



A bird hunter has a trap in a wetland at Kulaghat villager in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila while a poacher, also carrying his pet bird used in trapping birds, takes the hunter birds for sale at a market of Nababganj village in Jaldhaka upazila of Nilphamari.

PHOTO: STAR

LALMONIRHAT, NILPHAMARI

Hunters active as winter birds arrive

STAR COUNTRY DESK

With arrival of early winter migratory birds, a section of bird hunters have become active in different northern districts including Nilphamari and Lalmonirhat, much to the worry of nature lovers and conscious citizens.

There is hardly any action by law enforcers although illegal catching and sale of the birds are going on openly in different places.

Poachers are selling birds, especially doves, egrets and parrots, at different markets of Lalmonirhat, reports our correspondent.

"Bird hunters, both professional or amateur, have become active, particularly in the wetlands of Teesta and Dharla river basin areas in the district, during the winter season that sees arrival of a large number of migratory birds," said bird lover Enamul Haque Shamim, 45, a schoolteacher at Gokunda village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

"Indiscriminate hunting and sale of different species of local and migratory birds is posing a serious threat to wildlife in the area," said another bird lover

Ratiram Sarker, 36, at College Road in Lalmonirhat town.

"A section of local people are engaged in the illegal act for earning extra money while others do it just for fun. The authorities should conduct awareness campaign to check the callous act," he said.

"Every day I catch six to seven doves by trapping and sell each bird at Tk 300 to Tk 400 to the locals. Like me, many others use bamboo and wood traps for catching doves," said Khairul Islam, 38, a professional dove hunter at Barabari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

Kuddus Miah, 48, an amateur dove hunter at Khedabag village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said, "Especially during the winter, I hunt doves by setting traps in the jungle areas. I do this to eat dove's meat as it is very tasty."

Azahar Ali, 47, an egret hunter at Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said he goes to the local wetland for hunting the birds that move around to take small fishes.

"I can hunt four to six egrets every day and sell each at Tk 500 to Tk 700," he said.

"We sell egret and other birds openly on the street but we never face any difficulty

from law enforcers," said Sekendar Ali, 35, of the same village.

Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila Livestock Officer Maqbul Hossain said, "Due to shortage of manpower, we cannot conduct drives against poaching and selling of wild birds. Punitive action will be taken if anybody is found involved in the illegal act."

Our Nilphamari Correspondent reports: Poachers are applying different methods including use of pet birds, traps with glue and nets to catch birds.

Visiting several remote places early dawn a few days ago, it was found that poachers have set a strange kind of trap made of bamboo and leaves of trees near water bodies, marshy land, crop fields or bushes.

A pet bird like heron or crane is made to sit on the top of the trap, one leg of which is tied with a fine jute thread held by the hunter who remains hiding in a bush-like spot beneath the trap.

Whenever the hunter lightly pulls one end of the thread, the pet bird chirps and stretches wings, coaxing other birds to sit beside and immediately the hunter catches the target.

"It is our traditional way of catching birds. Using this method, we can catch 20 to 25 birds daily," said Alauddin of Chawra village of Sadar upazila.

Hanifuddin, a bird hunter in Teesta char areas, said, "In winter season, water in the river comes down to knee-deep level at many places and there we use big nets to catch entire flocks of birds."

"Another popular way of bird hunting is pouring glue on wood planks or big sized hardboards where food is spread. Whenever birds sit for eating food, they get stuck," he added.

Depending on species and size, a pair of migratory birds is selling for Tk 400 to Tk 1000, said bird hunters.

Bird hunters Mozahid Hossen, Abdul Kazi and Koilash Roy in Char Kharibari village in Teesta area of Dimla upazila, said 400 to 500 people in the district get involved in hunting birds in winter when birds come from Siberia and other cold regions.

Mofizuddin Sheikh, officer in charge of Dimla Police Station, said, "Bird hunting is a punishable offence and if we are informed, we'll take prompt action against the poachers."

Boiler blast kills rice mill worker

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A worker was killed and another seriously injured in a boiler explosion at a rice mill at Barapalashbari Kushaldangi village in Baliadangi upazila on Monday.

The deceased was Nur Islam, 38, of the village.

Six workers were working at the rice mill of Abdul Baten in the evening when its boiler exploded with a big bang, leaving Nur Islam and another worker Shahidul Rahman, 52, of Belsara village injured, Baliadangi Police Station OC Mosabberul Islam quoted locals as saying.

They were rushed to Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital. Later, Nur Islam died on way to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

Natural cattle rearing brings good profit

RABIUL HASAN DOLLAR, Chapainawabganj

Cattle farmers belonging to Ghosh community in the district are rearing cattle using traditional method that their ancestors followed as cattle can be reared easily, there is less risk of disease, it does not require much expenditure and the milk can be sold at good profit.

Cattle are fed only grass in the traditional method. The cattle farmers move in groups from village to village in the district to let their cattle graze in the open fields.

Bhikharul Islam, 45, of Bahrom-Ghoshpara village, grazes his 100 cattle at a field in Babudaying village under Sadar upazila. He rears cattle using traditional method without any cost and earns a handsome amount of money daily by selling milk.

Mohammad Hasen, 40, of the same area also took his 105 cows to the area for grazing.

Abdul Hamid, 60, of Hossaindaying village, took his 22 cattle to Babudaying area and let them graze in a field. He sells milk and earns around Tk 400 a day.

Bhikharul, whose family has been rearing cattle for three generations, said he came to the area 15 days ago with five other people and 400 cattle for letting them eat grass. They will stay in Babudaying area for one month and then go to the chars of the Padma river, he said, adding that they will go home in the rainy season, when they feed their cattle only hay.

He earns around Tk 1,000 daily by selling milk. He sells 15 to 20 cows every year and earns Tk 3 lakh to Tk 4 lakh, Bhikharul said.

Mohammad Rana, 25, of Thakur palsha village in Sadar upazila, said he buys milk from the cattle farmers for Tk 40 per kg. He follows them and collects the milk, which he sells in the town, Rana added.

The cattle farmers said all their cows and bullocks are of native species and can easily survive in our environmental condition. Hybrid cattle are kept in sheds and they need specially formulated feed.

District Livestock Officer Dr Ananda Kumar Adhikary said there are around 13 lakh cows in the district and 93 registered and 78 unregistered cattle farms.



PHOTO: STAR

Cattle farmers belonging to Ghosh community follow the traditional way of rearing cattle and let them graze in open fields. The picture shows two cattle farmers collecting milk at Babudaying village in Sadar upazila of Chapainawabganj.



An Aman paddy field attacked by pests at Khochbari village under Sadar upazila of Lalmonirhat. The photo was taken around 10 days ago.

PHOTO: STAR

Pest attack worries Aman farmers in Lalmonirhat

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Pest (current poka) attack on Aman paddy has upset farmers in the district as they are worried that they may not get expected production this year, in spite of spraying prescribed pesticide on the affected fields.

Lalmonirhat Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) Deputy Director (DD) Bidhubhushon Roy said Aman has been cultivated on 84,845 hectares of lands in five upazilas this year. Official records show that only 130 hectares of land have been attacked by pests in the district, but farmers estimate that the figure will be around 1,000 hectares.

Afzal Hossain, 55, of Ghonabari village in Patgram upazila, said he cultivated Aman on six bighas of land, of which four bighas have been attacked by pests. "I am spraying prescribed pesticide but not getting expected result, so I have given up hope of getting produc-

tion this year," he said.

"Low rainfall this year is the reason behind the alarming pest attack," said farmer Nabir Hossain, 65, of the same village, adding that three of his eight bighas of Aman fields have been attacked by pests. "It is uncertain that I will get the expected production of Aman this year," he said, adding that almost all the farmers in his village have been affected by pest attack on Aman.

Azizul Islam, 55, of Bawra village in Patgram upazila, said his three bighas of Aman field were attacked by pests overnight. "Pest attack on Aman field is common in our village this season," he said.

Noor Muhammad, 67, of Barakhata village in Hatibandha upazila, said they are not getting advice from DAE officials to save their Aman fields from pest attack. "We are upset over the pest attack in our Aman fields," he said, adding that two of his six bighas of Aman

have been attacked by pests.

"We have no chance to get even 50 percent of Aman production in our village this year as pest attack has shattered our hope of getting expected production," said Nazrul Islam, 56, of Gaddimari village. "Due to low rainfall this year, we cultivated our field for Aman farming by using irrigation water, so we had to incur additional cost," he added.

Shahjahan Ali, 38, of Khochabari village in Sadar upazila, said almost all of his four bighas of Aman paddy fields have been attacked by pests and he is not getting any result after spraying prescribed pesticide. "We are going to face serious production fall of Aman this year," he said.

The DD of DAE told this reporter that DAE officials are working in the field to advise farmers on how to save their crop from pests. "We are circulating leaflets among the farmers to build awareness," he said.

57 HSTU teachers on hunger strike

Removal of proctor, registrar, students' adviser demanded

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Fifty-seven assistant professors of Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU) started an indefinite hunger strike yesterday, demanding removal of the proctor, registrar and students' adviser for their inaction in identifying and punishing the students who attacked them (assistant professors) on November 14.

A large numbers of students of the university, carrying banners and placards, formed a human chain at the campus yesterday, demanding stringent punishment of the students who attacked the teachers.

Boycotting their classes, the 57 teachers gathered in front of the administrative building and started indefinite hunger strike.

The agitating teachers said the Board of Regents (highest policy making board of HSTU) had approved their promotion on October 11 this year, but they were not getting their due increment.

They went to HSTU Treasurer Prof Dr Bidhan Chandra Hawladar on November 14 to discuss payment of their increment while a meeting was going on, the teachers said.

Suddenly, some students, allegedly incited by the registrar and the proctor, attacked them, Assistant Professor Krishna Chandra Roy said, adding that the attackers also assaulted some female teachers.

Ras mela kicks off at Kuakata today

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The 150-year-old traditional Ras Mela, a dance festival attracting people of different communities in the southern region of the country, will begin at Kuakata beach today.

Thousands of people have gathered there to celebrate the three-day-long festival.

A good number of tourists will also gather at the beach on the occasion. The fair will end on Friday morning, said Bipul Halder, president of Kuakata Ras Mela Udjapan Committee.

The devotees take a dip in the water of the Bay at dawn after the full moon, believing that the holy bath will wipe out all their sins.

People irrespective of faith and profession join the biggest celebration in the area every year. The fair will also begin at Dubler Char in the Sundarbans at the same time.

As many as 17 idols of Sri Krishna, a god of Hindu community, has already been installed at a temporary mandap in the beach.

Various programmes including kirton and religious discussion will be held marking the celebration.

Patuakhali district and Kalapara upazila administration have already made preparations to celebrate the festival.

Police, Rab, tourist police and other law enforcement agencies have been deployed in the area to avert any trouble, said Md Mizanur Rahman, OC of Mohipur Police Station.

Adequate security measures have been taken for safety of the devotees and tourists during the festival, he said.