

Gharial on the verge of extinction

Survey begins to find out breeding adults

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gharial (*Gavialis gangeticus*), one of the three crocodilian species found in the wild in Bangladesh, is on the verge of extinction and it is presumed that there are no breeding adults in the wild.

Gharials are a natural heritage of Bangladesh and a flagship species for the aquatic/riverine habitat.

The Centre for Advanced Research in Natural Resources & Management (CARINAM)

has started a survey to find out the breeding population of gharials in Bangladesh. The project is supported by Mohamed bin Zayed Species Conservation Fund (MBZ), Abu Dhabi, UAE.

With permission from the Forest Department, CARINAM has started gharial survey in the Padma and Jamuna rivers. The survey team has recently visited the Padma from Charchat to Hakimpur, Godagari (close to Indian border) and Jamuna

river from Fulchhari/Gaibandha to Faschiar Char (north of Chilmari), says a press release.

"The politics and lobbying has made the people to believe that species loss is not a threat to their survival, thus leading to the loss of species at a faster rate than presumed. This need to be changed and priority actions targeted to protect and conserve the species and their habitats should be chalked out for implementation," it added.

CARINAM has requested the people having any information about the sighting of adult breeding gharials anywhere in Bangladesh to contact its Chief Executive Dr SMA Rashid on mobile phone (01717-318906) or via e-mail: carinam95@yahoo.com.

The other two species of crocodiles -- freshwater crocodile or mugger (*Crocodylus palustris*), which is no more found in the wild, and the saltwater crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*), found only in the Sunderbans, -- are also declining due to various factors such as habitat destruction, disturbances by humans, including capture of young hatchlings by fishermen.



Dr SMA Rashid holds a young gharial.

PHOTO: COURTESY

Three murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people were murdered at Nayabazar in city and South Keraniganj yesterday.

Police recovered the body of an unidentified man aged around 50, wearing a white lungi, from a flat of Kheurbagh area in South Keraniganj at around 9:45am yesterday. His body bore marks of several stab injuries.

Identity of the person could not be known immediately.

Police suspected that the unknown man might have been killed in the early hours of yesterday.

Meanwhile, South Keraniganj police recovered the body of one Kamal Hossain, 35, from the river Buriganga at around 11:45am. The body was floating near the Buriganga Bridge-1.

Police also recovered body of a boy identified as Masud, 12, from city's Nayabazar area at around 8:00am.

Police said Kamal was a resident of Wari in the city. He was missing since Wednesday.

The bodies were sent to Sir Salimullah Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Akhter Ahmed's janaza today

UNB, Dhaka

Namaz-e-janaza for former BFUJ Secretary General and Minister (Press) to Bangladesh embassy in Washington Akhter Ahmed Khan will be held at the National Press Club in the city at 10:00am today.

DUJ Omar Faruk requested all concerned to attend the janaza and pay last respects to the deceased.

His body arrived in Dhaka yesterday afternoon.

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad and the deceased's wife, Manjuri Afroz, received the body at Zia International Airport. He would be buried at Zaurin graveyard, beside his father and mother.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of a panel of international supporters of Asian University for Women pose with Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury, CDA Chairman Abdus Salam and former adviser to a caretaker government Rokia Afzal Rahman at a 'Students' Night' programme at the AUW main campus site at North Pahartali in Chittagong on Friday.

CCC, CDA assure support for developing AUW campus

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chittagong City Corporation (CCC) and Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) on Friday assured Asian University for Women (AUW) of all-out support for developing its main campus.

Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and CDA Chairman Abdus Salam at a 'Students' Night' programme also assured the AUW authorities of support to construct a loop road of Bayezid Bostami and Dhaka-Chittagong highway bypassing the university.

AUW Support Foundation Bangladesh Board of Directors Chairman Rokia Afzal Rahman and AUW Fund Raising Committee Chairman Janet Montag, who also led the 35-member panel of international supporters of the university on a three-day visit to Bangladesh, also addressed the programme at main campus site at North Pahartali.

Absence of the loop road stood in the way of developing the campus of AUW, an Asian citadel of women education, the speakers noted.

Terming the university a 'milestone', Janet Montag said AUW is being constructed with the support of a number of individual philanthropists from different countries, including the USA, Italy, Hong Kong, Australia, Thailand, Japan and Kuwait.

She stressed the need for constructing Dhaka-Chittagong Highway-Bayezid Bostami Connecting Road diverting the campus site.

Rokia Afzal Rahman, also former adviser to a caretaker government, sought cooperation from all to set up AUW epitomised with vision and commitment to educating the young women with talents to take up the future leadership across the globe.

At the beginning of the journey of AUW, regional cooperation started fostering as students being educated here would stand hand in hand softly reaching friendship and harmony across the globe, she observed.

Terming AUW an invaluable asset of Chittagong as well as of the country, the CCC mayor said any problem that stands in the way of establishing the university would be solved. People are ready to sacrifice anything for the implementation of the university.

Mohiuddin urged the AUW authority to start the construction work of the permanent campus immediately.

The CDA chairman said the problems that are being discussed are no longer major ones since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina as the chief patron of the university was monitoring everything regarding its establishment.

Salam expressed the CDA's intent to present a part of the under-construction connecting road that goes through the university to its authorities as a gift.

AUW started its academic calendar with a preparatory Access Academy Programme on its temporary campus housed in five rented buildings on Dampara MM Ali Road in the port city on April 6 last year.

Access Academy Programme, an 18-month full scholarship programme sponsored by Goldman Sachs Foundation, has been designed to provide a bridge for admission into AUW that requires additional preparation. It began with the total enrolment of 129 students from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka while the number of students now rose to more than 300.

The university was expected to shift to its main campus at a hill-beset picturesque site of the city's North Pahartali by the year 2010.

AUW was ready to go through all the procedures maintaining strictly all the environmental and planning parameters required for developing structures for its campus over 131.37 acres of land, including 104.40 acres donated by the government.

As the campus site comprised rolling hills, deep valleys, permanent and intermittent streams, the authorities had to take permission for re-profiling of

hills spreading over 47 acres of land for developing the campus as per the world famous design consultant Moshe Safdie and Associates.

The campus needed building construction permit for 14,40,000 square feet in all phases. The concerned Hill Cutting Committee also gave the AUW authorities hill re-profiling (hill-cutting) permission after discussing thoroughly every aspect of building construction, planning and hill re-profiling plans at a meeting on November 17 last year.

But before going to start developing the campus, it became necessary to construct a loop road making diversion of Dhaka-Chittagong Highway-Bayezid Bostami Connecting Road by the north side of the university.

Responding to the need of AUW, CDA also made a DPP (Development Project Proforma) to construct the loop road at an estimated cost of over Tk 19.68 crore. The main objective of the road, which was to be completed by June 2009, was to protect the university from traffic hazards.

But the loop road project got caught in different complexities to delay the process of developing the AUW main campus till date.

Project Director of AUW permanent campus Mostak Habib said infrastructure of the university would be implemented in three phases.

Two academic buildings would be constructed first where 800 students could study, he said, adding that around 3,000 students would be able to study after completion of the project. He hoped that the construction work would be started from the first week of January.

At the function, a colourful cultural programme was held where the students performed with the spirit of spreading and sharing cultural essence and taking talents beyond the geographical boundaries.

Standing shoulder to shoulder, the students also performed by upholding their rich cultural heritage and bringing the messages of goodwill.



PHOTO: STAR

Participants at a roundtable discussion on 'Bangladesh-India Relations: Present and Future' organised by the Prothom Alo at its office in the city yesterday. (Story on Page 1)

Distribution of admission forms for govt schools begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Distribution of admission forms for admissions to the government schools began in the city yesterday.

The forms will be available until December 17, said sources of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE).

Apart from schools, forms will also be available on the DSHE website. For that, students have to pay during sub-

mission of the forms at the schools. The price has been fixed at Tk 100 each.

The admission tests in the 24 government schools will be held on December 24, 26 and 27 while the classes will start on January 1.

Long queues were seen in front of the schools as the guardians were looking for admission forms for their children. Some of them had to wait for a long time to get a form.

Like previous years, the

schools have been divided into three groups -- A, B and C -- based on the geographic locations of the schools.

Group-A comprises Government Laboratory School, Mirpur Government High School, Motijheel Government Girls' High School, Khilgaon Government High School, Islamia Government High School, Nawabpur Government High School, Mohammadpur Government

High School, and New Government Girls' High School.

Admission tests for Group-A will be held on December 24 while the admission tests for Group-B will be held on December 26.

Motijheel Government Boys' High School, Narinda Government High School, Government Muslim High School, Banglabazar Government Girls' High School, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Government Boys' High School, Government Bigyan College, High School, Dhanmondi Government Girls' High School and Dhanmondi Kamrunessa Government Girls' High School belong to Group-B.

The schools under Group-C include Dhanmondi Government Boys' High School, Armanitola Government High School, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Government Girls' High School, Tikatuli Kamrunessa Government Girls' High School, Tejgaon Government Girls' High School, Dhaka Collegiate School, Gonobhaban Government High School and Tejgaon Government High School.

The admission tests for Group-C will be held on December 27.

Children above seven will not be allowed to get their admissions to class one in any of the government schools.



PHOTO: STAR

Booksellers sell various types of admission guidebooks aimed at easily gullible young learners. The photo was taken in front of Government Laboratory School in the city yesterday, the first day of distribution of forms for admission to the government schools.

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