

River taskforce to conduct mobile courts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The national taskforce on river protection has decided to conduct mobile courts against river encroachers and polluters.

The decision was taken at a meeting of the taskforce yesterday.

"Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) from now on will conduct mobile courts during eviction drives to hand down financial penalty or imprisonment or both on the river grabbers," said BIWTA Joint Director Saiful Islam.

The meeting, presided over by Shipping Minister Shajahan Khan, also directed deputy commissioners of all districts concerned to take steps for protection of the rivers from encroachment.

Besides, the taskforce directed Dhaka Wasa to force every individual house owner in the capital to build septic tanks to stop disposal of sewage into the rivers though storm sewers.

Ministers for housing, land, liberation war affairs and food were among others present at the meeting.

BNP ready

FROM PAGE 16

8:00pm at the BNP chief's Gulshan residence in the capital.

Emerging from the meeting, BNP vice-chairman Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury told reporters that a range of issues of bilateral interests were discussed in the meeting.

The BNP chief told the delegation that the EU usually works on the rule of law, democratic governance system and human rights. "But none of these are now present in Bangladesh," Mobin said quoting Khaleda as saying.

Khaleda also said the economy of the country would be seriously affected if political stability was not restored immediately.

EU Ambassador William Hanna and BNP chairperson's advisers Reaz Rahman and Sabihuddin Ahmed were present at the meeting.

Subhan, his aides killed 3 in Pabna

FROM PAGE 16

secretary and vice-president of Pabna Peace Committee, an anti-liberation force, in 1971.

The 63-year-old witness, also an acting editor of a local newspaper, said the Pakistani army captured the entire Ishwardi on April 11, 1971 and set up several camps there.

As the Pakistani army reached Ishwardi, local leaders and activists of Jamaat and other anti-liberation parties and Biharies carried out atrocities in the locality and killed around 200 people with the help of the occupation army, he said.

Shocked by the brutality, around 200 people took shelter in Ishwardi Kendriya Jame Masjid, Fazlur said.

They also heard that local anti-liberation people, under the leadership of Jamaat leader Khoda Baks, had been



Producers selling different types of mangoes at Baneshwar Kachari Math in Rajshahi, a division renowned for the summer fruit. Wholesalers buy mangoes from this market and ship them to Dhaka. However, there is no way of telling if the mangoes are tainted with toxic chemicals.

PHOTO: STAR

Step good yet not enough

FROM PAGE 1

ABM Faruque, professor of pharmaceutical technology at Dhaka University, described how many toxins are infused into mangoes.

"When a mango is green, it is sprayed with chemical insecticide to save it from pests." After that, the mango is infused with growth promoter hormones to make it grow fast, he said.

"Once it is of a considerable size, it is ripened with a hormone. After the mango is plucked off the tree, it is infused with the ripening hormone again. Before being transported, it is soaked in formalin to make it look fresh," said Prof Faruque.

"Fruits like these have no nutritional value whatsoever." On the contrary, if one consumes such fruits, the

ripening hormones may slowly damage his liver and kidneys. "The acid secretion of the stomach increases. This can even cause cancer," said the DU teacher.

A big problem is that farmers generally don't know that excessive use of growth hormones in fruits is harmful to human body, say experts.

Over the last few months, different consumer platforms have been staging protests in the capital over widespread use of toxic chemicals in food.

The Daily Star yesterday talked to some consumers, who seemed sceptic about the success of the government's latest step.

"So, we get poisoned with one less toxin ... don't we still get poisoned all the same?" asked Jamila Mostafa, a pharmacy student at Asia Pacific

University.

Sourav Saha, a resident of Old Dhaka, said he soaks apples in vinegar for at least half an hour to rid it of harmful chemicals, but can do nothing more.

"It seems pointless to buy fruits at high prices when they are poisoned. But it is difficult to say no to fruits," said Sourav.

As part of the government move, check points will be set up at Postogola Bridge, Waizghat at Sadarghat, Abdullahpur Bridge, Dhaur Bridge in Ashulia, Babubazar Bridge, Gabtoli, Jatrabari Police Station and the intersection near Kamal Bridge at Demra.

A recent government study sponsored by FAO found that 40 percent of 82 samples of fruits, vegetables, milk

and fish were poisoned with pesticides banned for high levels of toxicity. The presence of the harmful substances ranged from three to 20 times the acceptable limit.

Carrots, beans, capsicums, lettuce and pineapples were among some of the produce with high levels of toxicity.

However, the upcoming drive by the DMP and the BSTI will not be able to detect such toxins in food.

Meanwhile, Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed yesterday hoped a law would be amended in the current session of parliament, keeping the provision of tougher punishment for using formalin in food.

At a discussion on April 30, Law Minister Anisul Huq suggested life imprisonment for those using formalin in food.

Chief whip blasts media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Whip ASM Feroz yesterday claimed himself to be "a true and transparent politician working for the welfare of people" and requested the Speaker to ensure that no newspaper can hurt politicians like him in future by publishing "false news".

Feroz made the appeal in parliament in reference to a report published in the Bangla daily Prothom Alo yesterday.

Titled "Ek chief whip-er etto sorkari basa [So many government residences for a chief whip]", the report claimed Feroz had seven residences allocated to his name. The residences are, the daily claimed, being used by support staff and friends of the chief whip.

Apart from these, he has also been allocated a bungalow inside the parliament complex, the report cited.

Speaking on point of order, Feroz termed the news a personal vendetta aimed at smearing his image and alleged some newspapers, including the Prothom Alo, have been publishing "malicious" news against him since the run-up to the January 5 elections.

"However, they could not prove those news reports true," he claimed.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Ward councillor held for rape

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gopalganj

A ward councillor of Tungipara municipality allegedly raped a college girl at Madhumati Parjatan Motel in the town on Saturday with the help of two motel staff.

Councillor Liton Sheikh, 32, with the help of Jalal Mia, 26, and Alim Biswas, 26, had confined the student of Sheikh Hasina College of Kotalipara in Gopalganj to a room around 2:30pm, police said quoting the victim.

Jalal and Alim guarded the room while Liton raped the victim, police said, adding all three were arrested after the victim escaped and reported the incident to police around 3:30pm.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

More arms

FROM PAGE 16

investigations conducted after the 2003 arms haul in Bogra.

Indian separatist groups, including National Liberation Front of Tripura and All Tripura Tiger Force, used the bordering forest as a shelter and for training camps as well, said sources in the law enforcement agencies.

The Rab first laid its hands on 184 anti-tank rocket shells (40mm) and 153 rocket charges on June 3 inside a bunker at a hillock of the forest.

Six more bunkers were found on that day but they were empty, Rab sources said. The next day law enforcers found two more bunkers piled with a cache of arms and ammunition.

The bunkers look like tunnels, Rab officials said.

The arms and ammunition recovered previously were handed over to Chunarughat Police Station.

Need a gun to stop Messi! New frog species recorded for Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

ball. When the game goes to one side of the field, he will be all alone on the other.

"Despite his injuries this last season he will be a big threat at the World Cup."

Brazil and Argentina have been tipped as two favourites to reach the final in what would be a mouth-watering coming together of South America's fiercest rivals.

Silva admits he would love to face the Alejandro Sabella's men but also welcomed the prospect of renewing rivalries with several other nations.

"[Argentina] would be a classic," he added.

"After that Germany would be a great game, a re-match of the 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup final, or Spain. They are also calling for revenge after we beat them in the Confederations Cup final."

"[Sergio] Ramos says it would be different at the World Cup."

In their final World Cup tune-up, Argentina fielded a light line-up without too much talent against a tough Slovenia and still managed to impress with more than a few above-average substitutions.

Ricky Alvarez scored in the first half with Messi connecting with Angel di Maria, and Sergio Aguero put one in during the final half of the match to

finalise the scoreline. The latter three all entered the match to add a bit more spice to the attack and it certainly worked as was proved with that goal. Look out for these three to be on the field together quite a bit in the tournament itself.

Despite recent history in the tournament which has failed to quite live up to expectations, the feeling from Buenos Aires to the wine region of Mendoza, and from the heights of Salta in the north to the world's southernmost city, Ushuaia, is that a trophy win in Brazil is too good a chance to miss.

Argentina were the top scorers during South American qualifying, and given the players at their disposal it will be little surprise to hear that they're as capable of intricate team goals as they are of fast counter-attacks or thrilling solo efforts.

Expectations back home are tempered by a popular belief that Sabella has placed personal loyalties over perhaps more talented players; Carlos Tevez is the most obvious of the names to be left out.

Teams have already started to arrive at their base camps in Brazil. Argentina are due to arrive today at their base in Belo Horizonte from Buenos Aires.

FROM PAGE 16

trunk holes and hollows. They informed the world around that they were all awake and ready to jump into their real life of food gathering or raising families.

My objective was to look for toads and frogs making hay on fruitful nights of the rainy season, as all of them need water to take part in courtship and egg-laying. This is followed by production of tadpoles that must grow up in an aquatic environment, be that natural or man-made. Or even under and within the skin of the mother toad, as is the case with the South American Surinam Sea Toad.

We waited for a local guide to help us move through the pitch dark night of Lawachhara. The guide was a local Tipra man, who never turned up. It was almost an hour after sundown. Our rest house man was out in the market to get rations for our dinner and breakfast. In the absence of a guide when we decided to move on our own through the forest, the wife of the rest house attendant told us she was too afraid to remain alone and so came down with us up to the residences of the other forest staff when we moved downhill following a chhara, just below the mosque by the rail crossing.

Litter frogs were calling from all directions but appeared beyond our reach. The common tree frog could be seen and heard from every direction. The maculated tree frog call echoed over chhara water, reminding us of the gurgling of a person with a sore throat.

I was accompanied by Tania Khan, a self-made wildlife researcher; forest department officer Ishrat Jahan and our too young field guide and the most enthusiastic field companion Rafiq, who almost always accompanies Tania

in all her field work.

I had with me half a dozen head lamps and torchlights that I usually shared with the others who accompanied me. Rafiq is a great animal spotter. He saw a tiny frog amongst low foliage. As it was too small and I could not bend with my heavy body and loads of cameras to take shots, he caught it and gave it to me. I took it on my left thumb and just took two shots considering it to be an ordinary froglet of some unknown species.

Recently I was sifting through old pictures to take out amphibian, reptile, bird and mammal pictures for use in a checklist book of mine that is to be published soon. Among the Lawachhara pictures I have saved in the external hard disk I found a tiny frog sitting on my left thumb. I failed to tally it with all the pictures of Indian frogs and those from Bangladesh published in deshi and foreign internet sites. So, I sent both shots to Dr. Firoz Ahmed of Guwahati, Assam, India. He is a herpetologist and has helped me in the past in identifying several species. Soon, he replied, identifying it as a species of Micryletta and genuinely not sure which one of the two it could be. A species of it called Micryletta inornata, also known as Deli Paddy Frog, False Ornate Narrow-mouthed Frog, Deli Little Pygmy Frog, Inornate Froglet, et cetera.

As I searched through the internet I found the genus Micryletta had been separated from the more commonly known Microhylain in 1987 by a French biologist named Allan Dubois. However, it was found as Microhylla inornata in 1890 when the British biologist Boulenger wrote an article about a collection of animals from Indonesia and Taiwan (Boulenger, G.

A. 1890. List of the reptiles, batrachians, and freshwater fishes collected by Professor Mosh and Mr. Viersen in the district of Deli, Sumatra.] in the Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London. 1890: pages 30-39. The 2nd one and its only cousin Microhylla steinegeri Stejneger's Paddy Frog, Stejneger's Narrow-mouthed Toad, Paddy Frog, Taiwan Little Pygmy Frog was found in 1909 by Boulenger himself (Microhylla steinegeri Boulenger, 1909, Ann. Mag. Nat. Hist., Ser. 8, 4: 494. Syntypes: BMNH 1909.10.29.92-96 according to Parker, 1934, Monogr. Frogs Fam. Microhylidae: 145. Type locality: "Kanshirei", Taiwan, China).

An Indian biologist Pillai in 1977 discovered Inornate Froglet's sample in the Andaman island chain of India. IUCN considers it as native to Cambodia; China; India (Andaman Is.); Indonesia (Sumatra); Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia (Peninsular Malaysia); Thailand and Viet Nam.

The froglet I found in Lawachhara cannot be Stejneger's Paddy Frog as it is endemic to Taiwan. But the Inornate Froglet is the one that has at least been found in the Andamans if not in Manipur. Even if it is found in Manipur it is definitely too far for a tiny frog to make a cross country race to reach Lawachhara from there.

I am temporarily considering the forgot I have found in Lawachhara to belong to this Inornate Froglet. It could be the tiniest frog of our country as it hardly measures 20mm or 2cm, less than an inch in length from the tip of the snout up to the anal opening. Boulenger when describing the species first gave the measurement of two males and one female collected from

Sumatra, Indonesia, as 20mm when others gave the length as 23 to 33 mm. It has an indistinct tympanum that is absent in the Microhylla species. Also, its overall appearance is rectangular when Microhylids are triangular in shape.

This frog has very variable colour formation. The one on my thumb resembles the lighter ones with dark broad, broken lines and some large dark blotches over the back. Chin and gape-line having yellow tinges. Overall pale brown back and whitish underside.

The colour pattern and its sudden presence in Lawachhara indicate three distinct possibilities: it could be a new species of Micryletta genus; it is a new subspecies of existing Micryletta inornata and there could be other populations of it present in Indian States bordering Bangladesh; the population in Lawachhara, Bangladesh became isolated from the South-East Asian population possibly thousands of years back.

Whether this Lawachhara Inornate Froglet belongs to Micryletta Inornata or a different species, it is definitely related to it, which means millions of years back the land of Bangladesh was historically/geologically connected to the land extending up to Indonesia.

None of Bangladesh scientific papers or books I have found so far has ever mentioned the occurrence of Micryletta Inornata in Bangladesh. Also, no Indian amphibian biologist has mentioned it to be present anywhere in India, other than the Andamans.

So, Micryletta Inornata does not only represent a new species for Bangladesh amphibian fauna; it does include a genus- Micryletta- as well.

BSF again kills Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 1

The deceased is Parvez Alom, 21, son of Sujon Master of Agrabhulot village.

Parvez along with other cattle traders entered Indian territory through Agrabhulot border to bring cattle early yesterday, said Subedar Shamsur Rahman, in-charge of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) battalion-23 of Goga Camp.

BSF again kills Bangladeshi

While returning home from the Indian border around 5am, a BSF patrol team of Jhaudanga camp opened fire on the group leaving Parvez critically injured.

The other traders managed to escape unhurt and brought him back home but he succumbed to his injuries on the way.

The body was kept at his home.