

Heyday for poachers in CHT forests

MONIRUL ALAM, *Rangamati*

Rare species of wildlife are disappearing from Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) due to unabated poaching as the forests remain virtually remain unguarded.

Common species are also fleeing to forests across the border as poachers hunt chase them.

At least 100 deer were killed in the Rampahar-Shitapahar reserve forest in Rangamati in last one year, it was gathered from forest department employees. It was declared a sanctuary in 1991.

Last week, body of a dead elephant was recovered from Pablakhali Wildlife Sanctuary. Marks of injury on its body suggested that it was killed by poachers.

Destruction of forests is another cause of disappearance of wildlife, the forest employees said.

This correspondent visited the two wildlife sanctuaries in last week and talked to forest department employees and local indigenous people.

Poaching is going on unabated in the forests including the reserve forests due to an alleged nexus between a section of forest employees and locals, it was gathered.

"Wild animals are always on the run as poachers follow them wherever they hide", said a forest employee.

"There are two sanctuaries in this hills but you would never find any wild animal unless you are lucky", he added.

"In Pablakhali Wildlife Sanctuary, you would never find deer, wild boar, pythons, peacocks, beautiful species of goats and wild cocks now a days. These were in plenty and seen even near human habitations earlier", he said.

"They left the forests for survival and due to chase by poachers. "These are sanctuary in name only now", he added.

Surprisingly, there was no survey of wildlife in the CHT in last 20 years though there is a Wildlife Wing under the Forest Department. The officials are not interested in doing a survey.

Saiful Islam, Director-in Charge of Rampahar-Shitapahar sanctuary, when contacted said they can not stop poaching due to lack of manpower and arms. The limited number of forest guards with their obsolete arms can not face the poachers, he claimed.

An earlier survey had recorded 76 species of wild animals, 100 species of wild birds, 7 species of amphibious animals and 25 species of snakes in the hills.

But many of these, including wild elephants, deer, some species of

snake, monkey, baboon (honuman), jackal, hare, some species of frog, wild cock, wild boar, mongoose, porcupine, leopard, wild buffalo are rarely seen in the forests.

Indigenous people in the hills said 'Mothura' (a beautiful wild bird like peacock) and pythons are prime targets of poachers as they bring handsome amounts of money.

Saiful said hunting of animals by hill people for food is one of the main causes for the decreasing in wildlife population. Human population in the hills is increasing and so also their need for food, he said.

It was gathered that a section forest guards in connivance with local hill people help the poachers in hunting down wild animals.

The locals said monkey, baboon and donesh birds (Anthracoeros Malabaricus) are virtually not found in the reserve forest in Rampahar-Shitapahar

2 cops, bandit leader bullet-hit in gunfight

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Magura*

Two policemen and a ringleader of inter-district bandits were injured in a gunfight at Kala Laxmipur on the Magura-Jhenidah highway on Tuesday, police said.

Acting on a tip-off, a police team arrested alleged bandit gang leader Anwar Hossain, 35, of Aryanarayanpur village in Jhenidah Sadar from Amolsar village in Magura district on Monday night.

The police team was returning to Jhenidah Sadar thana along with Anwar, an accused in five cases including some for murder.

As they reached Kala-Laxmipur in Jhenidah Sadar upazila, Anwar's accomplices fired on the law enforcers, who also returned shots, said Jhenidah Police Superintendent.

Anwar was bullet-hit and critically injured when he attempted to flee from the police van.

Havildar Abdus Salam and Constable Mizan were also bullet-hit in the gunfight. Police recovered a shutter-gun and four bullets from the spot.

The injured persons including the policemen were admitted to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital.

POLICE 'STILL TRYING' TO NAB CULPRITS

Killers of Garo woman at large for 20 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Netrakona*

Police could not arrest any of the culprits involved in the gang-rape and murder of Garo woman Anjali Rama, twenty days after the incident.

Anjali Rama, 30, wife of Palinus Rangdi of Guchchagram village in Durgapur upazila was gang-raped and killed on the night of March 9.

Police recovered her body from near Bijoypur while clay mine. Anjali was a day labour working in a ceramic company there.

The husband filed a murder case with Durgapur thana. Netrakona Police Superintendent visited the spot.

A team of journalists visited the victim's house on Tuesday.

According to the victim's neighbours, Anjali's husband worked at a catholic mission in Rangamati.

They said attractive Anjali had an affair with an official of a ceramic company in the area and she used to visit him often. She was three months' pregnant when she was murdered.

Sholaja Rama of Gaimara village in the upazila, who worked with Anjali in the white clay mine, claimed that Anjali had no connection with her husband for about three years. Some others in the area also corroborated the statement.

They also said that few days of her murder, Anjali told her relatives and villagers that she became pregnant by the ceramic company official.

They claimed that two youths -- Sukal and Suprohat of Guchchagram forcibly picked up Anjali from a road in bordering Gaimara village on the night of March 9 and took her to an abandoned house of the ceramic company.

When contacted, owner of the company former lawmaker Jalaluddin Talukder said he heard about the murder but denied that any of his employees could be involved in it.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Durgaour thana Abdur Razzak said they are trying to nab the killers. Indigenous people in the area said police can nab the killers if they want.



A bear rescued from poachers in Nihyangchhari jungle last year by Bandarban district administration now sheltered at Meghla Mini Parjatan resort in the district (left) and a baboon in Kaptaimukh reserve forests.



PHOTO: STAR

Sacked tobacco workers demonstrate

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Manikganj*

Over 300 terminated workers of the Leaf Processing Factory of Dhaka Tobacco Industry, a sister concern of Aki Group yesterday demanded their immediate reinstatement and payment of arrears.

The demand came from a meeting held near the main gate of the factory at Golora here.

The speakers threatened a greater agitation if their demands are not met immediately. The workers and their family members pass their days in misery due to 'illegal termination' by the factory authorities, they said. They are being deprived of their legal benefits, they added.

Earlier, they brought out a procession in the factory area. The workers were sacked illegally one year ago.

Mohammad Sona Mia, president of Labourer and Workers' Union of the factory presided over the meeting while it was addressed, among others, by its secretary Alimuddin, organising secretary Mulluk Chan, labour leader Rezaul Karim Raza, Hanif Ali, Jagir Union Parishad chairman Shamsul Alam and ward member Mohammad Nizam.

Outlaw arrested in Khulna

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

A member of outlawed Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP-Janajuddha) was arrested from Teligati in Khanjahan Ali Police Station (PS) here on Monday.

Zakir Hossain Howlader alias Zakir, 35, son of Ali Akbar of Khanabari area under Daulatpur thana of Khulna city was arrested by Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) personnel at midnight. A revolver was recovered from his possession.

Rab and police sources told this correspondent, the arrested outlaw is a fugitive criminal who was wanted in several cases including Chhatra League leader Hafizur Rahman murder case and another case relating to bomb attack on patrol police of Khanjahan Ali PS on April 28 last year.

School girls vow to resist early marriage, dowry

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

Girl students of A Karim Girl High School in Satkhira town has set an example for others like them to follow. They have vowed to resist early marriage and dowry.

They made the pledge at a seminar on Early Marriage and Dowry, held on the school premises with its headmistress Abeda Khatun in the chair.

Held with the slogan --Amar Sonar Paribar (my golden family) the seminar was organised by Italian funded NGO Rishilpi.

Speakers at the seminar, including schoolgirls, also called for creating awareness among people against vices like early marriage and dowry.

They also urged the government and NGOs to take up programmes for women's education, particularly among backward sections of society and in rural areas.

The speakers included

Rishilpi's Education Support Programme Animator Augustin Gain, Mridula Rani Mondal, Shafi Siddique, Maniruzzaman Titu, schoolteacher Nasrin Khan Lipi, Kanchan Bannerjee and schoolgirl Josna.

They said much of the violence against women is due to illiteracy and lack of women's empowerment.

They praised the initiative by Rishilpi to hold such seminars at schools, saying these will create awareness among adolescent girls and their parents also.

Headmistress Abeda Khatun said due to early marriage, four girl students of her school met with premature death. She urged all the students of her school not to marry at an early stage.

Shubhankar Das moderated the seminar, which concluded with a musical soiree.

Realise rightful share of Ganges water

Roundtable in Rajshahi told

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Rajshahi*

Speakers at a Roundtable here yesterday urged the government to move world forums to compel India to give Bangladesh its rightful share of Ganges water.

India should abide by the Helsinki Act of 1966 and supply the water needed by lower riparian Bangladesh to save itself from an ecological disaster, they said.

The Roundtable on 'Crisis of water flow in Padma and its impact on Rajshahi region' was organised jointly by daily Prothom Alo, Rajshahi Rakkha Sangram Parishad and Geology And Mining Department of Rajshahi University. It was held at Nanking Community center in the city.

Moderated by Prothom Alo Editor Motiur Rahman, the roundtable was addressed by, among others, Dr Sayed Shamsuddin Ahmed, Dr

Sultanul Islam, Porf Yunus Ahmed Khan, Prof Golam Sabbir Sattar, Prof Chowdhury Sarwar Jahan, Prof Sultana Mustafa Kamal of Rajshahi University, engineers Tajul Islam, Shafiqul Islam and Shahabuddin, journalists Liaquat Ali, Sharmin Sultana, Hasan Millat, businessman Mosarraf Hossain Akhunjee, Nodi Bhangan Protirod Committee Convenor Shafiqul Alam Bhota and Lathi Basi Samity Convenor Abdus Salam.

They said decreasing flow in the Padma river is severely affecting the Rajshahi region. Sona Mosque land port, Shibganj, Chapainawabganj and Rajshahi towns are being threatened due to flood and erosion in the wet season as the river is being silted due to decreasing flow.

The Roundtable adopted a 16-point recommendation to solve the problems.

6x3



PHOTO: STAR

Women day labourers besiege Kishoreganj UNO office on Monday.

Women workers besiege Nilphamari UNO office

Unfair distribution of WFP rice alleged

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Nilphamari*

About 500 women labourers laid a siege to the Kishoreganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer's (UNO) office on Monday protesting anomaly in distribution of rice against their daily wages under a WFP (Food for Work programme).

They alleged that they were cheated in weight of the rice being doled out from the local LGED office.

The WFP programme was being implemented in Ranachandi union by the Rangpur Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), an NGO, under the supervision of Local Government Engineering Department LGED).

The women worked in the road development project in 28 groups.

The women also alleged that the rice allotted for them was sold in the black market.

Seeing the women's agitation, some local youths came and asked the LGED officials about the allegations.

But they were assaulted by some LGED men and rice traders who had bought the rice in black market.

The women then brought out a procession and laid a siege to the UNO office. After about an hour, the UNO assured the women of fair distribution and resumed distribution under police guard.

9x3

Police-mob clash leaves 50 hurt
OUR CORRESPONDENT, *B'baria*

At least 50 persons were injured in a police-mob clash at Ashuganj intersection here on Tuesday. The clash ensued when people tried to erect a barricade on the highway protesting a bid to transfer the NGL fractionation plant to Kailastila in Sylhet from Ashuganj. Police fired gunshots to quell violence of unruly people.

Killer suspect arrested
OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bandarban*

One person was arrested on suspicion in connection with killing of an indigenous youth on Sunday morning. Augn Swe Marna, 22, was arrested at night by Lama police. Ill-fated Augn sa Nue Marna, 22, was killed while returning to his native village Gozalia Headmanpara from Lama upazila headquarters. The body was sent to Bandarban Sadar Hospital for post-mortem. Bandarban Superintendent of Police (SP) Iqbal Bahar visited the spot on Monday.