

Noisy boats, poachers turn migratory birds away

Survey says 50pc birds did not visit Hakaluki Haor this year

IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet

The number of migratory birds in Hakaluki Haor fell by about 50 per cent this year compared to that of last year. However the total number of birds, mainly comprising local ones, went up.

These were revealed in a survey organised by the Coastal and Wetland Bio-diversity Management Project (CWBMP) of the Department of Environment.

Arrival of migratory birds decreased in last few years as many of their natural sanctuaries were

disturbed due to 'noisy fishing' (by using mechanised boats) and hunting, the survey said.

The survey was done by a team of wildlife experts including Dr. Inam Al Haque, Dr. SMA Rashid and Dr. MA Aziz. Some students from Jahangirnagar University,

Chittagong University and Khulna University also took part in it.

The survey was done on February 12 and 14. Last year's survey was also done during the same period.

Zafar Siddique, Project Director of CWBMP, said a total of 51,521 birds of 42 species were sighted in the haor during this year's survey. The figure includes 18,555 migratory birds of 29 species and 32,966 of 13 local species.

Four new species were found this year. These are Falcatored Duck (locally called Fuluri Hansh), Gray Leg Goose (Metey Raj Hansh), Northern Lapwing (Uttrey Tit) and Common Shell Duck (Pati Chokha Chokhi).

Around 37,520 migratory birds of 26 species and a total of 46,712 birds of 49 species were counted during last year's survey, he said.

Three species - Spotbill Duck (Metey Hansh), Comb Duck (Nakta Hansh) and Grey Headed Lapwing (Metey Matha Tit) - found last year, were not sighted this year. Grey Headed Lapwing is a rare Siberian bird and the two others are local species.

This year, the highest number of 30,262 birds of 10 species was spotted in Nagua-Loribai Beel where last year's figure was 27,486.

Hakaluki Haor comprises 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.



Migratory birds fluttering their wings in Hakaluki Haor.

STAR FILE PHOTO

Party in power came as a magic lamp for once poor Numan

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar



Only a few years ago, Nurul Alam Numan and his family lived in Berir Chor slum in Moulvibazar town, his father pulling a rickshaw and mother working as a domestic help. All on a sudden they turned visibly rich having luxurious houses, cars, trucks and prime lands.

Numan's fortune, amassed allegedly by virtue of being a leader of Jubo Dal, was a talk of the town.

Numan is in jail now after arrest on February 13.

It is widely alleged that Numan earned wealth by toll collection, tender manipulation and other illegal means using the name of the then BNP lawmaker M Naser Rahman.

Nurul Alam Numan is the eldest son of Elahi Boksh. His younger brother Kursheed is a truck driver. Other two brothers -- Jahangir and Alamgir -- are vagabonds and drug addicts.

Fortune smiled on Numan like many others after the BNP led 4-party came to power and M Naser Rahman was elected lawmaker in a by-election.

Naser managed an allocation of Tk 200 crore from the then govern-

ment for development of Moulvibazar. This opened up scope for party men to become 'contractors' to implement development projects.

This correspondent gathered data on development projects and their implementation. Numan got works involving Tk 7 crore in Local Government and Engineering Department (LGED), Tk 2 crore in Roads and Highways Department (RHD), Tk one crore in Public Works Department (PWD), Tk one crore in Moulvibazar Pourasava and Tk 1.5 crore in the Education Engineering

Department. He also captured sand quarries and water bodies in the district. Besides, he also got many works involving smaller amounts, officials said.

In five years, Nurul Alam Numan became one of the rich men in Moulvibazar.

Irregularities were alleged in most of his construction work, but bills were paid without any hassle, officials said.

Numan purchased a house at Sultanpur at Tk 48 lakh. He also owns two costly prime lands at Girzapara and Kazirgaon in the district town, three trucks and invested money in the stock market, people close to his family said.

It is alleged that Numan even changed design of some work but engineers keep silent as he was blessed by party influentials.

Sources at LGED office said they had served notices on many occasions asking Numan to follow their design and specification, but he cared a little.

Mamunur Rashid, chairman of Ashidrun Union Parishad in Srimongal upazila said people in his area had once resisted work by Numan when he was constructing the Bilas Chhera bridge allegedly with low quality materials.

Numan got the construction work of roads and drains involving Tk 1.40 crore under a World Bank aided project. As quality of work was not maintained, World Bank officials from Dhaka had to intervene to correct the faults.

After arrest on February 13, he confessed to joint forces that he had Tk 80 to 90 lakh in cash and with banks. This was disclosed by joint forces after his arrest.

Nurul Alam Numan also captured leadership of contractors' association in Moulvibazar and created a syndicate to control all development works. He used to 'distribute' works among fellow 'contractors'. 'We had no entry to Moulvibazar LGED office to drop any tender without his per-

mission', an aggrieved contractor said.

Talking to this correspondent, some professional contractors further alleged that budgets for all government development projects were inflated -- from 12 to 40 percent -- at the instruction of ruling party men.

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Japanese envoy opens two community centres in CHT

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Japanese Ambassador in Bangladesh Masayuki Inoue opened two United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) built multipurpose community centres in Rangamati and Khagrachari in two separate functions held yesterday and Saturday, report our Rangamati and Khagrachari correspondents.

The opening ceremony of the Khagrachari centre at Khagrachari was followed by a discussion chaired by Headman Association president Shaktipada Tripura, according to Khagrachari correspondent. The Japanese envoy attended the discussion as chief guest.

While addressing, the Japanese envoy termed the community centre as a symbol of Japan-Bangladesh friendship. Constructed with Japanese grant, the centres will be used as a place for gathering of community people for learning as well as health centre, emergency centre and guest house.

Among others, Mong circle chief Raja Paithala Prue Chowdhury, District Council chairman Manindra Lal Tripura, UNDP team director Michel Heyn also addressed.

A Tk 300 cr development project of UNDP is now underway in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).



PHOTO: STAR

Forest officials yesterday digging out costly timber stolen from reserve forests and hidden under soil in the housing project for fourth class employees. The project, being implemented by cutting hills, was cancelled recently.

Farmers block highway for urea

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Farmers brought out a procession and blocked the Barisal-Dhaka highway at Barthi in Gournadi yesterday demanding fertiliser.

Hundreds of vehicles were stranded on the road for about an hour during the blockade, marked by a rally.

Freedom fighter farmer Abdus Salam presided over the rally.

The blockade was withdrawn after Gournadi Upazila Nirbahi Officer Rafikul Islam and Officer-in-Charge of local police station Abbasuddin assured them about sufficient supply of fertiliser supply as early as possible.

Gournadi upazila agricultural officer Debanshu Kumar Shaha later said about 32,000 farmers there cultivated IRRI-Boro on 6,665 hectares of land. At least 2,052 tonnes of urea is needed in the upazila during December-March, he said.

Till February, only 1,132 tonnes of urea were supplied through 10 dealers. At places, agriculture officials and dealers were assaulted by agitated farmers for urea, he said, adding, higher authorities have been informed of the situation.

'Allocate more funds for Khulna'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Greater Khulna Development Coordination Action Committee, at a press conference held at Khulna Press Club on Saturday, demanded of the caretaker government to develop 'neglected Khulna' by allocating adequate fund in the next national budget.

The action committee has put forward some demands. These include construction of deep sea port at Akram point, supply of gas through pipeline, building Padma bridge at Mawa and development of Mongla port.

Speakers threatened a tougher agitation in future if the demands are not fulfilled by the government.

Among others, former PDB chief engineer Azadul Haque, CPB leader Advocate Feroze Ahmed, Gano Forum leader Haider Gazi Salahuddin Runu and prominent jute exporter Abdul Mannan addressed.

Earlier, Khulna Divisional Press Club Forum leader Alhaj Liaquat Ali appealed to journalists to extend their whole hearted cooperation to the action committee through positive reporting and hoped the caretaker government would fulfill the demands of people of the 'neglected region'.

Son's killers now threaten mother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A mother yesterday alleged that her son's killers are moving at large and threatening her, two years after the murder.

Kalpana Rani Kar, mother of Uttam Kumar Kar, at a press conference at Mymensingh Press Club, alleged that the main accused, BNP leader and ward commission Motiur Rahman Moti of Muktagacha municipality, is still at large, two years after her son's murder.

Uttam was killed at Mujati Purbo Para in Muktagacha municipal area in the early hours of August 8, 2004.

Kalpana Rani said, on the following day, she filed a case with Muktagacha police station accusing Sumon, Titu, Ujjal, Manik, Hira, Shohel and Moti based on her son's statement before his death.

After filing of the case, the accused persons led by Moti came to her house and threatened her to withdraw the case, Kalpana Rani told the press conference. She is the wife of Ratan Chandra Kar.

Kalpana Rani alleged that police did not arrest Moti. The case was later transferred to CID but there has not been any progress in investigation and arrest of the killers, she alleged.

Kalpana Rani filed several general diaries (GDs) with Muktagacha police following threats by the accused persons.

To protect mother varieties of fishes in these water bodies and to increase production, 'fish sanctuaries' have been created at 'safe

points' in the water bodies, where none is allowed to fish there, said Abul Hashem, Project Organizer in Purbadhalia upazila in Netrakona.

Earlier, mother fishes were rarely available in the water bodies. After

implementation of the project, they

are now take shelter in the 'safe

points' when water recedes. With

arrival of monsoon, the mother

fishes spread out and release fries,

said Nazmun Nahar Nur, Scientific Officer of the project.

Indigenous varieties like

Bhedari, Chital, Chapila, Khalisha,

Taki, Ghora Macchi, Baim, Ghania

and Kali Boush are now found in

these beels after creation of sanctuaries and awareness among

fishermen, they said.

All the water bodies taken under

this project will be maintained by

DoF till 2011 for improvement of life

of people in haor areas, Mostafa

Momin, another project official said.

The Department for International

Development (DFID) is the

donor agency for the project while

World Fish Center, CARITAS,

BRAC, FemCom Bangladesh,

Banchar Shekha, Shishuk, Gharani,

and Center for Natural Resources

(CNRS) are partner NGOs working

under it in low-lying areas of greater

Mymensingh.

For each water body, a commit-

tee named Beel Management

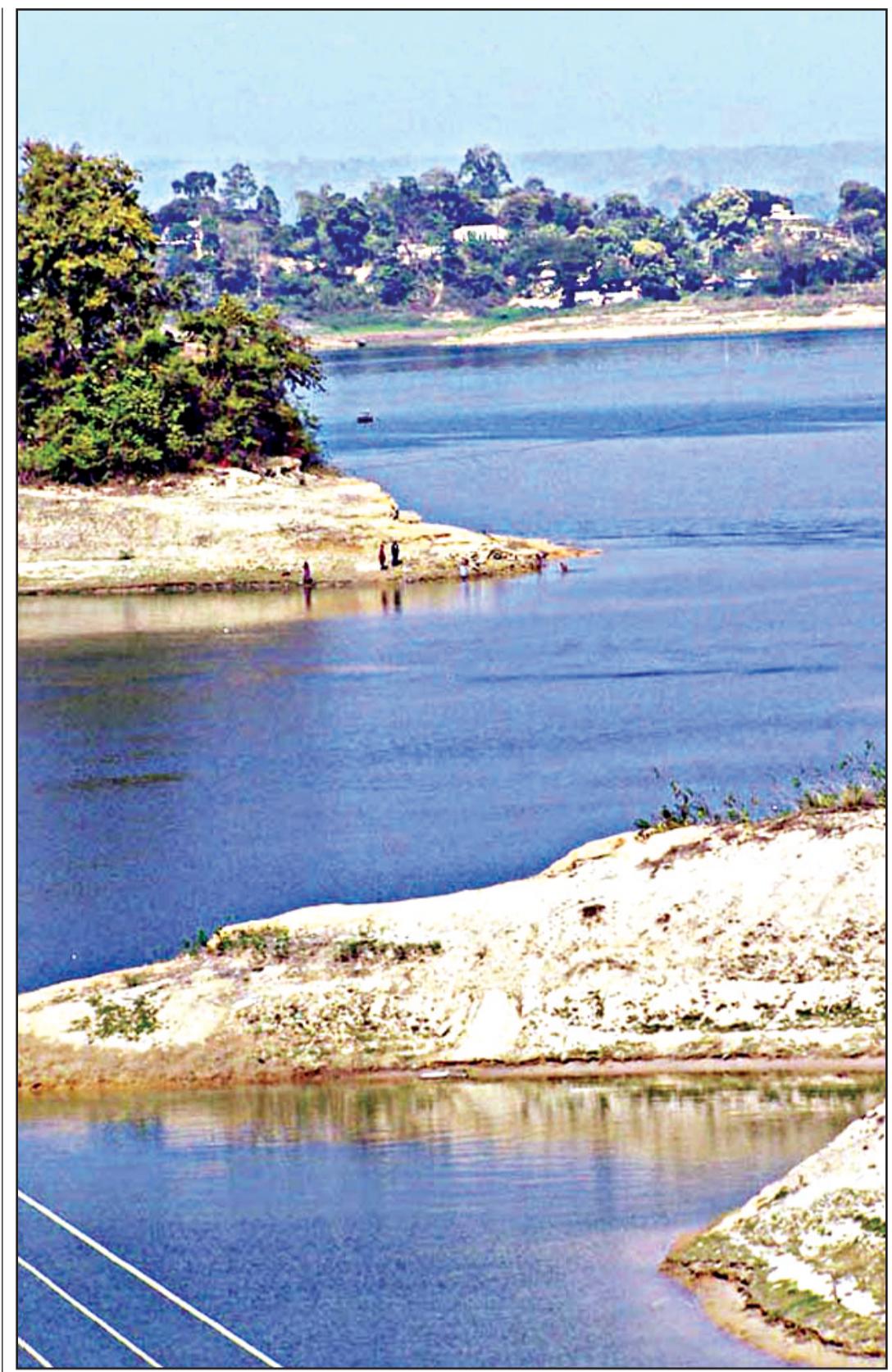
Committee (BMC) has been

formed with local fishermen.

Abdur Sattar of Gujakhal Kanda

village, who is president of Boalia

Doba waterbody committee, told



Numerous shoals have emerged in Kaptai Lake in Rangamati as its water level has fallen, affecting bio-diversity of the scenic lake and lush green hills around.

Teaching fishermen to 'stitch in time' for better catches

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Indigenous fishes which were depleting fast are now increasing and fishermen around haors in greater Mymensingh are being benefited after introduction of Community Based Fisheries Management project.

The project was launched by the Department of Fisheries (DoF) in September 2001.

Over 400 fishermen families in Netrakona are involved in the project, which now ensures their livelihood along with maintaining the ecological balance.

A team of newsmen visited water bodies under the project in Netrakona recently.

Nine government water bodies have been included under the project. These are Boalia Doba and Kuma Beel, Rajdhala Beel, Pakla Beel,