

# Miseries of Madhupur wildlife

MIRZA SHAKIL, *Tangail*

Driven by hunger and loss of habitat, a wide range of wildlife from Madhupur forest is regularly invading adjacent villages, locals and forest officials said.

In course of events, hungry mammals like boars, monkeys, hanumans, squirrels and deer are also getting killed regularly while crossing the busy Tangail-Mymensingh highway that crisscrosses the forest.

The situation deals a blow to the dwindling number of animals in the Madhupur forest which was, not long ago, very rich in wildlife, plants and trees.

Only 20 years ago, the Madhupur forest abounded with monkeys, hanumans, squirrels, deer, fowls, porcupines, hares, wild boars, jackals, fishing cats, civets, lizards, and different kinds of snakes including big pythons and birds.

Forest department sources said, since the independence of the country, the forest shrunk to an area of 10,000 acres from 45,565 acres. Indiscriminate felling of trees, poaching and increasing human population in the areas have contributed to near destruction of this rare forest.

Forest department office in Madhupur estimates that at present 300 to 400 monkeys, around 100 hanumans, several thousand squirrels, nearly 100 deer, including 70 spotted ones at the breeding centre, some wild fowls, jackals and snakes

## Driven by hunger, they invade neighbouring villages



PHOTO: STAR

**Deer and monkeys look for food in Dokhala area of Madhupur forest. The helpless animals often invade the neighbouring villages when food crisis turns acute, especially during the winter season.**

have managed to survive.

Monkeys, hanumans, squirrels and deer are mainly dependant on different fruits, including mango, jackfruit, berries, *kaika*, *dumur*, *ajuli*, *bohera*, *amlaki* and fresh leaves of different plants, which are now scanty in the forest.

Winter is not the season for mango and jackfruit. Some berries are still found in the forest, but other wild and medicinal fruit trees have almost disappeared from the forest.

The hungry animals often move around the quarters of the forest department staffs, villages and outside the forests and sometimes go near the tourists who come here for picnic.

The 70 spotted deer

which are kept in a pen inside the boundary at the breeding centre of Dokhala Range area are fed by the authorities. But the barking deer at large face acute food crisis as *bohera* and *ajuli* trees are now rare in the forest. The ground of the entire forest have also become devoid of grass and shrubs due to dryness.

"The winter season, especially the period between January and March, is very hard time for the wildlife in the forests," said Rajesh Chakma, Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF) in Madhupur.

"We have been getting some help for feeding the deer at the breeding centre which is very insufficient.

Though the deer should be given food thrice a day, we are unable to feed them more than once for want of fund," he said.

"Allocation of fund is needed also for buying food for the desperate monkeys and hanumans at large," the ACF added.

Hungry primates are now entering the villages of the indigenous people, stealing foods and also eating up fruits especially banana from their plantations, said elderly locals Ajoya Mre and Eugene Nokrek.

On January 19, five monkeys got on a banana-laden truck from Madhupur which was passing through the forest.

Sensing their presence, the driver stopped the truck at Rauti in Tarail upazila of

Kishoreganj.

At this, the five mammals fled the scene only to be displaced and shelterless, said Saiful Islam, Tarail upazila livestock officer.

Asit Ranjan Paul, Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) in Madhupur, told this correspondent that the food crisis of the wildlife would come down in a few years as they have already planted 19 varieties, including several fruit trees on 20 hectares of forest land for the wildlife.

"I will write to the higher authorities to allocate more fund for feeding the monkeys and hanumans and also to increase allocation for feeding the deer at the breeding centre," the DFO added.

# 300 kids suffer as their schoolhouse looted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

A group of villagers dismantled a tin-roofed government primary school in Pangashia union of Dumki upazila in the district on Monday following a dispute with the managing committee over shifting of the institution from erosion-prone area to a safer place.

While visiting the school yesterday, Abdur Rashid Gazi, chairman of the managing committee of Rajganj Government Primary School, told this correspondent that over 200 people of South Pangashia village, led by one Alauddin Mollah, came to Rajganj village in the union in two trawlers at around 8:00am.

They dismantled the school and took away its roof made of CI sheets, bamboo enclosures and other objects, forcing at least 300 students to attend classes under a makeshift tin-shed, Gazi added.

Md Nasir Kazi, a member of the managing committee, filed a case with the Speedy Tribunal tribunal, Patuakhali, yesterday accusing over 150 people, including Alauddin Mollah.

The court asked the officer-in-charge (OC) of Dumki Police Station to treat the case as an FIR (first information report) and submit a report on the matter after proper investigation.

Locals said the primary school was built 0.41 acres of land donated by Tufan Mollah of Rajganj village about 90 years ago. After independence, the school, the lone one in Pangashia union, comprising Rajganj and South Pangashia villages, became nationalised.

But due to erosion by the river Paira, the school was shifter several times to different

**Kids at Rajganj Government Primary School attend classes under a makeshift shelter after a local gang dismantled and looted the schoolhouse on Monday.**



PHOTO: STAR

## SNIPPETS

### Shop owners protest robbery

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

Shop owners of the district town yesterday observed a two-hour strike, protesting robbery held at Alim Jewellers at Imperial Super Market in Ganginarpar area on Monday. Under the banner of Shop Owners and Employees' Association, they brought out a procession in the town, demanding arrest of the robbers. A gang blasted bombs and looted gold ornaments and cash worth Tk two crore from the jewellery shop at around 8:00pm on Monday, said the speakers at the programme.

### Woman gives birth to triplets

UNB, *Benapole, Jessore*

A woman gave birth to three babies at Fedaipur village in Monirampur upazila on Sunday night. Local sources said Rafeza Akhter, 25, wife of Habibur Rahman of the village, was taken to the house of Shamsur Rahman after the pregnant woman felt labour pain. Later, she gave birth to three babies—two sons and one girl—one after another under the care of midwife Nazma Begum at the house.

### Land port closed for 4 days

UNB, *Brahmanbaria*

Export and import activities between Bangladesh and India through Akhaura land port were suspended for four days from yesterday due to assembly election in Indian Tripura state. However, the movement of passengers through the port will continue, said port sources. Polls to India's Tripura state assembly will be held on February 14. Hence, India's Agartala land port will remain closed for four days from Tuesday, halting all export-import related activities through the land port till Feb 15.

### Jamaat leader arrested

UNB, *Comilla*

Police arrested a local leader of Jamaat-e-Islami from a house in Devidwar upazila early yesterday. The arrestee was identified as Saiful Islam Shahid, 50, Devidwar upazila unit general secretary of Jamaat. Police said he was arrested from his sister's house in Devidwar municipality area at about 1:00am ahead of the party's countrywide demonstration yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

**This bridge aimed at linking people of 10 villages in Pabna Sadar upazila lies useless for the last six years as the authorities are yet to complete its approach roads.**

# Bridge that failed to bridge gap in the last six years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Pabna*

A bridge meant for providing better communication facilities to people of 10 villages in Dogasi union under Pabna Sadar upazila has remained useless for six years due to unfinished approach roads.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) built the 100-metre-bridge on the Mora Padma, a branch of the Padma River, at Char Ashutoshpur village at a cost of Tk 1.5 crore and then lawmaker of Pabna-5 constituency Moulana Abdus Subhan inaugurated the bridge on October 18 in 2006, official sources said.

The bridge links several villages including Char Ashutoshpur, Radhakantapur, Komorpur, Sadirajpur, Char Sadirajpur and Banglabazar under Dogasi union.

"If we go to Pabna town through Char Ashutoshpur and Dipchar areas we have to cross 10 kilometres but the distance would be reduced by half if the bridge is made usable," said Md Mofiz Uddin, a resident of Char Ashutoshpur.

"We the people of 10 villages in Dogasi union are too unlucky as we cannot use the road even after six years of bridge construction," said Mofiz, 80.

Md Shamsul Islam, chairman of Dogasi union Parishad, said, "The union parishad made an earthen road with the union parishad fund but it is not enough for vehicular movement. We have informed the local lawmaker of the matter but no step has been taken to construct the approach road for using the bridge."

কর্পোরেট বুকিং

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