for 'interrogation'.

They alleged that the police took him to custody on the night and tortured him without filing any case against him. However, the police later filed a case at 10:30am on the following day. According to rules, an arrested person must be produced before the court within 24 hours of their arrest, a procedure which the police did not follow.

The OC did not allow Jamal's mother Ramiza Begum to meet her son and misbehaved with her when she went to the station the following

morning, family members alleged.

Ramiza alleged that police showed Jamal 'arrested' at 10:00am Thursday and did not produce him before the court even after 24 hours of arrest.

After being severely tortured, Jamal fled from the custody and jumped into the adjacent Shitalakhiya river on Friday morning.

But the police chased him down and poked him with bamboo sticks

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Committee unsure of gas reserve

STAR REPORT

The national committee on gas reserve assessment could not come up with a consensus figure of the country's proven gas reserves at its meeting yesterday.

The committee, comprising experts from Petrobangla and the Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET), now plans to put two different figures in its report to be filed to the prime minister, a meeting source said.

It was also decided that more time was required to prepare the report, supposed to be submitted by the end of this month.

"But we are expecting to outline a draft report within the end of this month," said a member of the committee, which is headed by Vice-chancellor of the BUET Nooruddin Ahmed.

The committee members, however, agreed on the benchmark for Bangladesh's gas resources or potentials. The committee maintains that the USGS-Petrobangla 2001 Gas Resource Study is the most credible one.

But the apple of discord in the committee was the proven gas reserve issue, a point that would help the government decide

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