



PHOTO: STAR

Collectors putting into bags a huge quantity of snails gathered from water bodies at Baoikola village in Pabna Sadar upazila as preparation to transport them for sale. They are, however, hardly aware of the negative impact of the large-scale destruction of the mollusks on biodiversity and soil fertility.



Mindless snail collection poses threat to ecology

The friend of nature adds to calcium in soil, helps maintain food chain

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPI, Pabna

Hundreds of people across the district engage in massive snail collection from water bodies and paddy fields during Bangla months of Srabon to Kartik every year, much to the harm of biodiversity. "It is high time for collecting snails that come out from bushes due to pressure of water. Snails are collected from banks of rivers and other water bodies, paddy fields and other areas," Md Khabir Uddin, a leading snail trader, said as this correspondent visited his snail depot at Baoikola in Atghoria upazila

under Pabna district a few days ago. Khabir engaged 25 to 30 people, mostly poor young boys, to collect snails in his area and he sells 15 to 20 bags of snails from his depot daily. Some 150 to 200 snail traders active in Atghoria, Chatmohar and Ishwardi upazilas under the district collect 500 to 600 bags of snails daily, sources said. "Most of the wholesalers of the district supply snail to Khulna where it is made into poultry feed in factories. Each bag of snail is selling for Tk 400 to 500 to the feed factories from

wholesale market," said a trader at Tebunia wholesale snail market in Pabna Sadar upazila. Chalanbeel and other water bodies in the district are main sources of snail collection, he said. "We usually earn Tk 200 to 300 a day by collecting a bag of snail. This helps our poverty stricken family," Md Sadekur Rahman, 15, of Baoikola village in Atghoria upazila. "We don't know the importance of snails in nature. We collect it to earn money as well as to make our surroundings clear of the garbage," said Rony

Islam of the village. Terming snails as friend of nature, geologists and environmentalists have urged taking step to stop indiscriminate collection and trade of snails. "Snails play an important role in ecosystem by helping maintain the food chain in nature. Most land snails consume rotting vegetation like moist leaf litter, fungi and sometimes soil directly. Soft part of the snail body is used as poultry feed while the harder part adds to calcium in nature," said Prof Rawshanara Begum, head of geology department of Pabna Edward College.



PHOTO: STAR

The Teesta devouring a school building at Dawa village in Hatibandha upazila under Lalmonirhat district as erosion by the river has taken a serious turn in the area during the last couple of days.

Teesta devours schools, 50 homesteads in 3 days

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

The Teesta River has devoured academic buildings and at least 50 homesteads in Dawabari village in Hatibandha upazila of the district in the last three days. Nur Islam, headmaster of Dawabari Government Primary School, said the school building went into the Teesta River on Monday. A portion of Dawabari Junior High School has also been eroded he said, adding that he has already informed the upazila education officer of the situation.

Hasan Atiqur Rahman, Hatibandha upazila primary education officer, said as the school building has been devoured by the river, an alternative arrangement will have to be made. "I will write to the authorities concerned to construct a new building for Dawabari Government Primary school," he said. Morsheda Bewa, 48, of Dawabari village, said the Teesta onslaught has brought sorrow for them after the Eid-ul-Azha. "The river engulfed my homestead before I could save it. I have taken shelter on a

road," she said. "The Teesta continues to devour homesteads, croplands, orchards and important infrastructures one after another," said Shamsul Islam, 50, of the same village, who has taken shelter at a relative's house after losing his homestead. Manowar Hossain, 45, said he and many other villagers have taken shelter at safer places, fearing erosion by the river. "I have already lost two bighas of land with aman paddy and a banana orchard on five bighas of land in the last

three days," he added. Delowar Hossain Babla, chairman of Dawabari Union Parishad, said he has informed the upazila administration and the Water Development Board WDB authorities about the matter. "I have been providing help for the erosion affected families," he added. Shibendu Khastagir, executive engineer of WDB in Lalmonirhat, said WDB officials visited the affected area and they will take necessary steps to check the erosion as soon as possible.

Man gets life for killing wife

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A court here yesterday sentenced a man to life imprisonment for killing his wife in 2009. The court also fined the convict Tk one lakh.

The convict is Mohammad Masud, 28, of Boro Shahtoli area in Sadar upazila.

According to the prosecution, on October 26 in 2009, Masud demanded some money from his father-in-law Mosharraf Hossain to purchase a rickshaw.

As Mosharraf refused to pay heed to the demand, Masud got angry, beat up his pregnant wife Salma Begum, 22, mercilessly and later strangled her around 2:00am on October 28.

Victim's mother Mariam Begum filed a case, with Sadar Model Police Station the same day, accusing Masud.

After examining records and 17 witnesses, Additional District and Sessions Judge Mamunur Rashid delivered the verdict in presence of the accused at noon.

21 more fishermen jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A mobile court yesterday sentenced 21 fishermen to one year's imprisonment each for catching hilsa in the Meghna River, defying a 15-day temporary ban.

The convicts are Din Islam, Khalil, Moinuddin, Azizul, Mostafa, Aziz, Mahbulul, Shahid, Zakir, Jamal, Shahjalal, Tajul, Russell, Nazmul, Sayed Ali, Jasim, Md Hossain, Al-Amin, Rafiq and Nazrul Islam.

BM Nuruzzaman, additional superintendent of Chandpur River Police, said law enforcers raided Harina and Alur Bazar area in Sadar upazila in the morning and arrested the fishermen.

2 tetanus patients of DjMCH put in quarantine

Surgery ward vacated, operations suspended for 72 hours

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The authorities of Dinajpur Medical College Hospital [DjMCH] vacated the surgery ward and suspended the functioning of operation theatres for 72 hours, following the detection of two tetanus patients there on Tuesday, said Dr Partha Sharathi Roy, in charge of the ward.

The patients -- Sazedur Rahman of Mohdipur village of Phulbari upazila and Siraj Uddin of Sundarpur village under Kaharol upazila of Dinajpur -- underwent surgery at the hospital on September 15.

A tumour was removed from the back of Sazedur

Rahman while hernia operation was conducted on Siraj Uddin, said the doctors.

"After the surgeries, the two patients left hospital for home. They came to the hospital again on September 27 to get their stitches removed. On suspicion, doctors conducted a thorough check up on Tuesday and found that they were infected with tetanus," Dr Partha said.

The two tetanus infected patients were sent to Dinajpur General Hospital as DjMCH does not have any quarantine facility, said Mohammad Ali, assistant director of DjMCH.

The DjMCH authority suspended all kinds of

operations for next 72 hours and vacated the surgery ward to prevent highly risky tetanus infection.

During a visit to the hospital yesterday, the correspondent found patients of the surgery ward were lying on the floor of the corridor.

The patients will be shifted to their ward within 72 hours, said Masud Rama ward master.

Emdadul Haque, deputy civil surgeon of Dinajpur General Hospital, said, "The two tetanus patients are being treated here in quarantine. There is no need to panic."

Doctors, however, said fatality rate among tetanus patients is high.



PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

An artiste gives the finishing touches to the idols at Koilaghat Kali temple in Khulna city yesterday as the Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Bangalee Hindus, is only a couple of days away.

3 'robbers' killed in 'shootout'

STAR REPORT

Three alleged robbers have been killed in "shootouts" in three districts.

Two of the incidents involved police and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) while the third, reportedly two groups of criminals.

In Laxmipur, Abdus Jaher alias Dama Kalu, 37, was killed in a "gun-fight" with police in Latifpur village of Sadar upazila early yesterday.

The incident occurred around 4:00am when police went to the village on information that a group of 10-15 armed men were preparing for a robbery there. Later on, the law enforcers besieged the criminals.

Sensing police presence, the "robbers" opened fire at them. Jaher was shot and killed on the spot after law enforcers retaliated with gun-shots, reports our Noakhali correspondent, quoting police and witnesses.

The other "criminals" fled. An LG, four bullets and several local arms were reportedly recovered from the spot. Five police members were injured and took first aid at Laxmipur Sadar Hospital.

Shah Mizan Safiur Rahman, superintendent of Laxmipur police, said Jaher was the prime accused in the recent murder of Omar Faruque, a former vice-president of Chandraganj Union Awami League.

He also stood accused in several criminal cases with Chandraganj and Laxmipur Sadar police stations, said the police official.

In Bagerhat, Akkas alias Rahim, an alleged ringleader of Sundarbans robbing gang, was killed in a "gun-fight" with the Rab yesterday morning, reports our correspondent.

Rab-8 Deputy Commander Major Adnan Kabir said one of their teams was suddenly attacked around 5:45am when it was patrolling the forest's Sharankhola Range in Aamgachia area.

The members of the elite force immediately fired back in retaliation, triggering the "shootout".

Around 6:30am, the attackers fled. Later, the bullet-hit body of Akkas and several arms were recovered from the spot, he added.

Sources at the Rab said the "robber", who hailed from Barguna's Patharghata, was the chief of "Sagar-Saikat Bahini".

In Cox's Bazar, Sazzad Hossain was shot when two groups of robbers exchanged fire in Yunuskhali village of Maheshkhali upazila around 11:30pm Tuesday, according to police.

Shyamal Kumar Nath, superintendent of police in the district, said on information they rescued the 29-year-old and admitted him to Maheshkhali Upazila Health Complex. He was shifted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital where he died early yesterday.

The police official claimed Sazzad was a leader of "Ekram Bahini", a notorious local robber gang.

However, Sazzad's father Abdul Hashem claimed his son was not a robber and alleged police killed him in a "planned way", reports our Cox's Bazar correspondent.

Saikul Ahmad Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Maheshkhali Police Station, refuted the allegation and said Sazzad was facing several cases with the police station.

SNIPPETS

Sec 144 in Dashmina town

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The local administration yesterday imposed Section 144 for an indefinite period in Dashmina upazila town of the district as two rival groups of BNP called meetings at the same venue and time. The restriction remained in force since 9:00am. Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Azaharul Islam made the announcement to avert clash. Police said two groups -- one led by Abdul Alim Talukder, convener of the upazila unit of BNP and another by Syed Mahfuzur Rahman, secretary of the unit -- arranged two programmes in the town around 10:00am. Additional police have been deployed in the area to avert untoward situation, said Md Sahabuddin, officer-in-charge of Dashmina Police Station.

'Robber' killed in mob beating

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

An alleged robber was beaten to death by a mob at Pushkoni village under Shibganj upazila of the district on Tuesday night. The victim was identified as Meghu, 40, of Argara village in the upazila. Moinul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Shibganj Police Station, said locals caught two robbers at around 10:00pm when a gang of 5 to 6 robbers were preparing for committing a robbery in the area. They beat up the robbers mercilessly, leaving one dead on the spot and another injured. The other gang members fled the scene, exploding bombs.

Undertrial prisoner dies

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

An undertrial prisoner of Mymensingh Jail died at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), yesterday. He was identified as Mohammad Zafar, 25, son of ATM Golam Rabbani of Bhaticharia village in Nandail upazila of the district. Jailer Md Habibur Rahman said Zafar was an accused in a murder case. He had been suffering from acute chest pain and respiratory problems and was admitted to the hospital in the morning, said the jailer.

Two girls drown

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Two girls drowned in a pond at Matikhola village in Dhubaura upazila of the district on Tuesday. The victims are Rehana Parvin, 14, a Class V student, and daughter of Abdur Razzaq, and Mim Akhtar, 7, daughter of Abdul Malek of the village. Quoting family and local sources, Abdul Haque, officer-in-charge (OC) of Dhubaura Police Station, said Rehana and Mim went to a pond near their houses to take a bath around 1:00pm. They somehow drowned in the pond, said police. The bodies of the girls were seen floating in the pond at around 5:50pm. Locals recovered the bodies, police said.