

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.



Migratory birds fluttering their wings in Hakaluki Haor.

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 Kurshed 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-



Nurul Alam Numan 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 Moulvibazar Zila Parishad, Tk 3 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. Some sources claimed that he also owns a flat in Dhaka, but it could not be confirmed. 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. It is alleged that Numan even changed deign 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. In Komolganj municipality, 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.

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 Khagrachhari in two separate functions held yesterday and Saturday, report our Rangamati and Khagrachhari correspondents. The opening ceremony of the Khagrachhari centre at Khagrapur was followed by a discussion chaired by Headman Association president Shaktipada Tripura, according to Khagrachhari 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 guesthouse. Among others, Mong circle chief Raja Paihala Prue Chowdhury, District Council chairman Manin-dra 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).



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, Sohail 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.

2 Shibir men held in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Police have arrested two leaders of Islami Chhatra Shibir from Lalbag area in Rangpur town in connection with Friday's clashes on Carmichael College campus. They are Carmichael College unit Shibir secretary Alamgir Hossain and its former president Zahinur Alam, who is also president of Nilphamari district unit of Shibir. Police said, Friday's clashes with Chhatra League took place as Shibir activists attacked them on the campus.



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 Netrokona 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 Netrokona recently. Nine government water bodies have been included under the project. These are Boalia Doba and Kuma Beel, Rajdhala Beel, Pakla Beel, Atla Beel and Doba Beel in Purbadhala upazila, Narsinghpur Nadi in Khaliajuri upazila, Ghoradubi Beel and Meda Beel in Kamlakanda upazila. The project also covers some water bodies in Mymensingh, Kishoreganj and Tangail districts. The project has created awareness among fishermen about preservation of different varieties of fishes and when to net what variety of fish, local fishermen and project officials said. 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 Purbadhala upazila in Netrokona. 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 Macch, 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 would 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, Banacha 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 committee named Beel Management Committee (BMC) has been formed with local fishermen. Abdur Sattar of Gujakhali Kanda village, who is president of Boalia Doba waterbody committee, told

this correspondent that they became gainer financially from the project. "We learnt many things about condition of fish resources in the country", he said. Abdul Motaleb Titu and Akhtar Khatun, general secretary of the committee echoed in the same tone. The adding awareness programme has opened their eyes and they are now protecting fish resources for their benefit, he said. The project has also provided sanitation facilities for ultra-poor fishermen and established a community center at Gujakhali Kanda where villagers hold regular meetings. FemCom Bangladesh, a partner NGO, conducts awareness building activities among grassroots people. Puppet show and drama for school children and women, video shows, documentary films on fishery are part of awareness building activities, said Nargis Akhtar, Managing Director of FemCom Bangladesh. The awareness programmes have created a positive effect on the local people, she added. World Fish Center renders technical supports for the project. It includes research and monitoring of social and economic conditions of people in project areas, training, workshop, seminar, site visit and impact study, said Dr. Nurul Islam, Research Associate of World Fish Center.



Project officials with local fishermen at a fish sanctuary at Boalia Beel in Netrokona.

PHOTO: STAR