

## Landslides displace wildlife

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The wild animals have started coming out of their habitats due to extensive damages to their natural environment following the recent landslides in the port city and its suburban areas.

The landslides have also increased the fear of earthquake, the wildlife experts said, adding that it is one of the main causes that have compelled the wild animals to come out of their habitats into the localities.

A good number of pythons came out of their natural habitats to the localities seemingly for safe shelter within a span of seven days after the June 11 landslides.

Five of them were handed over to Chittagong Zoo authorities. The rest were released in the forests due to accommodation problem in the zoo, said the sources.

Apart from this, local people of the Khulshi area in the port city on Thursday caught a deer, which was later slaughtered and eaten up.

"Landslide is one of the major causes that forced the wild ani-

mals to come out of their habitats into the localities," said Prof Gazi SM Asmat of Zoology Department of Chittagong University (CU).

Landslide also causes various types of adverse impacts on ecosystem in the hills where different animals build their habitats, said Prof Asmat, also the president of Bangladesh Wildlife Network.

He said the hills on the CU campus provide habitat for 151 species of birds, around 20 per cent of the total 788 species living in the country.

Of the birds, living in the hills and the forest on the campus, 87 per cent stay permanently while the rest join them in different seasons as migratory birds, he added.

At least 20 species of frog, out of total 33 found in Bangladesh, are living on the university campus. They include some species of tree frogs that usually live on the trees of the hills, he said.

The landslides have greatly disturbed these birds, frogs and other wild animals, forcing them to leave their natural habitats, Prof Asmat said. It will also ham-

per the food chain in the wildlife, he added.

This season is high time for breeding of the frogs. But they will not be able to breed properly as most of the drains and small hillside water-bodies are filled up due to the landslides, he said.

On the other hand, landslides due to mindless hill cutting have removed the green coverage or topsoil, making the hills vulnerable to earthquakes, sources concerned said.

Prof Dr Jahangir Alam of Department of Civil Engineering of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology (CUET) said frequent tremors are giving signals of larger shakes when the hills weakened by landslides pose a threat to higher casualties of over 50,000 people living in the foothill areas.

Prof Jahangir emphasised building up physical barriers around the hills and on afforestation in the affected hills to avert further casualties in tremor or other natural disaster.

Analysis of the previous records showed that many areas of Bangladesh, including Chittagong, are in the high risk



Natural habitats of wild animals have been damaged due to the recent landslides, left, while a number of pythons, right, come out of their habitats to the locality for safe shelter.

zone of earthquake as the country is situated on the Indo-Australian Plate.

A total of 191 earthquakes,

some of them measuring up to 7.4 on the Richter scale, were recorded at the Seismic Observatory Centre at Ambagan

since 2000.

Of them, 31 were recorded in 2000, 40 in 2001, 44 in 2002, 20 in 2003, 12 in 2004, 26 in 2005,

16 in 2006 and two this year (until March), said Md Momenul Islam, meteorologist of the Observatory. Around 127 people were buried alive in the devastating landslides and wall collapse in the port city and its adjacent areas on June 11.

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