

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.

Enforce ban strictly to protect Halda spawning centres

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

Experts have called for strict enforcement of restriction imposed by the government on netting brood (mother) fishes in the river Halda from March 15 to July 15 and ban on cutting river bends to protect the natural fish spawning centres.

The experts in the port city underscored the need for taking immediate initiatives like creating awareness among the locals, river training as well as renovation and restoration of the canals and the springs flowing into the Halda to get back the river in its state which was highly congenial for fish spawning.

Indigenous species of giant fishes like Ruhi, Katla, Mrigel and Kaliboush migrating from the river Karnaphuli, the Matamuhuri and the Sangu released fertilised eggs in an astounding number at the spawning centre of Halda during Baishakh and Jaishtha (April and May) every year.

At this time a 10-km stretch of the river from Satterghat to Madunaghat of Raozan upazila took a festive look with hundreds of local people in small boats collecting fertilised eggs.

But netting of mother fishes and bend cutting that shorten length of the river and raise salinity in its water, caused spawning in the Halda to fall at an alarming

rate, the experts said.

Spawning at the Halda marked a serious decline with some 9000kgs of spawns collected this year against the average collection of around 65,000kgs in the early fifties, said

Mohammad Ali, who has been carrying out a study on the river for more than five years.

Earlier, the Halda provided around 70 percent fries of major carps while the rest 30 per cent came from the Padma, Jamuna

and the Brahmaputra. But fries of major carps now provided by the Halda has come down to some 33 per cent, he said.

"Since 1947 four ox-bow shaped bends, the most suitable places for releasing spawns in

the river, were cut," regretted Ali while talking to The Daily Star.

The bends were cut to shorten the length of the river at Barighona in 1947, Angkurighona in 1961, Sonarmukh in 1990 and

Garduara in 2003, he said.

Muhammad Idris, president of Chittagong Nagorik Udyug, an organisation working on the Halda, said sluice gates were set up at different canals flowing to the Halda to reduce flow of water and depth of the river.

As such, saline water of the Bay of Bengal coming through the Karnaphuli raised salinity in water of the Halda to pose a threat to the spawning centre.

He hailed the government for imposing restriction on fishing in some 30km stretch of the Halda from Karnaphuli-Halda juncture to Satterghat from March 15 to July 15.

But he blamed the government for imposing restriction on fishing in the canals and springs where no spawning took place.

He called for opening the canals for fishing to support the livelihood of local fishermen and removing the sluice gates that hampered fish production at the canals.

Prof Manzoorul Kibria of Zoology department of Chittagong University, emphasised the need for creating awareness among the local people to raise rates of egg-collection, hatching of spawning, survivability and production of fries from spawns as well as protecting the brood fishes.

No policy or plan to protect the spawning centres could be suc-

cessful unless the locals are involved and provided them with alternative jobs, he said.

He called for declaring the Halda stretching from Halda-Karnaphuli juncture to Mirzapur in Hathazari a sanctuary.

"All the marshlands like Gumanmardan, Fatika Beel on both the sides of the Halda up to Mirzapur also have to be declared sanctuary as well," he said.

"Because, most of the springs and canals falling into the Halda flow through the marshlands and carry all the nutrients required for spawns and fishes," he added.

"Once Halda was famous for Ruhi and Kali Boush that used to go to the marshland to get there eggs matured before returning to the river for releasing eggs," said Manzoorul who had been working on the Halda since 2001.

To stop fishing in the sanctuary for six months he suggested income generating projects in and around Halda for the fishermen and locals.

Four original stretches of the river have been detached following the diversion of course through cutting bends, which are now known as "dying canals," he said.

Projects should be taken up dividing the dying canals into four blocks for increasing Brood Stock, Brood Banks, raising fingerlings (one to two month-old

fries) and matured fishes.

Spawns would be released in the Brood Stock block, 18 to 25-day old fries in the Broad Bank block, fingerlings in the third block while the fourth block might be preserved for developing matured fishes.

From the first, second and third blocks spawns, fries and fingerlings could also be sold out to different hatcheries throughout the country.

Fishes could be netted from the fourth block for sale in the market or for releasing as brood fishes in the Halda, he said.

An organisation could play the role coordinator in the process and share the profit among all the stakeholders, he said.

Prof Manzoorul said if such projects could be implemented the Halda would be flooded with spawns and fishes without brood fishes coming from elsewhere.

It would help the fishermen and egg-collectors involved in the project to protect the Halda and its resources, he said.

At the same time training should be there for collecting eggs and hatching in scientific way, he said.

At present only 20 per cent of the released eggs are collected and only 50 per cent of them are hatched while 90 per cent hatching is possible in scientific method, Prof Manzoorul said.



Shoals started emerging at different points of the river Halda due to sluice gates set up at the mouth of canals flowing into the river.

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Long-term plan on child labour stressed

Speakers emphasised taking long term planning and steps to stop child labour in the country.

They were addressing a roundtable organised by Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA) on the occasion of International Child Labour Prevention Day on Thursday.

Additional Divisional Commissioner (General) M Mohiuddin Ahmed was the chief guest at the roundtable moderated by BITA Executive Director Shishir Dutta at Theatre Institute of Chittagong (TIC) auditorium.

BITA coordinator Saiful Alam pre-

sented a survey report on 'Condition and Position of Child Labour in Chittagong.'

The report said the number of children along with their families, migrating to the port city from poverty-stricken northern region, are increasing every year and they often get involved in risky jobs.

"Since major cities like Chittagong has in general offers wide range of job opportunities, such migration from those areas is quite a common practice and this can't be stopped," the report said.

Dr AQM Sirajul Islam, Prof Hossain Kabir, Advocate Rafiqul Hoque Bhuiyan, Prof Faujul Kabir, Public Prosecutor (female and children) Advocate Akhter Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Hari Shankar Jala Das, ward commissioner Jalal Hossain, Rehena Kabir Ranu and Principal Anwara

Alam spoke at the roundtable.

Seminar on export policy

Speakers at a seminar in the port city said the government and non-government organisations, engaged directly or indirectly in the export process, will be more successful if they sincerely follow the export policy.

They were addressing a seminar titled 'Export Policy 2006-2009: Initiatives for Growth of Exports and their Implementation' organised by Export Promotion Bureau (EPB), Chittagong on Wednesday.

EPB Director General Faridul Hasan was the chief guest with EPB Chittagong Director Manoj Kumar Roy in the chair.

Director of Chittagong Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCC) Mahfuzul Hoque Shah spoke as the special guest at the seminar attended by representatives from different export and manufacturing companies and banks.

Faridul said government is contemplating steps to strengthen the export-base alongside the six most prioritised sectors and nine more special sectors.

"The bureau organises such seminar every year under the National Export Training Programme 2006-2007 to increase the knowledge and efficiency of the exporters and officials involved in export process," EPB, Chittagong Chief Manoj said.

Expand forest to evade natural disaster

Speakers underscored the need for taking effective steps for expansion of forestland in the country to evade natural disasters.

"Due to mindless cutting of trees, adverse situation is being created in the nature that pose serious risk for human lives," they said at a discussion on the eve of a tree fair jointly organised by Department of Forest (DoF), district administration and Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) at Lalidighi Maidan on Wednesday.

CCC Ward Commissioner Jamal Hossain presided over the discussion. CCC Secretary AKM Khairul Alam,

General Secretary of Chittagong Union of Journalists (CUJ) Reaz Haider and Headmaster of Char Chaktai City Corporation High School Arun Kumar Chandra addressed the discussion.

Later, students of Saleh Jahur Kindergarten School and Char Chaktai City Corporation High School performed at a cultural function.

Dialogue on persons with disability

Speakers at a dialogue said media can play a vital role in developing the merits of persons with disability.

They emphasised publishing reports in newspapers and broadcasting different programmes in electronic media on around 1.50 crore persons with disability of the country.

They were addressing a dialogue on 'Problem and Prospects of Disable Person: In the Context of Mass Media' organised by Sangshaptak, a non-government organisation, on Thursday.

Prof Dr Abul Kasem chaired the dialogue held at District Shipkaka Academy. Journalist Muhammad Idris, Chief Reporter of Daily Suprabhat Bangladesh M Nasirul Hoque and journalists from different local and national dailies took part.

Jahanara

Imam's death anniversary observed

Eminent social scientist Dr Anupam Sen said, "We can learn from the life of Jahanara Imam how to love the country and hate the enemies of the country."

He was addressing a discussion to mark the 13th death anniversary of Jahanara Imam on Wednesday.

Ektattor Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee organised the discussion as part of a daylong programme on the occasion.

Awami League Presidium Member Ataur Rahman Khan Kaiser, Prof Hossain Kabir and poet Kamrul Hasan Badal

wrote at the discussion.

Shantanu Biswas, Mili Chowdhury, Faruk Taher and activists of Prama Abriti Sangathan recited poems dedicated to Jahanara Imam.

Annual Sports -2007 held

'Chittagong Metropolitan Union of Journalists (CMUJ)-Ispahani Annual Sports - 2007' was held on Thursday.

Ispahani Group of Companies Managing Director Mirza Salman Ispahani inaugurated the sports as the chief guest at the CMUJ auditorium.

Chattagram Mohanagari Krira

Sangstha General Secretary Prof Shayestha Khan and Chittagong Press Club (CPC) President Ali Abbas were present at the special guests.

Salman Ispahani in his speech said everybody needs recreation alongside his professional life while journalists get a little time for recreation after performing their duties.

"Recreation through sports will bring a change in the minds and everyday lives of the journalists," he said.

CMUJ President Shamsul Haque Haidari presided over the ceremony.

Later, the guests handed over prizes among the winners of annual sports of 2005 and 2006.



Artistes of Panthajan, a cultural organisation, recite poem at the inaugural function of Kabita Sandha organised by Panthajan at Alliance Française on Wednesday.



Prama Abriti Sangathan takes out a mourning procession in the port city on Tuesday, marking the 13th death anniversary of Shaheed Janani Jahanara Imam.