

# Bird survey today at Hakaluki haor

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Bangladesh Birds Club will do a survey on an endangered migratory bird, waterfowl, at Hakaluki haor today.

A team of 15 experts led by prominent bird specialist Enam Ul Haque is conducting the survey under the Coastal and Wetland Bio-diversity Management Project of Directorate of Environment (DoE).

He is also the national coordinator of waterfowl census in Bangladesh.

The survey, funded by USAID's Climate Resilient Ecosystems and Livelihoods (CREL) project, will be done in six upazilas of Hakaluki Haor area.

Local biologists and bird lovers will also be in the survey team while a zool-

ogy team will observe the arrival of guest birds, said DoE officials yesterday.

The survey aims to find out the number of this bird's species and reasons why the number of this bird is declining, they said.

Bashir Ahmed, Natural Resource Management officer at environment department, told The Daily Star that the survey would end tomorrow.

Earlier in 2011, about 64,000 birds of 61 species were counted during a survey.

In 1999, the DoE declared the Hakaluki Haor an ecologically critical area as its environment with aquatic trees and plants like Hijal and Koroch was being destroyed, resulting in a decrease in the number of migratory birds coming here.



Migratory birds chirping and flying in Hakaluki haor. They arrived in the water body from the Himalayan and Siberian regions in the beginning of this winter season. An expert team begins a survey on an endangered migratory bird, waterfowl at the haor from today.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA



## Rickshaws clog streets

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Since the political turmoil which began late last year, rickshaws have been freely moving on main streets like Mirpur Road, Panthapath, Manik Mia Avenue, Phoenix Road, Ittefaq intersection to Bangabhaban, Abdul Gani Road and between Matshya Bhaban and Shahbagh intersections.

The newfangled battery-run rickshaws pose a greater risk as these home-made rickshaws, which are just regular rickshaws with an electric motor attached, are not designed to endure speeds they usually do on the streets.

They are neither recognised by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) as a motorised vehicle, nor by the city corporations as a non-motorised three-wheeler. Yet nobody does anything about these illegal rickshaws.

Due to rising congestion in the city, the government between 2002 and 2004 banned rickshaws on important city streets. But many rickshaw pullers The Daily Star talked to said they get to use those streets

just by paying traffic police or ansar members on duty a bribe of Tk 5 to Tk 10.

"I have given Tk 5 to a traffic police at Matshya Bhaban to go to Shahbagh last week," said Mohammad Barek, a rickshaw puller of Madhubagh of Moghbazar.

Anwar Hossain, a car driver who travels to Mirpur-1 from New Market everyday, said it was very difficult to stop his car when a rickshaw or rickshaw-van swerves in front of it, especially at night.

There are around 5 lakh illegal rickshaws and rickshaw vans in the capital on top of around 79,000 rickshaws and 7,793 rickshaw vans with permission from the Dhaka city corporations, said sources in Dhaka north and south city corporations.

Tanweer Hasan, director of Accident Research Institute, said the main purpose of a street off limits to non-motorised vehicles is get better mobility and the mobility gets compromised when rickshaws run on the street along with motorised vehicles.

"Rickshaw should not be used for long-distant commuting and should be restricted within an area or for short distance travels," he said.

Dhaka Transport Coordination Board's ex-additional executive director SM Salehuddin said separate rickshaw lanes in pocket areas should be set up but key thoroughfares should remain free of rickshaws but more buses are needed to reduce congestion.

Deputy Commissioner (traffic south) Khan Muhammad Redwan of Dhaka Metropolitan Police claimed that when the flow of vehicles increases four to five times the capacity of the streets, traffic police struggle to manage and that was when some traffic rules remain unenforced.

He said they were trying to keep the thoroughfares free of rickshaws 24 hours a day.

About policemen taking bribes, Redwan said if they discover involvement of any traffic police, they would take immediate action.

CHECKING ANOMALIES

## Milk Vita to track its vehicles

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to prevent transport-related anomalies, the state-run cooperative dairy farm Milk Vita has started installing vehicle tracking system (VTS) devices in its lorries and covered-vans.

The move aims to check "unusually excessive expenses" on the pretexs of repair and maintenance of vehicles, according to a press release of Milk Vita.

The initiative will help curb corruption in the company's transport department, Mohammad Munir Chowdhury, managing director of Milk Vita, told The Daily Star.

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## Jinnah at Curzon Hall

FROM PAGE 16

convocation of Dhaka University at Curzon Hall on March 24, 1948. He dwelt on the refugee issue, the need to guard against conspiracies and the place of Urdu in national life.

Excerpts from the speech are reproduced below:

"Unlike your predecessors you fortunately leave this university to enter life under a sovereign, independent state of your own. . . We have broken the shackles of slavery; we are now a free people. Our state is our own state. Our government is our own government.

. . . Thwarted in their desire to prevent the establishment of Pakistan, our enemies turned their attention to finding ways and means to weaken and destroy us. . .

Our enemies, among whom, I regret to say, there are still some Muslims, have set about actively encouraging provincialism in the hope of weakening Pakistan and thereby facilitating the re-absorption of this province into the Indian Dominion. Those who are playing this game are living in a fool's paradise, but this does not prevent them trying. . ."

Jinnah then took up the language ques-

tion:

"There can, however, be one lingua franca, that is, the language for inter-communication between the various provinces of the state, and that language should be Urdu and cannot be any other. The state language, therefore, must obviously be Urdu. . .

Make no mistake about it. There can be only one state language, if the component parts of this state are to march forward in unison and that language, in my opinion, can only be Urdu."

At this point, loud protests of "No, no!" were heard in the hall. Jinnah, unaccustomed to people defying him, stayed silent for a few moments before resuming his speech.

Pakistan's leader clearly spotted conspiracies to undo Pakistan. He went on to warn the students:

". . . beware of the fifth columnists among yourselves . . . guard against and weed out selfish people who only wish to exploit you so that they may swim. . . consolidate the Muslim League party which will serve and build up a really and truly great and glorious Pakistan"

It was not Mohammad Ali Jinnah's finest hour.

## Youth dies in cop custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A youth died in police custody yesterday hours after he was detained for "involvement in a fight that created panic" at Pallabi in the capital.

The dead, Istiaq Ahmed Johny, 28, was a private car driver and a resident of Talab camp, a settlement for the Biharis at Mirpur sector-11.

He along with four others was picked up from Irani camp, another Bihari settlement close to his residence, around 2:30am after a scuffle between two groups at a wedding function over a girl being harassed, local people and witnesses said.

Johnny had slapped Sumon, who happened to work as a "source of police", for harassing the girl, said his brother Mohammad Rony.

Syed Ziauzzaman, officer-in-charge of Pallabi Police Station, told The Daily Star that police had taken Johny to a local hospital after he had chest pain. He was transferred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead around 10:30am.

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## SORRY, Khaleda

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Mominul said he didn't have any record on deaths of opposition men during the one-month period.

The Daily Star carried a report on the death of a Juba Dal leader in the district in that period.

The BNP chairperson claimed that 20 people were killed in Laxmipur, and almost all of them were local leaders of her party and its front organisations.

Harun-ur Rashid, organising secretary of Laxmipur district BNP, however, said only two opposition men were killed during the period.

Khaleda also mentioned that 17 activists of the BNP, Chhatra Dal and Jubo Dal were killed in Cox's Bazar. But district BNP President Shajahan Chowdhury and its Office Secretary Yusuf Badri said no BNP man was killed during the period.

According to the BNP chairperson's claim, 15 people, including eight local leaders of the party and its front organisations, were killed in Chittagong. Gazi Shajahan Jewel, general secretary of Chittagong district (North) BNP, said he had sent a list of the dead to the party's central office, but he

refused to give it to The Daily Star.

During the period, The Daily Star ran reports on deaths of four opposition men, which were corroborated by Mohammad Ali, senior staff correspondent of the Dainik Purbokan, a Chittagong-based newspaper, and Mithun Chowdhury, local correspondent of a national news agency.

Khaleda put the death figure in Sirajganj at 14 that include seven members of the BNP, Chhatra Dal and Jubo Dal.

However, Harunur Rashid Hasan, office secretary of Sirajganj district BNP, said only one Jubo Dal leader was killed during that time.

She claimed that 13 men of the BNP-led alliance were killed in Chapainawabganj. Of them, seven were BNP activists.

But in reality, it was an Awami League man, Enamul Haq, who was burnt to death by opposition activists during the period. Emran Faruk Masum, editor of the Daily Chapai Dristi, refuted Khaleda's claim, saying except for Enamul, none was killed in the district during that time.

Joypurhat district BNP leaders were unaware that 12 party activists were killed in the one-month period, as claimed by Khaleda.

Mozahar Ali Prodhon, president of Joypurhat district BNP, said 12 people were killed in police firing over the last one year.

The death figure mentioned by Mozahar was corroborated by the superintendent of police in Joypurhat, Hamidul Alam.

When his attention was drawn to Khaleda's claim, Mozahar refrained from making any comments.

The BNP chief also cited that 11 activists of the BNP-led alliance were killed in Noakhali.

But Harun-ur Rashid, general secretary of Noakhali district BNP, said 11 people were killed in the last three months. He, however, couldn't give any death figure for the said one month.

Other local sources said two opposition men were killed in the one-month period.

JUGGLERY OF FIGURES

The district-wise death figures given by Khaleda appeared more or less authentic only when the period was

extended by more than a year from the one month she had specified.

At a press conference on January 22, acting BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir claimed 294 activists of the BNP-led alliance were killed in three months from November. But he couldn't give details to support his claim.

Party's Joint Secretary General Rizvi Ahmed on February 6 told reporters that his party couldn't prepare a complete list of the alliance leaders and activists killed in recent times, as they didn't have much time to do so because of the government's "relentless repression".

However, The Daily Star would like to note that even 17 deaths in a month are much higher and not acceptable. And the death of around 200 people in political violence in a year is a matter of grave concern. This should be investigated by the government and necessary measures should be taken to bring an end to the culture of political killings.

[Our correspondents in the nine districts contributed to this report]

## Wounded tigress undergoes surgery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Though a vein of her forelimb had been torn and the wound had become infected, veterinary surgeons managed to save the left foreleg of Pashuri, the rescued tigress from the Sundarbans.

A group of doctors led by Professor Mizanur Rahman of Mymensingh Agricultural University (BAU) conducted the two-hour long surgery at the animal hospital of the Bangabandhu Safari Park in Gazipur yesterday afternoon.

"The surgeons have removed the rope and cleaned the pus from her wound. The good news is her limb is saved and hopefully she will recover in two weeks," said Dr Tapan Kumar Dey, forest conservator at wildlife and nature conservation circle under the Department of Forest.

Besides the eight-member BAU team, Dr Nizam Uddin, surgeon of the animal hospital, also took part in the operation.

The trap's twine had dug deep and infected the flesh, and a vein was torn, said

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## Rising slowly against fear

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On January 5, Hindus of Telipara, a locality under Kornai village in Dinajpur, came under attacks led by BNP-Jamaat men for allegedly casting their votes, ignoring the polls boycott call of the 18-party alliance.

The attackers, local activists of BNP and Jamaat-e-Islami, swopped on men and women on the way to and from the poll centre, vandalised several houses and more than three dozens of shops at the village, around 430 kilometres northwest from the capital.

Not only at Kornai of Dinajpur, Hindus also came under attacks in several other districts in the country on the polls day and afterwards.

The local administration installed a temporary police camp at Kornai Bazar after the attacks in the area to ensure security of the villagers.

However, feeling of insecurity runs high among the Hindus of Telipara despite the fact that the alleged attackers have been on the run.

"Some attackers have threatened us that they would come at night again to vent their anger. That is why we guard our locality at night since January 5," said 22-year-old Sudesh Roy, a member of the voluntary security providers, who was

accompanying Liton.

However, Liton, Sudesh and others know although their services will give respite to others for the time being, it cannot dispel the feeling of deep insecurity that grows over the years owing to past attacks and repression of the Hindus by a section that promotes religious fundamentalism and hatred through politics.

"We faced the brutality of Khans [Pakistani military] and Razakars during the Liberation War and repression after independence. Now, our children face the same tyranny," said 50-year-old woman Vatibala Roy, who also volunteers with Liton and others at night.

Some 43 years has passed since the country fought the Liberation War with the spirit of secularism, but religious and political hostility still haunts the nation.

"I cannot sleep for fear of further attacks. The government should give us security so that we can live in peace," said a frustrated Vatibala.

Amid fears of insecurity and threats of further attacks, Bhushan Chandra Roy left home with his family by the end of last month, said Chandan Roy, nephew of Bhushan.

Some locals claim Bhushan, who was injured in his attempts to resist the attackers, left for India amid frustration. But Bhushan's 60-year-

old mother Ajobala believes her son would come back.

"We were also about to leave after the attacks," said Kamona Roy, spouse of Liton, showing clothes and other essentials ready in luggage.

Liton's neighbour 25-year-old Ganesh Roy thinks many of the villagers might leave Kornai if the temporary police camp is withdrawn.

"Once lost, the peace of mind does not return too easily when security of life is concerned. We, the Hindus, are attacked every time after elections. We do not understand what is out fault. Are not we Bangalees?" said elderly Prem Charan Roy, another neighbour of Liton.

Apart from the feeling of insecurity, poverty also increases vulnerability of most of the residents of Kornai and its locality Telipara.

Most of the Hindus of Kornai do not have farmland and earn their living by working as farm labourers on cropland of well-off Muslims in nearby villages. A section of Hindu women also work as domestic help at the Muslims' houses.

Their income has dropped sharply since the election as most of the Muslims, including attackers and supporters of BNP-Jamaat alliance, are either least interested

to hire the Hindus or are on the run.

Liton's neighbour Anukul Chandra Roy, who used to work as a construction worker under his Muslim neighbour, has found himself jobless after the polls.

Anukul believes his employer, a supporter of BNP-Jamaat-led 18-party alliance, is reluctant to hire him at the construction sites in the town. He lived on little savings he had and after it was fast consumed had to depend on donation from an NGO. Now he is working four days a week to help Border Guard Bangladesh repair the vandalised shops at Kornai Bazar with no idea how he will survive once the repair is complete.

For Liton, the sole breadwinner of a four-member family, the story is a bit different. His small medicine store, which was vandalised on the election day, still remains shut due to shortage of capital.

Liton also runs a business of potato seeds, which he buys on credit and sells to neighbouring farmers, mostly Muslims, on credit on condition they would make the payment after harvest and give him priority as a buyer of their produce.

But he has yet to get payment from the farmers, who have suffered loss due to low prices of potato amid harvesting glut. A

section of farmers, whom Liton provided potato seeds on credit, belongs to the BNP-Jamaat alliance. They have been on the run to escape arrest, making the situation harder for Liton as he is under pressure from seed suppliers to make their payment.

In addition, pressure of depositing instalments of microcredit and sharecropper loans rises. Every week Liton has to pay Tk 1,700 in instalments for micro loans and Tk 2,600 a month to clear his dues as sharecropper.

"It is a very tough situation. I cannot bear it anymore," said a frustrated Liton after a phone conversation with the potato seed supplier, who was not willing to consider his situation.

"How can I face all these problems at a time? Security of my parents and family is at stake. My income has fallen, but the pressure to clear dues has risen. I cannot see any hope," he lamented.

Liton, preoccupied with the burden of these thoughts, proceeded towards home to take some rest one and a half hours past midnight. Other volunteers Sudesh, Anukul and Naresh sat together by the campfire to prepare for the rest of the night to ensure security of a people, whose future is as dark as the winter night.

## Owners land

FROM PAGE 1

causing grievous injuries and deaths by negligence.

According to the charge sheet, the couple had constructed the building on a faulty plan with the help of the engineer, and illegally used the ground-floor walkway as a warehouse.

Of the 11 other accused, the factory manager, quality manager, engineer and production manager were shown as fugitives in the charge sheet.

Six accused got bail from the High Court and the lower court on different dates. Only the security in-charge of the company is now behind bars.

Following a writ petition, the HC in May last year asked the government to explain why it should not be directed to prosecute Delwar for his alleged negligence in protecting the workers.

The rule is pending with the HC, and the court may hear it any day, said petitioners' counsel Asaduzzaman.

During the proceedings of the writ petition, Delwar appeared before the HC at every hearing in line with a court order.

In June last year, a probe body formed by the home ministry submitted a report to the HC, saying there was "unpardonable negligence" on the part of the owner.

Talking to The Daily Star at the HC on May 30 last year, Delwar protested his innocence. He claimed the law enforcers did not arrest him, as there were no specific charges against him.

The Tazreen fire highlighted the appalling safety records in the sector, a mainstay of the economy, where about 40 lakh workers toil for some of the lowest sector wages in the world.

Bangladesh suffered the worst industrial tragedy four months later in April last year when the Rana Plaza garment factory complex collapsed in Savar, killing at least 1,135 people.