

# Rampant poaching threatens wildlife in Hakaluki Haor

MINTU DESHWARA, back to Moulavibazar, from Hakaluki Haor

Poachers are indiscriminately hunting and selling birds, especially herons, posing a serious threat to wildlife at Hakaluki Haor, one of the country's largest natural waterbodies. Poachers say they catch the birds, that are in good demand for consumption, without facing restrictions from the authorities concerned although poaching is banned under The Wildlife (Protection and Safety) Act 2012.

Environmentalists say killing of birds, if continues, will affect the ecological system of the huge marshland. Hakaluki Haor is an 'ecologically critical area' having international importance for the conservation and sustainable utilisation of wetlands, they observed. However, poachers are deaf to the facts.

Ali Hossain, 35, at Kathaltoli Bazar of Borolekha upazila, is the one catching and selling birds on regular basis with traps.

"I trap birds and sell those at different markets. Some people place advanced orders for herons, a fact that attracts me," he told this correspondent, expressing his ignorance about any law against bird hunting.

Even commercially reared birds in the area are

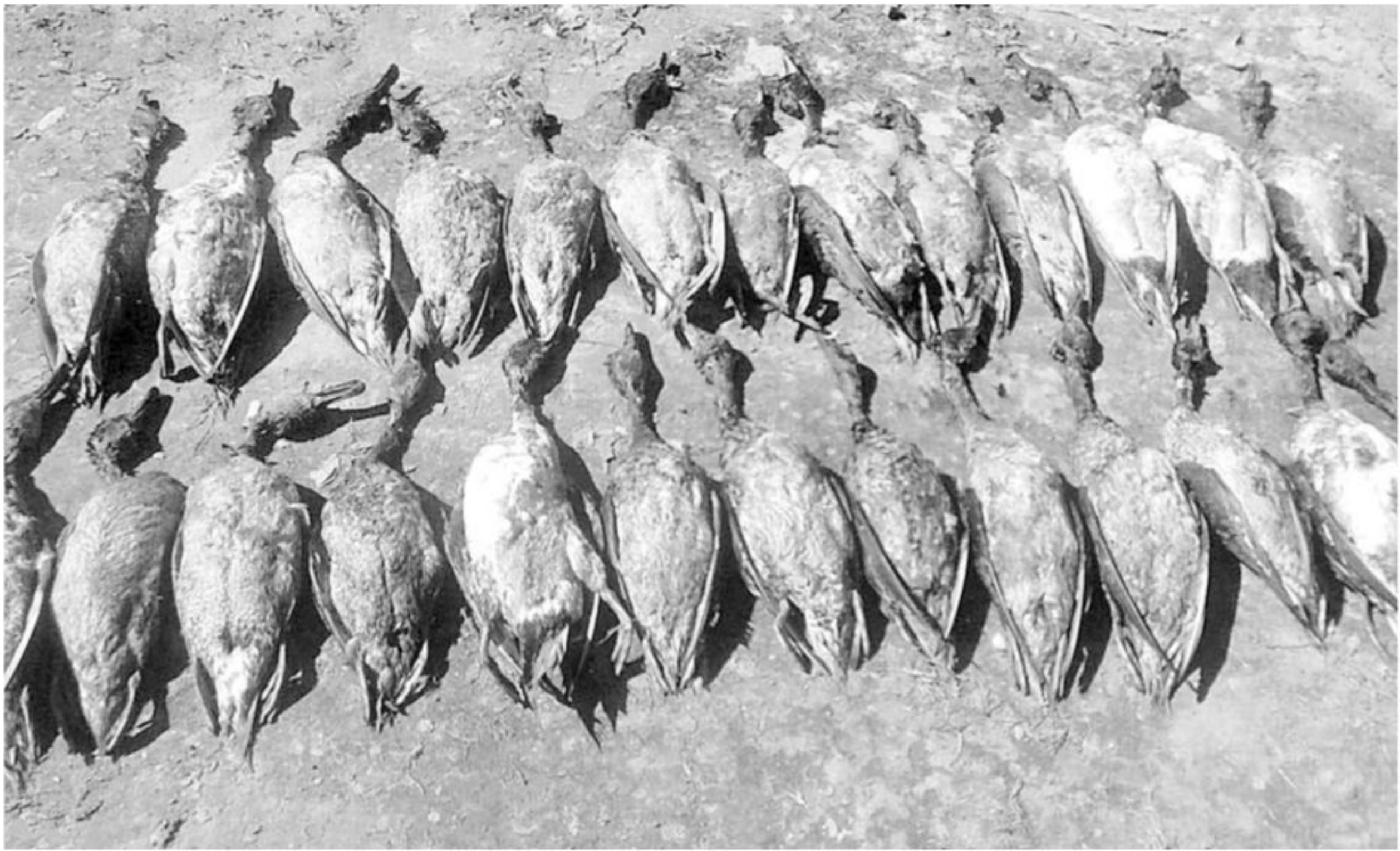


PHOTO: STAR

Poison-trapped ducks lie dead on the bank of Hakaluki Haor at Balijuri Beelpar in Baralekha upazila under Moulvibazar district.

not spared by the poachers who recently poisoned to death 200 ducks owned by Lilu Miah at Balijuri Beelpar in Borolekha upazila.

Lilu Miah filed a case with Borolekha police station in this regard on January 9 against the poachers Joynal Miah, Milon Miah, Rojjak Miah, and Aian Miah in Tamilpur union.

On December 9, forest officials seized 20 birds from poachers at Gourbeel

in Kulaura upazila. The gang had caught those from Hakaluki Haor.

Mizan Miah, 25, a poacher, said a good number of people regularly catch herons, which flock to the wetland in search of food, and sell those at Balapukur Bazar.

Such indiscriminate poaching is threatening existence of the herons, said an elderly farmer, Hossain Sarker, 82.

"Earlier I saw a lot of

herons flocking to the local beel (water body) in search of fish but the scene is becoming rare now," he said.

Shrinking of water bodies, decrease of indigenous fish species and mindless poaching are mainly responsible for the situation, said Sarkar of Pusainagar village of Kulaura upazila.

Mahbubur Rahman, divisional forest officer [wildlife and nature

conservation department] of Sylhet, said The Wildlife (Protection and Safety) Act 2012 has a provision of awarding one year jail and a fine of up to Tk 1 lakh or both to the bird poachers.

"With the help of law enforcers, I will conduct drives against bird poachers if I get any information," he said, admitting that it was important to build awareness on conservation of biodiversity.

# Brick kiln worker shot dead, 6 others injured by extortionists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chuadanga

A brick kiln worker was shot dead and six others were injured by extortionists at Kumari village in Alamdanga upazila of the district early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Sujon, 35, son of Abdul Malek of Shapur village in Iswardi upazila of Pabna.

Police quoted brick kiln workers as saying that a gang of seven extortionists entered Musa Brick Field at Kumari village at around 3:00am and demanded Tk

five lakh from the manager.

As the manager and workers refused to pay them toll, the extortionists opened fire, leaving Sujon dead on the spot and worker Rafiul Islam, 38, injured.

The gang also beat up Manger Golap Ali, 40, and workers Abdul Latif, 32, Siddique, 35, Robiul, 37, and Abdur Razzak, 38 and left the scene.

Locals took the injured manager workers to private clinic and bullet-hit Rafiul Islam to Kushtia General Hospital.

On information, a police team from Alamdanga Police Station went to the spot, recovered Sujon's body and sent it to Chuadanga Sadar Hospital for autopsy.

A case was filed with local police station yesterday morning, but police could not arrest any of the gang as of filing of this report at 4:00pm.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Rafiul Islam said they have already launched a drive to arrest the killers of brick kiln worker Sujon.

# 14 forest robbers arrested with arms, bombs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Members of Bangladesh Coast Guard arrested 14 forest robbers from Gagramari area near Sundarbans under Shyamnagar upazila of the district early yesterday.

The law enforcers also recovered 14 locally made arms, five bombs and bomb-making materials from the robbers.

The arrestees are Md Muzzafar, Md Araj Ali, Murshid Ali Sarder, Md Israfil Gazi, Abdus Samad

Sarder, Abdus Salam, Sirajul Islam, Md Amirul Fakir, Siddique Ali, Abu Musa, Abdur Rahim and Kutu Alamgir.

They were staying at a house in Gagramari area near Sundarbans. Acting on a tip-off, coastguards raided the house of one Abdur Sattar Khan in the area at around 4:30am and arrested the robbers.

Commander Md Shahjahan of Coira Coast Guard contingent said coast guard members

seized 14 locally made arms, including machetes, knives and spears, and five bombs and bomb-making materials from robbers' possession.

Coast guards later handed over the forest robbers to Shyamnagar Police station. A case was filed with the police station.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) Shagir Mian of Shyamnagar Police Station said the gang members were staying at the house in Gagramari area to attack a shrimp enclosure there.

# Growers pile up banana on road for lack of marketplace

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Banana growers of the district, that saw a bumper production of the fruit, are facing serious trouble as they do not have any suitable marketplace to sell their produce.

The cultivators and traders throng different points on both sides of Rangpur-Dhaka highway, including Mokamtola, Chandihara, Mohasthanagar and Rahabal in the district, for selling the fruit twice a week.

The rush of farmers, vendors, and buyers make the road very crowded while the piled up banana adds to the traffic congestion during the trading.

Farmers of 12 upazilas have been showing interest in banana cultivation as it is more profitable than farming of paddy and jute, said officials at local Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

Due to this, about 2333 bighas of land out of 3750 in the district have been brought under banana cultivation this season. Shibganj, Gabtoli and Shajahanpur upazilas are now well-known for its farming.

Around 3000 bighas of



PHOTO: STAR

A large quantity of bananas brought for sale occupy a portion of Rangpur-Dhaka highway at Chandihara in Bogra district, much to the disturbance of commuters, as there is no suitable marketplace for growers and wholesalers of the popular fruit that sees bumper production in the district this year.

land had been brought under the cultivation of the seasonal fruit last year, said the sources at DAE.

Abdul Hamid, a farmer 52, at Anantobala village in Shibganj upazila, said different types of bananas like sagor, champa, jahaji, anupam and shobri are being

cultivated here.

"I have spent Tk 20,000 for cultivating banana on one bigha of land and expect to earn at least Tk one lakh by selling the fruit," he said.

Due to lack of suitable places for selling our produces, we were forced to pile up those on the

roadside spaces, increasing the risk of accidents, said banana cultivator Hossain Ali, 47, of Ashokola village in Sadar upazila.

Contacted, Bazlur Rashid, deputy director, DAE in the district, said his office was looking into the problem to resolve it as soon as

## Missing tea shop owner found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narail

Police recovered the body of a man from a field at Digholia Purbopara village in Lohagara upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased is Torikul Islam Mollah Turki, 34, son of Lal Mia of the village. He ran a tea stall at Digholia Bazar in the area.

Alamgir Hossain, officer in-charge of Lohagara Police Station, said Turki went missing on Wednesday night.

Criminals might have strangled Turki and dumped the body in the field, said the OC.

Turki was also accused in a case for vandalising houses in the area, said police.

## 5 robbers held with Tk 16 lakh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Police in separate drives have arrested five alleged robbers along with Tk 16 lakh looted from a business centre in Joypurhat district last month.

The arrestees are Moyen Uddin, 45, of Akkelpur upazila of Joypurhat, Farid Hawladar 41, of Satrail village, Belayet Hossain 43, of Satghata village under Rajapur upazila in Jhalokathi, Siraj Baul, 38, of Monirampur upazila in Jessore and Mizanur Rahman, 40, of Terokhada upazila in Khulna.

Khairul Islam, inspector of Joypurhat Police Station, said the five were arrested from different districts recently.

They also recovered Tk 16 lakh out of Tk 65 lakh looted from the volt of British American Tobacco Company Ltd office in Joypurhat on December 21.

The robbers also killed the night guard of the office before fleeing the scene, said the inspector.

Police produced them before the newsmen at Joypurhat SP office yesterday, he said.

Later, they were produced before the court which sent them to jail, said Khairul, also investigation officer of the case.

# Thousands suffer for want of a permanent bridge

ABDUL WAHED, Kurigram

Over 40 thousand people in two unions of two upazilas in the district have been suffering much just for want of a bridge.

Royganj union council constructed a 60-metre bamboo bridge over Phulkumari river at Rangalirbash village in Nageswari upazila with the voluntary services of local people eight years ago and the bridge was last renovated two years ago.

People of 20 villages of Royganj union in Nageswari upazila and Andharighar union under Bhurungamari upazila of the district use the bridge, locally called 'Rangalirbash Pool'.

Now the bridge is in a bad shape, posing a serious risk to the users. As the bridge is not fit for vehicles, people are to walk an extra 15 to 18 kilometers

road to reach the district headquarters, villagers said.

Royganj Degree College, Ratanpur MU High School, Ratanpur Government Primary School and Sonaikhamar Alim Madrasa are situated only half-a-kilometre around the bridge. Students go to their institutions using the bridge amid risk of accident anytime. Many people including students often use boat for crossing the river in fear of falling down from the bridge.

The people's representatives of the area pledged several times for constructing the bridge before their union parishad and parliamentary elections but they forgot the promise after polls, villager Suruzzaman Mia, 36, said.

While visiting the bridge, this correspondent talked to Aroz Ali,

50, of Rangalirbash village who said, "Now the bridge has turned into a death trap for people as middle part of the bridge has been badly damaged. Locals, including students, cross the river using the bridge with fear."

Acting chairman of Royganj union parishad Rokunuzzaman Shimu admitted that the bridge is most essential for people on both sides of the river.

"Local lawmaker called me recently and told me to place an application for constructing Rangalirbash bridge", he added.

Contacted, LGED engineer Masudur Rahman said, "I am yet to receive any order to renovate Rangalirbash bridge. However, I will take necessary steps after getting directives in this connection".



PHOTO: STAR

Overused and risky, this bamboo bridge over Phulkumari River in Royganj union of Nageswari upazila under Kurigram district remains the lone means for walking across the river for thousands of people of several villages on the both sides of the river.

## BGB-BSF flag meeting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chuadanga

A battalion commander level flag meeting between Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and India Border Security Force (BSF) was held at international conference room at Darshana border check post in Damurhuda upazila on Wednesday morning.

BGB-6 camp commander Lt Col SM Moniruzzaman led a seven-member team while commander SH AK Shorma led the 10-member Indian delegation.

During the meeting, both sides agreed to reduce border Killing and solve the existing border related problems between the two countries.

# 10 injured as BCL, JCD clash at BRUR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

At least ten people were injured as Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) men clashed with Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists at Begum Rokeya University, Rangpur (BRUR) yesterday.

Police and witnesses said BCL activists brought out a procession on the campus at around 11:45am, welcoming the admission seekers during first year honours admission test at the university.

When a procession of JCD activists entered the campus to welcome the admission seekers, BCL men by BRUR unit

chief Mehedy Hasan Shishir chased the JCD activists.

At one stage, the activists of the two rival student bodies equipped with lethal weapons swooped on each other, leaving at least ten people from both sides injured.

Of the injured, Md Imran, Saiful Islam Limon, Md Sharif Hossain, Md Moksed Ali, Shovan, and Rezwan were admitted to Rangpur Medical College Hospital and private clinics in the town while the rest given first aid.

On information, police rushed to the campus and brought the situation

under control. Hajrat Ali Belal, convener of JCD university unit, claimed that seven JCD activists were injured in BCL attack on their procession on the campus.

Refuting the allegation, BCL university unit president Mehedy Hasan Shishir said JCD men with help of outsiders attacked their peaceful procession.

Contacted, Abdul Qader Jilani, officer-in-charge of Rangpur Kotwali Police Station, additional police have been deployed on the campus to avert any further untoward situation.