



A bird poacher holds two white-breasted waterhens that he caught from a nearby maize field at Khochabari village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. PHOTO: STAR

Bird poaching rampant in Lalmonirhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Unabated hunting, trapping and selling of local and migratory birds in different upazilas of the district is posing a serious threat to nature and biodiversity. Poachers get quite reckless during this period, January to April, every year as many birds across the border fly down to maize fields in flat wetlands to eat maize cobs. Bird hunting is rampant in bordering villages like Sarkarerhat, Bawra, Jamgram, Sreerampur, Jagatber, Hosnabad, Shafirhat, Vandardah and Munglibari in Patgram upazila, Singimari, Barakhata, Dawabari, Nawdabansh, Daikhawa and Bhelaguri in Hatibandha upazila, Chaparhat, Gorol, Dalgram, Kakina and Sreekhata in Kaliganj upazila, Durgapur, Kamlabari, Namuri, Dighaltari and Hajiganj in Aditmari upazila and Mogholhat, Karnapur, Bhatbari, Boshbari and Kulaghat village in Sadar upazila. Poacher Azizar Rahman, 45, of Sarkarerhat

village in Patgram upazila, said during this time of the year, mid-March to mid-April, a good number of parrots from India arrive here to eat maize, which make them an easy target for hunters. "We sale each parrot for Tk 400 to Tk 600," he said, adding that one can hunt three to five parrots in a day. "We usually target dowki as this variety of bird likes to eat maize corn," said Mobarak Hossain, 48, another poacher of Mogholhat village in Sadar upazila. "Though we sale the birds openly on the streets, we never faced any difficulties," he added. Environmental activist Abdus Salam Bakul in Lalmonirhat town said poachers mainly hunt different local and migratory birds like dowki, pond heron (kani bok), doves, parrots, common mynah (shalik) and many other varieties. Poachers are seen selling hunted birds openly in the markets or on the streets, he said, adding that due to lack of social awareness against bird hunting and rare legal action,

hunters consider this an open period for hunting and selling birds. According to the Wildlife (Conservation and Security) Act, 2012, killing any wild or migratory bird is a punishable offence, with a provision of maximum one year imprisonment and a fine of Tk 1 lakh. The act also mentions that collecting, acquiring, purchasing, selling and transporting any wild or migratory bird is also an offence with a punishment of six months' imprisonment and a fine of Tk 30,000. Lawyer Kamal Chandra Roy in Lalmonirhat court said despite strict provisions in the law, we see no action from the forest department and local administration. Alongside strict laws, awareness is a must to stop illegal bird hunting, he added. District Livestock Officer DLO in Lalmonirhat Saidur Rahman said his department has very limited human resources to fight against such poaching activities, but they were trying their best to stop the illegal act.

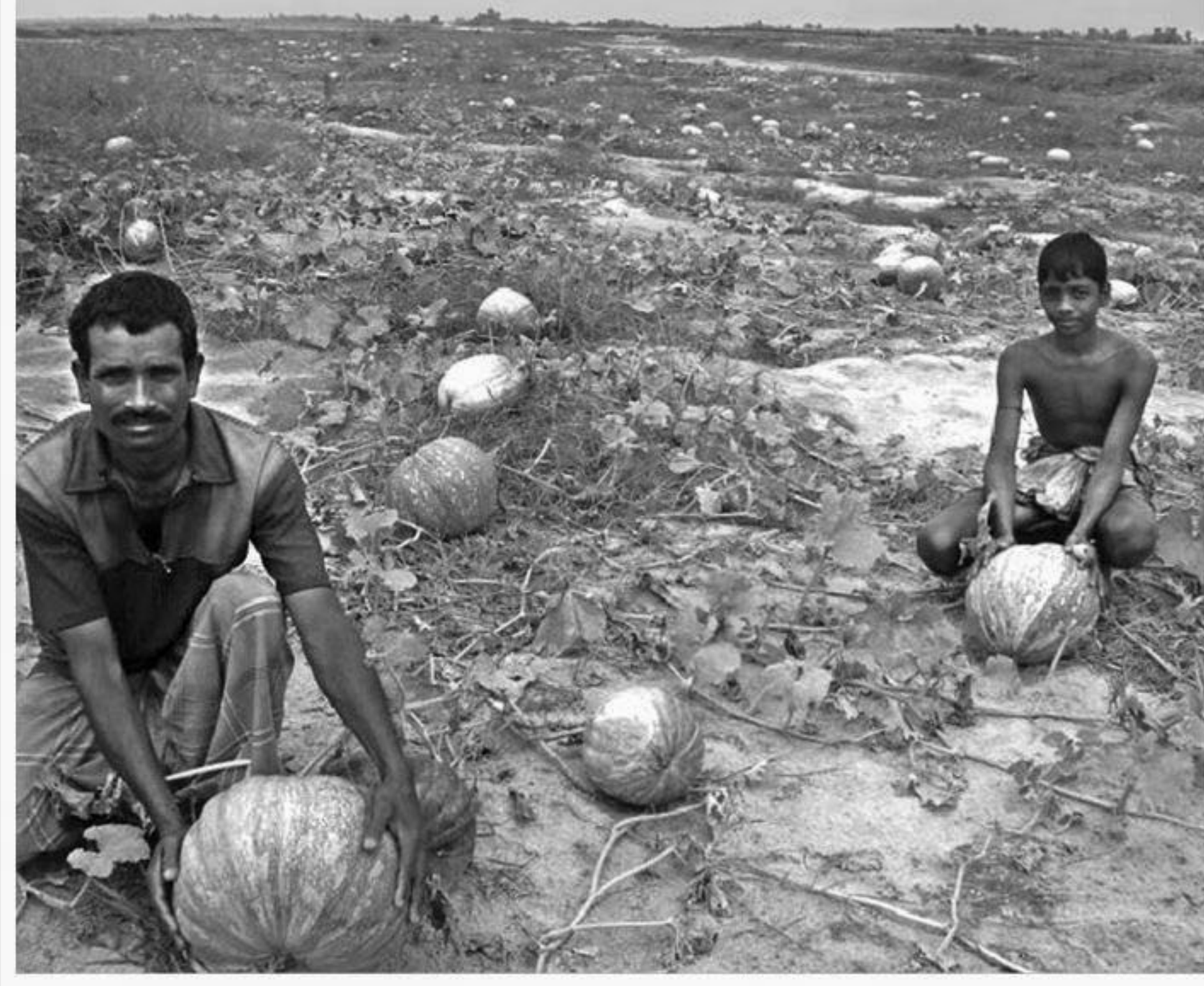
Bizarre act by teacher

Primary teacher forced students to swallow others' spit as punishment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A gruesome allegation of forcing young students to ingest each other's spit has surfaced against a teacher of a primary school in Rangpur's Kaunia upazila. The allegation came to light yesterday when angry parents and guardians of students gathered in numbers at Haragachh Chotura Government Primary School, demanding punishment for the vile act of the school's teacher, Jamal Uddin. Students and parents alleged that on Tuesday, a girl student of fifth grade went home after school and told her parents that her teacher Jamal Uddin, in his 30s, had forced her to swallow spit of another girl in her class as punishment for failing to produce homework. Many fifth graders of the school told journalists that the same teacher had physically tortured them and made them swallow spits of other students whenever they also could not deliver their homework.

A mortified student of fifth grade said what her teacher did was outrageous. "It's so embarrassing that you can't talk about it." Students of the school are now reluctant to go to the school, said Abdul Jalil, a parent, adding that the parents will declare a tougher movement unless due action is taken against the teacher. Speaking with parents gathered at the school, Khaleda Akter, the headteacher, assured of necessary action against the teacher following proper inquiry. An emergency meeting of the school's managing committee has been called on Saturday and the committee will take necessary action regarding the accusation made against Jamal Uddin, she also said. Swapan Kumar Adhikari, upazila education officer in Kaunia, also assured of due action against the teacher. Jamal Uddin told reporters that he had been mistaken and was offering apologies to all.



A vast sandy land in a Teesta river basin area of Nilphamari's Dimla upazila sees good yield of pumpkin, thanks to the initiative of the local agricultural officials for the farmers in the flood-prone area. The photo was taken at Kismater Char village a few days ago. PHOTO: EAM ASADUZAMAN



Students and teachers of Nazirpur Palli Jagoron High School form a human chain in Netrakona yesterday demanding steps to save a pond belonging to the school from attempted grabbing by a local. PHOTO: COLLECTED

18 AL men sued for vandalising party office in Sakhipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A case has been filed against 18 local Awami League (AL) and Jubo League leaders and activists on charge of vandalising Sakhipur upazila AL office in Tangail. Fazlul Haque Shikder, former general secretary of Government Mujib College unit of Chhatra League, and also nephew of incumbent Chairman of Sakhipur Upazila Parishad Shawkat Shikder, filed the case with Sakhipur Police Station on Wednesday night, said Amir Hossain, officer-in-charge of the police station. Jahangir Alam Talukder, general secretary of Sakhipur upazila unit of Jubo League, Fazlul Haque Talukder, vice-president of municipal unit of AL, Amir Hamza Badu, member of the unit and municipal councillor, and Monowar Hossain Antor, a party activist and president of Sakhipur Boys Club, are among the accused in the case. All the accused are supporters of Anupom Shajahan Joy, former AL lawmaker of the constituency, and his uncle Julfikar Haider Kamal Lebu, who was elected chairman of Sakhipur Upazila Parishad in the March 31 election. According to the case statement, shortly after Julfikar Haider Kamal Lebu, the AL-nominated candidate, was declared the upazila chairman elect, the accused vandalised the upazila AL office at Etimkhana Road around 10:00pm on the day. They tore the banner with the photos of incumbent AL lawmaker of the constituency Joaherul Islam and incumbent upazila Chairman Shawkat Shikder and took a television from the party office, the case statement said.

Ershad makes

FROM PAGE 20 announcement on March 23 also removed his younger brother from the post of deputy leader of the opposition in parliament and appointed his wife Raushan Ershad in his place. The senior co-chairperson of JP, Raushan was the leader of the opposition in the immediate past parliament. The recent ups and downs in JP's top leadership are the outcome of the conflict among party leaders over establishing supremacy, party insiders said. Quader said he was deeply disappointed and felt humiliated by the allegations brought against him regarding his failure to discharge duties. JP leaders loyal to GM Quader had been mounting pressure on Ershad to reinstate him. JP sources said such flip-flops by the party chairman were creating divisions and confusion among the party leadership and ultimately weakening the party. Ershad is almost inactive in the party as he has been suffering from multiple old-age complications for the past six months. He joined only one parliament sitting out of 26 of the recently concluded maiden session of the 11th parliament. Sources close to Quader, presidium member of the JP, said a section of top party leaders had convinced Ershad to oust Quader as from the posts of co-chairman and deputy leader. CHANGES IN TOP LEADERSHIP On December 3 last year, the JP chief had removed Hawlader as party secretary general. Much to the surprise of many party members, then state minister for LGRD Moshir Rahman Ranga was picked for the post. Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu was made JP secretary general in 2014. Ershad removed him from the post on January 19, 2016. He was replaced by Hawlader. The JP took part in the December 30 national polls as a key partner of the AL-led Grand Alliance and won 22 seats.

Hailstorm ravages vast croplands in Tangail

Banana and cucumber gardens worst affected due to the natural disaster that hit twice within week

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Consecutive spells of hailstorm have damaged crops on vast tracts of land in Ghatail and Madhupur upazilas. Although the two recent storms have damaged many crops like Boro paddy, cucumber, banana and lemon, local agriculture officials are yet to estimate the loss. Tuesday's hailstorm has damaged many banana orchards in four unions -- Sangrampur, Deolabari, Rasulpur and Dhalapara -- in Ghatail upazila. The worst affected villages in those unions are Boga, Kamarchala, Boalihatabari, Sangrampur, Khatibari, Chapri, Deolabari, Ratanbarish, Pakutia, Cherabhang, Khilgati, Mamudpur, Rasulpur and Dhalapara village. Mohammad Moniruzzaman of Boga village said Tuesday's hailstorm has damaged about 2,000 banana plants on his seven bigha orchard.

"I cultivated Sobri variety of banana after taking loan from a local bank and was expecting a good yield this season, Moniruzzaman said, adding that the recent hailstorm has damaged all his banana plants. Alam Miah of the village said banana plants of his five bigha orchard were completely damaged in the recent storm. Locals said about 1,800 banana plants of Abdul Malek of Sangrampur village, and a huge number of banana plants, owned by Nayon Khan of Kamarchala village, were also damaged in the storm. Not only banana plants, but paddy and vegetables, belonging to many other farmers in the area, were damaged in the storm, Sangrampur Union Parishad Chairman Abdur Rahim said. Ghatail Upazila Agriculture Officer Abdul Matin Biswas said alongside bananas, cucumber farmers have also faced a huge loss due to the storm. He, however, said standing Boro paddy on vast tracts of land has not faced that much damage, adding that they were visiting the affected areas to estimate the loss. Meanwhile, standing Boro paddy, banana, cucumber and lemon on vast tracts of land in adjacent Madhupur upazila were completely damaged due to the hailstorm. Abdul Kuddus of Uttar Laofula village in Madhupur, also owner of one of the largest lemon orchards in the area, said he cultivated lemon on eight bighas of land this year, spending Tk 2 lakh and was expecting to sell those at Tk 5 lakh. "Now it will be very tough for me to make profit and repay the loans that I took from a local bank and a wholesaler in advance," Kuddus said. Madhupur Upazila Agriculture Officer Mahmud Hasan said cucumber fields were affected mostly by the storm.



A banana orchard, damaged during Tuesday's hailstorm, at Sangrampur village in Tangail's Ghatail upazila. Inset, farmer Abdul Kuddus of Laofula village in Madhupur upazila takes care of his storm-hit lemon orchard. PHOTO: COLLECTED