

A glimmer of hope for 'BOON GRANTERS'

|| AMIR HASAN SHAHRIAR ||



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

PORT CITY CHRONICLES

Finally a ray of hope for the "Bostami turtles", a species previously declared extinct in the wild by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), as a group of specialists have successfully hatched 36 eggs in an incubator last month.

The Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group (TFTSG) under IUCN took the initiative. They released the hatchlings in the pond at the shrine of Hazrat Bayezid Bostami in Chattogram recently.

This experiment has paved the way for preservation of the black softshell turtle or Bostami turtle, opined turtle specialists. As of 2002, the IUCN classified the species (*Nilssonina nigricans*) as extinct in the wild.

Although the pond was considered a major habitat for the species, their number has been gradually decreasing over the years due to water pollution, among other reasons.

Some miscreants also poisoned the water of the shrine's pond in 2004.

These turtles are visited by hundreds every day at the shrine of Hazrat Bayezid Bostami in Chattogram. People not only seek blessings but also feed the turtles, hoping to have their wishes granted. In the process, leftovers often get dissolved in the water, polluting the reservoir.



Turtle eggs being kept in special minerals for incubation. The photo was taken recently.

The authorities then shifted the turtles to three waterbodies of Khalil Shah's shrine in Kulgaon area of the port city and changed the water.

But the number of hatchings started to drop after the turtles were brought back, said Mohammad Habibur Rahman, a khadem (caretaker) of the shrine. He said only 40 turtles

and Management (Carinam) found several specimens of Bostami turtles in Sylhet.

A WORK IN PROGRESS

Over the years, many organisations, including TFTSG, have been working to find ways to conserve the endangered species.

In February this year, Fahim Zaman, a volunteer of TFTSG, came up with the design of the incubator and set it up in collaboration with shrine authorities.

In July, they collected 50 eggs from the field of Bostami Turtle Breeding Centre and put them in the incubator as part of their experiment.

"The temperature inside the incubator was set at around 30 degrees Celsius with humidity level at 80 percent. The eggs were kept in vermiculite [a mineral working as an insulator] on a tray," said Shahriar Caesar Rahman, IUCN regional vice chair, South Asia.

"An interesting fact about these turtles is that if the eggs are

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MILITANT HIDEOUT IN ATIA MAHAL

PBI submits charge-sheet accusing three militants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) yesterday pressed the charge-sheet in a case filed in connection with the sensational five-day anti-militant drive at Atia Mahal in Shibbari area of Sylhet, accusing three militants.

The drive, code-named "Operation Twilight", went on from January 24 to January 28, 2017, and resulted in deaths of four suspected militants and seven other people including a high official of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab).

Dewan Abul Hossain, inspector of PBI in Sylhet and the investigation officer of the case, submitted the charge-sheet to Sylhet Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court.

The accused militants are: Jahurul Haque, 25; his wife Arjina Begum, 19; and Mohammad Hasan, 26.

The trio were arrested in connection with several other militancy cases and later shown arrested in this case on January 17 this year, the investigation officer said, adding that they were remanded after being shown arrested.

"Eight militants were listed in the charge-sheet. Among them, four died during the anti-militant drive at Atia Mahal and another one died during an anti-militant drive in Nasirpur area of Moulvibazar. Therefore, we have asked for these five to be excluded from the charge-sheet," Hossain said.

The investigating officer said, "Lokman Hossain alias Mosharaf Hossain alias Sohel, 38, who died along with his family members in a suicide blast during another anti-militant drive in Nasirpur area of

Moulvibazar on March 29, 2017, was a leader of the militant group of Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB)."

"Among the four other dead militants of Atia Mahal, only two have been identified. They are Monjiara Begum Alias Morjina Begum of Bandarban, and Tamim Ahmed Foraji of Mymensingh," he said.

"The militant group were positioned in three hideouts in Sylhet and Moulvibazar, and were planning something bigger. We found 60 types of explosive making substances, which were used to build Improvised Explosive Devices and other advanced explosives."

Bangladesh Army led "Operation Twilight", at a militant hideout in Sylhet's Atia Mahal from March 24 to March 28, 2017.

On the evening of March 25, 2017, while the drive was ongoing, two grenades were blasted 400 metres away from Atia Mahal, which claimed seven lives including Rab intelligence chief Lt Col Abul Kalam Azad and two police officers.

Police filed two separate cases, one regarding the militant hideout and another for the twin grenade blast, with Moglabazar Police Station accusing unnamed people after the operation.

Following an order of Police Headquarters on May 9 that year, PBI took over the cases from Moglabazar Police Station and started investigation from May 13.

PBI on July 22 this year, submitted a final investigation report on the twin grenade blast, where it said two attackers and the key planner died during anti-militant drives in Barahat and Nasirpur areas in Moulvibazar.

AL LEADER KILLING

Suspects yet to be arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Police could not make any arrest till yesterday over the murder of Awami League leader Tipu Sheikh in Khulna.

Tipu, 50, from Padmabil, was the immediate-past general secretary of AL's Gazirhat union unit in Dighalia, said upazila AL president Sheikh Mofidul Islam.

Locals said Tipu was attacked by unidentified people while he was returning from a market around 6pm on Friday.

He died on the way to hospital.

OC Manosh Ranjon Gosh of Dighalia Police Station said after autopsy they handed the body over to the family. He said they identified the suspects and are trying to arrest them.

Tipu was an accused in two murder cases, said the OC, adding that previous enmity might have led to the killing.

Tipu's family said they were yet to file a case.

Two killed in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Two people were killed in road accidents during the last two days across districts, according to reports by our correspondents.

A man was killed after a truck hit his motorcycle in Palbari Natun Khairtola area in Jashore town on Friday night.

The deceased was identified as Azizur Rahman, 37, son of Atiar Rahman of Bolpur village in Jashore Sadar upazila, was a senior officer at Janata Bank's Jashore town branch.

Police and locals said, the truck hit the motorcycle and ran Azizur over, killing him on the spot.

The truck was taken into police custody, but both the driver and helper fled the scene.

Jashore Kotwali Police Station SI Ziaur Rahman said the body of the deceased was recovered and sent to Jashore General Hospital morgue. A case was filed in this connection.

In Chattogram, an unidentified girl was killed after a recklessly driven passenger-bus ran her over in Karnaphuli Shah Amanat Bridge area in the port city yesterday afternoon.

The identity of the deceased could not be known immediately after the accident, said Nezam Uddin, officer-in-charge of Bakalia Police Station.

The girl was killed on the spot as the bus ran her over while she was crossing the road around 4:30pm, said the OC.

Police chased down the bus and detained the driver, Md Hasan, Nezam Uddin added.

The body was sent to Chattogram Medical College morgue for an autopsy, said the OC, adding, "We are trying to know the identity of the deceased."

No quick fix to Rohingya problem: Malloch Brown

UNB, Dhaka

Stating that there is no quick fix to the Rohingya crisis, former deputy secretary general of the United Nations Lord George Mark Malloch Brown yesterday urged the international community to put pressure on Myanmar to resolve the issue.

"This is a classic dilemma of refugees... the reality is, these [refugee] problems don't lend themselves quick fixes. It's a steady problem," he said while delivering the keynote speech at a symposium titled "The Relevance of the United Nations for Bangladesh: A Prognosis for Partnership" arranged by Cosmos Foundation at a Dhaka hotel.

Cosmos Foundation Chairman Enayetullah Khan delivered the welcome address at the event held with Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, principal research fellow of Institute of South Asian Studies at National University of Singapore, in the chair.

Brown said it requires "a great depth of patience and humanity" on Bangladesh's side to manage this issue because a refugee population of that size in the part of the country is a huge burden.

The former UN deputy secretary general said a lot of political changes are needed in Myanmar and the international community must exert pressure on it to secure that change. "I appeal to Bangladesh for patience," he said, noting that these are not refugees who want to stay but conditions have got to be created to enable them to do that.

He said he believes the UN understands the frustration here and the need to find a solution. "I think [the UN] wants to work with Bangladesh in this coming session of the UNGA to make sure that this issue gets the political prominence and it needs to move towards a solution," he said.

Malloch Brown praised Bangladesh's rapid economic growth but noted that the

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Despite a government ban, auto-rickshaws continue to ply the Dhaka-Sylhet highway. These three-wheelers and other slow moving vehicles are often the causes of fatal accidents on highways. The photo was taken in Dakshin Surma upazila yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Doctor impersonator jailed in port city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A mobile court sentenced a fake doctor to two months of imprisonment during a drive in Halihsahar Shapla Residential Area in the port city yesterday.

Wasim Osman, 34, had been treating patients at Sandwip Janata Pharmacy in the area, using the alias Dr Syed Osman Gani.

On information, a mobile court led by Executive Magistrate Ashraf Alam conducted a drive at the pharmacy yesterday and found that Osman was delivering treatment to patients, said Ashraf, adding that his prescription pad claimed he was a medicine specialist, but he could not show any certificate or licence to practise.

"Later he admitted that he did not have any degree or licence, and that his real name is Wasim Osman," he said.

Man held on rape charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A man was arrested yesterday on the charge of raping his nephew's wife in Dacope upazila of Khulna the day before.

The woman's mother-in-law filed a rape case with Dacope Police Station, said Shafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of the police station.

"We arrested the accused, Saiful Gazi, from Nalian area," he added.

The mother-in-law said his son, the woman's husband, a day labourer, has been in jail for the last nine days in a loan default case. "On Friday morning, in an attempt to release my son, we went to see the local UP chairman," she said.

Meantime, her daughter-in-law was home alone as she was three months

pregnant. At that time, Saiful went to the house and raped her, she said.

"After we heard about the matter from her, we took her to Khulna Medical College Hospital," she said.

Anjan Kumar Chakraborty, coordinator of one-stop crisis centre at KMCH, said the woman is being treated at the centre.

Meanwhile, her father-in-law alleged that relatives of the accused, who is his cousin, are threatening him to withdraw the case.

Asked, the OC said they are looking into the matter.

Contacted, UP Chairman Masum Ali Fakir said the mother-in-law of the woman came to see him about her son. "I told her to take steps as per law, that's it."

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