

LAWACHHARA FOREST

Wildlife in danger

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

Incidents of wild animals getting killed by vehicles on the Sreemangal-Kamalganj road through the Lawachhara forest in Moulvibazar are on the rise.

On Friday night, a speeding bus hit a barking deer when it was crossing the road. The deer was undergoing treatment at a centre of the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department inside the forest, said forest officials.

Animals like fox, fishing cat, wild-cat, monkey, deer and rare species of snakes are often run over and killed.

A 15km stretch of the Sreemangal-Kamalganj road passes through the forest and hundreds of vehicles like trucks, lorries, buses and CNG-run auto-rickshaws use the road every day. Many animals come out of the jungle at night in search of food and are hit by vehicles at speed, said wildlife experts.

Whenever animals are seen crossing the road, drivers must slow down and let them cross the road, they suggested.

Tabibur Rahman, assistant conservator of forests in Moulvibazar, said

many animals were run over while trying to go to the other side at night.

"The deer got injured in the similar way. Now it is under treatment," he added.

Sadly, the wildlife management centre has no data or information on the number of animals getting killed this way.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (Bapa), Sylhet chapter, said the ecosystem of the forest would suffer badly if the trend continued.

Vehicles should not exceed the speed limit of 20 to 30km per hour while driving along the road, he opined.

Mihir Kumar Doe, divisional forest officer (wildlife), stressed the need for finding a more effective solution to prevent such unwanted deaths of wild animals.

Monzur Kader Chowdhury, president of Pradhikar, a Sylhet Agricultural University-based animal rights organisation, said more cautionary signs, requesting drivers to go slow, needed to be put up along the road.

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This barking deer broke its right rear leg after it was hit by a bus on Sreemangal-Kamalganj road through the Lawachhara forest in Moulvibazar on Friday night.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Top brass find it hard to tackle

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using section 54 and several others of the CrPC.

Law enforcers must earn public respect and the police department must preserve and advance the principles of democracy, the court said on Thursday.

An officer shall not exercise his power arbitrarily violating the dignity, honour, liberty and fundamental rights of a citizen, the top court noted.

SC OBSERVATIONS ABOUT POLICE'S DUTY

It should be kept in mind that the very nature of the job of law enforcing agencies is to respect the law even their lives are at stake... Crime control remains an important function to them. They entered into the job knowing the responsibilities reposed on them.

It is clear that the culture of a police department, to a large degree, determines the organisation's effectiveness. That culture determines the way officers view not only their role, but also the people they serve... It is also important to recognise that the culture of a police department, once established, is difficult to change.

In our country we find no concern of the police administration about the abusive powers being exercised by its officers and personnel. This department has failed to maintain required standard of integrity and professionalism.

But such arbitrary highhandedness of police officers does not go unnoticed by the police authorities either.

Having failed to contain corruption by policemen at different police stations, the Dhaka Metropolitan Police authorities early this year started a quick search of officers.

Using the DMP's counter-intelligence unit, the police authorities found 124 such SIs and ASIs and reported them to the Police Headquarters. The DMP also recommended that the police HQ post these errant police members in remote areas as a "punishment," DMP officials said.

Most of those cops -- 85 SIs and 39 ASIs -- were posted in the DMP area and many of them in the past had used their influence to stop their transfer outside Dhaka, one DMP official said.

Despite such punitive measures,

officials of these two tiers are still indulging themselves in corruption, the latest being the case of the four cops of Darus Salam police in Mirpur.

The four -- an SI, an ASI and two constables -- took Tk 10,000 and a necklace from a businessman, threatening to implicate him in a drug case, according to the complaint lodged by the businessman, Chowdhury Moshir Rahman.

Asked why police members indulge in corruption, officials said one reason is that they have to pay hefty sums to get the job. Besides, political backing and hobnobbing with senior police officials give them a sense of invincibility. So they get involved in extortion and bribery.

The job of a constable costs Tk 6-7 lakh while that for an SI Tk-15 lakh, they added.

Under the existing system, a constable may be promoted to the post of SI after six years of service, subject to passing of a certain test. Half the posts of SIs are filled with fresh recruitments and the rest with the existing ASIs who pass a certain examination.

The minimum educational qualification for constables is SSC and that for SIs is graduation.

Currently, there are around 16,500 SIs and 17,000 ASIs.

"Following some incidents [of bribery] in quick successions, we asked our intelligence unit and deputy commissioners of different crime divisions to collect information about the desperate sub-inspectors and assistant sub-inspectors," Joint Commissioner (headquarters) of DMP Anwar Hossain told The Daily Star recently.

"We sent negative reports about each of the policemen to the relevant section of the police headquarters with request for their transfer to remote areas," he added.

SI Firoz Wahid of Rupnagar Police Station is one of those removed from the capital and posted in Rangpur range. Before his posting in Rupnagar, he was at Kalabagan Police Station.

Asked if the measure is enough to check public harassment at the hands of errant cops, Anwar said such officials had been posted in "dumping grounds" where they would have very little activities involving people.

DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia said it was a continuous, internal process to ensure accountability of the police force. "Nobody will be spared if found to have misused power."

Many police members are also

SOME EXAMPLES OF POLICE CORRUPTION

Jan 9

Bangladesh Bank official Golam Rabby was tortured for refusing to pay bribe of Tk 5 lakh in the capital's Mohammadpur. Police reportedly threatened to implicate him in narcotics cases. Later, Masud Shikder, SI of Mohammadpur Police Station, was suspended.

Jan 15

Dhaka South City Corporation employee Bikash Chandra Das was beaten in the capital's Jatrabari area by SI Arshadul Islam Akash of Jatrabari Police Station and his subordinates.

Jan 17

ASI Aminul Islam of Kafrul Police Station was closed over allegations that he demanded bribe from NGO official Proloy Baidya and threatened to frame him in a case for possessing yaba, a contraband tablet. Aminul was closed two days later following a departmental probe.

Feb 4

Tea vendor Babul Matabbar of Mirpur, who had suffered severe burns in an incident involving police, died from his injuries after fighting for life for about 16 hours. Five policemen of Shah Ali Police Station were suspended following the incident.

Mar 26

SI Debashis and ASI Shafiq were suspended over detaining three employees of a travel agency and extorting Tk 75,000 from them.

Jun 19

An SI of the Criminal Investigation Department detained two Buddhist traders in Rampura. The two were released only after they bribed officials Tk 20,000.

sacked when they are found to be involved in such unlawful activities, which is never made public, the DMP boss said.

Some, however, get back their job following court orders.

Former police chief Nur Mohammad said if any policeman indulged in corruption, they should face severe disciplinary action.

"Transferring such officials to other places in my view is not an action," he said.

Man arrested over 'rape' of indigenous girl

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Rapid Action Battalion yesterday claimed to have detained a man who allegedly raped an indigenous young woman at Uttar Badda in the capital last month.

A team of Rab-1 apprehended the alleged sex offender, Rafsan Hossain alias Rubel, 30, from near Airport Railway Station around 7:30pm on Friday following a tip-off, said Lt Col Tuhin Mohammad Masud, commanding officer of Rab-1, at a press briefing yesterday.

The detainee, during primary interrogation, has admitted to be involved in the crime, said the Rab official.

A cellular phone belonging to the victim's fiancé and over Tk 9,000 in cash were seized from the possession of Rubel, who is a listed criminal accused in several cases filed for rape, kidnapping and extortion in Badda and Rampura areas, he added.

On October 25, the 18-year-old indigenous girl was raped after she went to visit her fiancé at his lodging in Uttar Badda area.

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IS blast

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Hakeem Nasi told Geo TV dozens of wounded were being moved.

The government dispatched 25 ambulances from the nearby town of Hub to the shrine, said Akbar Harifal, provincial home secretary for Baluchistan. The army was called in to assist with rescue operations, given the remoteness of the site, Bugti said.

It was not clear if the attack was carried out by a suicide bomber or a planted device, according to Bugti.

The province has seen some of the worst militant attacks this year in Pakistan.

Islamic State said in a statement via its Amaq news agency that its fighters had carried out Saturday's bombing.

The jihadist group also claimed responsibility for the last major attack in the province, at a police academy last month, that killed around 60 people.

Muslim shrines have often been targeted by militant groups, many of whom adhere to a strict interpretation of Islam that regards veneration of saints at shrines such as Shah Noorani as heresy.

Key cyber watch cell

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"We have also showed him [Khairul] the footage related to the Avijit murder and he spotted four persons as his teammates," Baten said during a press conference at the DMP Media Centre yesterday.

Khairul could not reveal identities of any of his teammates, claiming that they never discussed anything beyond organisational matters even though they lived in same apartment.

They only used pseudonyms. An orphan, Khairul was found to have lived in Chittagong with his siblings in 2013. He went to MA Salam High School and Foudjarhat Collegiate School before he started studying BBA at Pahartali College.

"He was introduced to an Ansar al-Islam man and met Boro Bhai in 2014. He was recruited as a member of the IT section as he was skilled in computer operation and IT," said Baten.

Khairul was taken on a five-day remand yesterday after he was produced in Niladri murder case before a Dhaka court. Seven other suspects have been arrested in the case.

Niladri was hacked to death at his residence on August 7, 2015. The murder was claimed by Ansar al-Islam, said to be the Bangladesh chapter of al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS).

Ansar al-Islam was previously called Ansarullah Bangla Team.

On October 31 last year, Dipan, a publisher of free-thinking writer-blogger Avijit Roy, was murdered at his office at Aziz Super Market in Dhaka's Shabbagh.

The same day another publisher Ahmedur Rashid Tutul and his two blogger friends were hacked at his Lalmatia office.

Ansar al-Islam claimed responsibility also for the attacks on Dipan, Tutul and the other two.

Before Khairul's arrest on Friday, five other suspects were arrested and three of them confessed to killing Dipan and hacking Tutul and two others.

Police are yet to submit charge sheets in the cases.

Khairul and four to five others were in the IT cell that primarily selected the possible targets, mostly from bloggers, and analysed their online activities.

The cell then informed Zia about its findings including whereabouts of the possible targets.

"It was the Boro Bhai who finalised the hit list and assign specific persons



Ziaul Haque

to monitor the targets," the police official said.

Khairul was asked to follow Dipan and Niladri.

With adequate info in hands following the monitoring, Zia instructed the operation wing to execute the targets.

"Khairul and his team monitored the victims until the operations were conducted. After the targets were executed, they uploaded a statement about the operation on their website."

Before being killed, Niladri was closely monitored by Khairul for five months. The killing took place after Khairul delivered information on the blogger to Boro Bhai.

Similar preparations were made before the Dipan murder.

This was how Khairul played a key role in the two murders even though he didn't take part in the attacks in person.

In the capital, Khairul received trainings in militant dens in phases -- in Shewrapara for two days, on Elephant Road for seven days and in Mohammadpur for several days.

Interrogators have learnt that he had some more targets but the militant group wasn't successful in those cases. ZIA UNDER 'CLOSE WATCH'

Last month, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal claimed that Zia was under "close watch" and would be arrested anytime.

Earlier in August, the Police Headquarters declared cash rewards of Tk 20 lakh for information leading to the arrest of the militant kingpin.

Sacked from the Bangladesh army for his 2012 coup attempt, Zia is from Mostafapur of Moulvibazar Sadar upazila.

MURDERS LINKED TO ANSAR AL-ISLAM

Ansarullah Bangla Team, later renamed Ansar al-Islam, is allegedly responsible for the killings of Ahmed Rajib Haider on February 15, 2013; Avijit Roy on February 26, 2015; Oyasiquir Rahman on March 30, 2015; Ananta Bijoy Das on May 12, 2015; Niladri on August 7, 2015, and Nazim Uddin Samad on April 6 this year.

The victims were bloggers and online activists and critical of religious bigotry.

The militant outfit also claimed responsibility for the killings of LGBT rights activist Xulhaz Mannan and his friend Mahbob Tonoy on April 25 this year.

BB gets back \$15m of stolen money

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Abu Hena Mohd Raze Hassan told The Daily Star.

"We hope to get back the whole amount," he said.

The money will be deposited into the BB account with the New York Fed within a couple of days, Hassan said.

A high-powered Bangladesh delegation is scheduled to meet senior Philippine officials on November 28 to discuss further recovery of the stolen \$81 million, said Gomes, according to Bloomberg.

A Philippine court in September adjudged that BB is the rightful owner of around \$15 million surrendered by casino boss Kim Wong and his Eastern Hawaii Leisure Company.

The BB delegation headed by Debaprosad Debnath, general manager of the bank's Financial Intelligence Unit, went to Manila on November 7 to bring back parts of the fund.

Wong returned \$4.63 million and 488.28 million pesos (\$10.05 million) to Philippine authorities from the millions of dollars he took from two Chinese high-rollers. He however denied any role in one of the world's biggest cyber heists.

The \$15 million recovered from the stolen total is now secure in the vaults of the Philippine central bank, said Gomes.

On February 5, hackers flooded the Fed Bank with requests for transfers totalling almost \$1 billion from an account owned by the BB.

Around \$101 million was successfully withdrawn before suspicions were raised. Some \$20 million of this sum was quickly traced to Sri Lanka and recovered.

The rest was transferred to Philippine's Rizal Commercial Banking Corporation and from there \$46 million found its way into the lightly regulated Philippine casino industry and disappeared.

According to the probe carried out

by a three-member team led by former BB governor Mohammed Farashuddin, at least \$54 million of the \$81 million that ended up in the Philippines could be recovered.

So far, the Anti-Money Laundering Council of the Philippines has accounted for \$60 million of the stolen money. Of them, \$15 million has been traced to Wong, \$28 million to Solaire Casino and \$17 million is believed to be with Filipino remittance company Philrem, which the latter has denied.

But the remaining \$21 million has yet to be traced.

In a bid to recover the rest amount, a team led by Law Minister Anisul Huq will visit Manila very soon. BB Governor Fazle Kabir and BB lawyer Ajmalul Hossain already met Foreign Minister A H Mahmood Ali to request him to start the procedure of the law minister's visit.

During the visit, the law minister will seek to meet Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte to speed up the

process to reclaim the remainder of the stolen money, said an official of the BB.

The biggest cyber heist in the history has not only revealed the weakness in the BB's system, but also questioned the role of the NY Fed and the SWIFT.

The BB and its lawyers have suggested some of the blame lies with SWIFT, a Brussels-based cooperative of financial institutions that operates a crucial messaging system among thousands of banks.

The BB lawyers have also hinted some responsibility may lie with the NY Fed, which stopped as suspicious most of the 35 transfer orders sent by the attackers but let five through.

Although the NY Fed and the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) denied any failures, the two joined hands with the BB in May to help Bangladesh recover the stolen money.

Clouds over 'Mama Bari'

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watching educational videos on TV. Mahboob's deep engagement and encouragement have kindled the creative abilities in these children.

With time, the number increased to 70 as word spread around of a kind man who invested his time into the well-being of the needy. Mahboob is not alone in this journey; he appreciates support from his wife Ayasa Akter, his family members, and Shariful Islam Khan, a friend. Moreover, his oldest students, who are now educated and empowered, take care of the youngest ones. The group consists of a majority of girls -- between the ages 3 and 15 -- with teachers and martial arts gold medallists in the mix.

"I believe the children have a right to what they receive here. I do it from that simple notion -- that every child has the basic right to proper education, good health and a quality life," says Mahboob.

It is no surprise that such an ini-

tiative would face challenges -- sceptic parents trying to marry off their young daughters and boys dropping out from school are just to name a few. Thankfully, Mahboob has defied the odds every time and found solutions to such setbacks that have been beneficial to the children as well as the respective families.

Two years ago, however, Mahboob was diagnosed with a precarious illness for which he had to leave his job as the chief executive of a trading company. Supporting his family of 70 has since been an uphill task with costs having to be cut. Mahboob worries about the future of these children and welcomes all and sundry to visit or contribute in any way, to continue with the big-hearted efforts of Mama Bari.

Follow Mahboob Robbani's Mama Bari at www.facebook.com/mamabarite. A more detailed feature on Mama Bari will come out on the November 24th issue of SHOUT.