

Elephants wane in Bandarban

MONIRUL ISLAM MONU, Bandarban

Lack of favourable environment, scarcity of food and, above all, human resistance have forced elephants to leave Bandarban, once considered to be its safe sanctuary surrounded by high mountain ranges and deep forest.

About 50 people were killed and a large number of them injured in confrontations with elephants in the last few years. As the humans invaded their habitat, groups of wild elephants destroyed hundreds of houses and crop fields.

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Wild elephants grazing in a forest.

Thousands swindled out of over Tk 2cr

At least 2,000 poor victims demonstrate for return of their money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The chairman and staff of a Jatrabari-based multipurpose cooperative society in the city have allegedly swindled at least Tk 2 crore savings of a few thousand poor.

Giasuddin Khandokar, chairman of Bangladesh Janakalyan Bahumukhi Samabay Samity Limited, and his accomplices vanished into thin air yesterday with the booty, leaving the association office vacant and locked.

About 2,000 victims -- mostly beggars, domestic helps, restaurant workers and rikshawpullers -- of the fraud demonstrated at Jatrabari and in Mukhtangan yesterday, demanding the return of their savings with

the association.

The cooperative body headquartered at 364 Meer Hajaribagh, Wasa Road, Jatrabari, Demra, was formed 19 years ago. Its chairman, Giasuddin, used to run the 11 branches of the organisation at Gulshan, Jurain, Dhalpur, Malibagh, Demra, Dhania, Kalyanpur and Motijheel in the city from its base staffed with 15 people.

A few hundred field-workers of the organisation used to go door to door to woo people to be its members, promising financial support and a return of Tk 10,000 for every Tk 7,300 deposit made by Tk 10 daily instalments in two years.

"They convinced us to deposit

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PHOTO: STAR

Agitating poor at Jatrabari in the capital show deposit books of a cooperative association, leaders of which disappeared yesterday after swindling a few crores of taka deposited by them.

1 killed in Rab 'crossfire' in Barisal

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A listed criminal was killed in "crossfire" during a shootout between his accomplices and the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members in Bakerganj upazila of Barisal early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Kamruzzaman Nantu, 35.

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Criminals hurl bombs on Rab to evade arrest

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Several gangsters yesterday dodged arrest by hurling four bombs at the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) after a gunfight with the elite force at Ganganj in Kushtia.

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Pro-Tiger MP shot dead at Christmas mass

AFP, Batticaloa

Sri Lankan legislator allied with Tamil rebels was gunned down during Christmas Mass yesterday, the latest in a series of bloody attacks.

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Defence policy snails for two years

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The country's first defence policy could not see the light nearly two years into the formation of a high-profile council that works at a snail's pace to draft the policy.

The 11-member council headed by a major general met only eight times since it started working to this end on February 14, 2004 without setting a deadline.

"The task for preparing the defence policy is under process," a source said quoting a report prepared by the Armed Forces Division (AFD) for the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry, which will discuss the matter today.

But the report does not specify

when the task will be completed, sources said.

"It is very unfortunate that the country has passed 34 years without a defence policy," a former defence secretary told The Daily Star. He said lack of a defence policy is a major deterrent to the strengthening of the armed forces.

The former secretary said the policymakers have been discussing the issue of defence policy with prime importance for the last ten years. But the process has not been completed yet despite the formation of the council two years ago.

In absence of the defence policy, the operations of the three services are being hampered, observed the parliamentary standing committee

on defence ministry on December 17, 2003 and asked the Armed Forces Division to initiate effective steps coordinating the three services to finalise a defence policy.

The AFD, after getting consent of the prime minister, who is also in charge of the defence ministry, formed the council to prepare the policy.

The council comprises an AFD representative equivalent to brigadier general, a brigadier general from the army, a commodore of navy, an air commodore of air force and representatives of the ministries of defence, foreign affairs,

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Bangladeshi, wife held in Agartala with arms

UNB, Dhaka

Indian police on Saturday night arrested a Bangladeshi along with his wife at a hotel in Agartala, the capital of the Indian State of Tripura, for possession of an illegal firearm and trespassing, UNI reports.

Officer-in-charge (OC) Harimohan Das arrested Suman Mia and his wife Kakan Begum following a tip off, the agency quoting official sources said.

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70 shops in Patharghata market gutted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A fire burnt down a market in Barguna early yesterday injuring at least 50 and damaging goods and structures worth Tk 20 crore.

The fire originated in a quilt making shop at the municipal market of Patharghata upazila around 12:00 midnight and gradually spread

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Man takes his life after killing grandmother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A grandson in Narsingdi committed suicide yesterday after chopping his grandmother's head off on Saturday night.

Gulzar Hossain, 22, of Chandrabordi in Shibpur upazila killed his grandmother Mazeda Begum's, 70, as she expressed her discontent with his unlawful activities.

Gulzar at 8:00pm on Saturday night returned home and

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PHOTO: STAR

Shopkeepers of Mirpur take to the street yesterday after extortionists shot a local business leader for his refusal to give them Tk 10 lakh as toll.

Prayer Timing		
December 26		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	5-30	6-05
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-27	5-30
Esha	7-00	7-30

Source: Islamic Foundation