

WORLD WILDLIFE DAY

# Bangladesh urgently needs a new Wildlife Department



REZA KHAN

**D**URING my childhood, in the late 1950s, I spent a jovial life in a remote (in those days) village named Borobari, Ballia in Dhamrai upazila in the Dhaka district, some 60 km north-west of Dhaka city. Our only suitable communication link with the capital was a motor launch that was operational from June-July to October, when the nearby Bangshi River became navigable for launches and smaller cargo ships. The rest of the time, we had passenger boats called *gohnar nouka* that would take us to Khushuria or Kalampur. From there, you would have to walk to Dhamrai to avail a small launch bound for Dhaka via Savar, Kornopara Khal, heading to Turag in Mirpur and finally moving on to Sadarghat. We had only kerosene-lit hurricane lanterns at the time, or *kupi bati* or cup lamps, as they were called. Palanquins, horse-driven carts and bullock carts were the other modes of transport. Few used bicycles at the time. When we would cross the many rivers during these journeys—our own Bangshi River, the river by Satura Bazar, the Dhaleswari River near Gopara or Jaigir and Tara Ghat—using wooden boats operated by a single boatman, we would often enjoy the sight of the *Shisu*, *Shushuk* or River Dolphin in every river, sometimes even a few metres from us.

*To manage whatever resources are left in the denuded and human-altered forests, the scanty wildlife populations in disjunct natural and man-made habitats could be partly saved through the creation of an independent Wildlife Department.*

The walk from Ballia to Manikganj at the time was also quite comfortable because all the villages had age-old trees—especially fig, banyan, tamarind, silk cotton, mango and *kalo jaam* trees—as well as bamboo clumps, jute and paddy fields. Along the bridge paths, horse-driven cart tracks and aisles of the fields we passed on those journeys, I would often see jackals, mongooses and sometimes *bagdash* or civets. There was, possibly, not a single moment that passed when I did not see or hear flocks of birds, or hear the melodies of koels, cuckoos, bulbuls, mynas, shrikes, drongos, leafbirds and others. There were sal forests around Dhaka, Mymensingh and North Bengal, and the greater Chittagong and Sylhet divisions also still had some naturally growing patches of forests holding quality wildlife. However, exponential and unchecked human population growth always negates the principles of wildlife conservation. This is a picture that has been painted everywhere in the world for many centuries, especially after the Industrial Revolution. Bangladesh is no exception. It is a nascent country—

just half a century old, but its wildlife footprints are as ancient as in other parts of the subcontinent. The dynasties before the Mughals also saw the leasing of the natural wealth of land and animals for human utilisation, but as the human population was proportionately small then, this did not really lead to the massive destruction of forests and wildlife wealth. The land area under Bangladesh has witnessed two major geopolitical changes, first in 1947 and again in 1971. Both have led to the mass movement of people and the loss of wildlife wealth. When Bangladesh became an independent country in December 1971, it had already lost its megafauna, such as three species of

livelihoods of hundreds of millions of people globally, and particularly of Indigenous and local communities with historic ties to forested and forest-adjacent areas. Bangladesh does not have virgin forest anywhere in the country—rulers and subsequent governments have leased out forest lands for extracting timber and wildlife from as early as the 1600s. In the forests that were not under any direct control of the ruling powers, the Indigenous populations have cleared large areas in the name of slash-and-burn agriculture, and animals have been hunted as well. The only exception is the Sundarbans, which has never seen a permanent settlement of people inside

forests. They are part forest dweller and part living with the mainstream populations of the country because they cannot get sufficient livelihoods from the forest to support themselves. The mainland populations and governments have mismanaged the forestry sector, and the overall environment of the country in water, agricultural and industrial sectors. Also, the subsequent governments after 1971 have had no constructive or sustainable plan to save government-owned forests, privately-managed forests and the forests that are inhabited by Indigenous populations. There were also no plans regarding village groves, rivers, wetlands and coastal areas, and on tackling excessive pollution. All of these

Wildlife, Forest and Climate Change to incorporate the new department and give it more prominence than what it enjoys under the current Forest Department—as a subordinate unit with stop-gap arrangements for employees without clear policies of hierarchical succession. This Wildlife Department will need to have policies to manage all wildlife wealth—plants, animals, soil, water and air, from the village level to the highest mountain in the country, from the tiniest wetland to all marine resources. In areas with Indigenous populations, the Indigenous people need to be included in a partnership in all field-level activities and management when it comes to village forestry. It will partly be the job of the villagers to provide labour and services at the grassroots level at cost, whereas other, more qualified people will also need to be recruited through government procedural channels. This new department should have recruitment policies similar to other government departments, where a junior wildlife officer/warden would eventually climb the ranks to become Chief Wildlife Officer/Warden and finally have a rank similar to the current Chief Conservator, Forests, before retirement. The government must hand over all lands that have so far been declared as wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, Ramsar sites, ecotourist spots, marine parks, game reserves and other reserves or parks, zoological gardens, ecologically critical areas, migratory routes of birds and marine animals, etc, to the Wildlife Department. Even wildlife occurring in private lands, crop or agricultural fields, or on specific trees, waterbodies, etc, will come under the management of this department through revamping and modifying the existing wildlife acts and rules. This department will manage all treaties related to wildlife, zoological gardens and biodiversity under the United Nations and regional agreements with various governmental blocs, donors, and international and national NGOs. It will be empowered not to cut a single naturally growing tree in any land it owns, unless there is an extreme necessity to have access to this area for better management. In such cases, the department, to supplement the loss of such trees, should plant double the number of trees in suitable areas before the old trees are removed. We need to urgently design and implement a far-reaching plan to save our wildlife and forest ecosystems through a separate department that is specifically designated for this purpose before it is too late.



A Pantropical Spotted Dolphin shot in the Swatch of No Ground in the Bay of Bengal in 2010.

PHOTO: REZA KHAN

rhinos, buffaloes, gaur, banteng, swamp deer, nilgai, wolves, possibly cheetahs, almost all three species of bears, two species of peafowl and the notable mugger/marsh crocodile. By this time, most of the surviving wildlife—such as the gigantic Bryde's whales, Asian elephants, Bengal tigers, leopards, dolphins, clouded leopards, binturong, hornbills, gharial and saltwater crocodiles—were already dwindling. These species might disappear from our territory at any moment, in 20 or 50 years. This year's World Wildlife Day will be celebrated under the theme "Forests and Livelihoods: Sustaining People and Planet", as a way to highlight the central role of forests, forest species and ecosystems in sustaining the

it. However, rulers from the 1600s and finally the British after the mid-1700s started the wholesale removal of trees from the Sundarbans and other forests in mainland areas around Dhaka-Mymensingh, Sylhet and Chittagong divisions. The path of forest and wildlife extraction shown by the British was soon followed by Pakistan and Bangladesh almost up to the 1990s. So, this year's World Wildlife Day theme applies very loosely to Bangladesh simply because modern forest-inhabiting people—such as the Garo and Hajong in sal forests, Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Tanchangya, Lushai, Pankho, Bawm, Mro, Khyang, Khumi and Chak in Chittagong and Khamsi tribes in Sylhet—cannot survive on the produce obtained from the

have been compounded with massive changes in world weather patterns and the effects of global warming. The ultimate result is the massive destruction of forests with wildlife, the silting up of rivers, the drying up of wetlands, and polluted water and air. These have had devastating effects on hill/Indigenous peoples and the overall environment of the country. To manage whatever resources are left in the denuded and human-altered forests, the scanty wildlife populations in disjunct natural and man-made habitats could be partly saved through the creation of an independent Wildlife Department. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change should also be renamed to the Ministry of Environment,

Dr Reza Khan is a nature-lover and ex-head of Dubai Zoo.

## Building resilient food systems



POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

**T**HE Covid-19 crisis has demonstrated a number of ways in which the world, as currently functioning, is not fit for

consumption patterns, boost nature-positive production, advance equitable livelihoods and build resilience to vulnerabilities, shocks and stress. I have been privileged to be invited to chair Action Track number five on resilience. Each of these Action Tracks' chairs and their respective teams have already started to consult with a wide variety of stakeholders from national governments—who obviously will play a very important

There is also another parallel track focusing on youth, as each Action Track has a Youth Vice Chair who is consulting widely with youth from around the world. The inputs that the Action Track chairs and teams will receive are being called "game changing solutions", which could range from new ideas and existing initiatives that can be scaled up to new technologies that can be submitted from any source. The first round of game changing

purpose and is certainly not at all as resilient as we would like it to be.

One of the vulnerabilities that have been exposed is food production, processing, trade and consumption in practically every country. In light of this vulnerability of the entire food system from local to national to global levels, the United Nations Secretary General has initiated the holding of a UN Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) in late 2021, which is an innovative approach to holding such Summits.

The first innovation is that it will not be negotiated between governments, which is what normally happens at UN Summits, but rather the starting point is assumed to be the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which have already been agreed upon by the governments. Hence, the UNFSS will look to how things can move forward to reduce the vulnerability and enhance the resilience of food systems from local to national and global levels over the next decade.

The second institutional innovation is that the Secretary General of the UN has appointed a high level individual, Rwandan agricultural scientist and policy-maker Agnes Kalibata, to invite experts and academics to chair each of the five Action Tracks under which the UNFSS is organised.

These five Action Tracks are: ensure access to safe and nutritious food for all, shift to sustainable

role—to the private sector (both large and small), farmers, fishers and herders, as well as women, Indigenous peoples and youth groups around the world.

In addition to the widespread consultations being carried out by the five Action Tracks, there is a parallel process of scientific assessments being done by a group of scientists, both on their own and attached to each Action Track. The most far reaching activity is probably the holding of national dialogues on food systems in each country, whose outputs will then feed into the five Action Tracks.

The national dialogue in Bangladesh has already been initiated under the aegis of the Ministry of Food, and they are planning two more dialogues in the coming weeks that will include different ministries as well as non-governmental stakeholders.

solutions reached over 500 across all five Action Tracks and these will be filtered into a smaller set over the next few weeks, while we are still open to receiving more ideas over the next months. So if anyone is still interested in engaging or giving inputs, they are most welcome to do so through the website of the UNFSS: <https://www.un.org/en/food-systems-summit>.

The Action Track chairs will submit the final list of proposed game changing solutions' ideas to the pre-Summit due to be held in Rome, Italy in July 2021. After that the UN Secretary General, in consultation with the member states, will make the final list for the actual Summit to be held in September 2021.

Dr Saleemul Huq is Director of the International Centre for Climate Change and Development at the Independent University Bangladesh and Chair of Action Track 5 on Resilience of the United Nations Food Systems.

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### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

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### Invitation for Tenders

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education.		
2	Agency	University Grants Commission/National University.		
3	Procuring entity name	Principal, Shahid Smriti Govt. College, Muktagacha, Mymensingh.		
4	Procuring entity code	N/A.		
5	Procuring entity district	Mymensingh.		
6	Invitation for	Procurement of Power Machinery (Sub-station, Generator, IPS and its related wires, cables & equipments) & Air Conditioner for multipurpose Computer lab, seminar library, departments, Project office, Conference Room etc. G-5, FY 2020-2021.		
7	Invitation Ref. No.	১৯৯৯/প্রকৌশল/২০১৯/৬-১৭		
8	Date	03/03/2021		
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>				
9	Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (National).		
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>				
10	Budget and source of funds	Development Budget (Government & IDA Credit).		
11	Development partners	International Development Association (IDA), World Bank.		
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>				
12	Project code	224017200		
13	Project name	College Education Development Project (CEDP).		
14	Tender package No.	G-5		
15	Tender package name	Procurement of Power Machinery & Air Conditioner for multipurpose Computer lab, seminar library, departments, Project office, Conference Room etc.		
16	Tender publication date	03/03/2021		
17	Tender last selling date	17/03/2021 Time 04.00pm.		
18	Tender closing date and time	18/03/2021 Time 02.00pm.		
19	Tender opening date and time	18/03/2021 Time 02.30pm.		
20	Name & address of the office	Shahid Smriti Govt. College, Muktagacha, Mymensingh.		
	Selling tender document	Shahid Smriti Govt. College, Muktagacha, Mymensingh.		
	Receiving tender document	Shahid Smriti Govt. College, Muktagacha, Mymensingh.		
	Opening tender document	Shahid Smriti Govt. College, Muktagacha, Mymensingh.		
21	Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting (optional)	Will not be held.		
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>				
22	Eligibility of tenderer	1. The tenderer shall have a minimum number 05 years general experience in supply of Sub-station, Generator, IPS & Air Conditioner and physical services. 2. The tenderer shall have satisfactory experience in supply of Sub-station, Generator, IPS & Air Conditioner & similar goods of minimum BDT 50,00,000.00 (fifty lac) only under minimum 01 contract in the last 03 years. 3. The minimum amount of liquid assets i.e. working capital or credit line(s) of the tenderer shall be Tk 40 (forty) lac.		
23	Brief description of goods or works	Sub-station, Generator, IPS & Air Conditioner.		
24	Brief description of related services	Related service shall be in accordance with Section 4; Particular Conditions of Contract, Section 6; Schedule of Requirements and Section 7; Technical Specification of the tender document.		
25	Tender document price	BDT 1,500.00 (one thousand five hundred).		
26	Tender name	Location	Tender security amount (Tk)	Completion time in days
	Procurement of Power Machinery & Air Conditioner for multipurpose Computer lab, seminar library, departments, Project office, Conference Room etc. G-5	Shahid Smriti Govt. College, Muktagacha, Mymensingh	1,60,000.00	60 (sixty) days
27	Name of official inviting tender	Professor Md. Idris Ali, IDG Manager & Principal, Shahid Smriti Govt. College, Muktagacha, Mymensingh.		
28	Designation of official inviting tender	Principal, Shahid Smriti Govt. College, Muktagacha, Mymensingh.		
29	Address of official inviting tender	Principal, Shahid Smriti Govt. College, Muktagacha, Mymensingh.		
30	Contact details of official inviting tender	Tel: 09028 75216	Mob: 01711-221193	E-mail: <a href="mailto:gsscollege_mukta@yahoo.com">gsscollege_mukta@yahoo.com</a> <a href="mailto:shahidsmritigovtcollegecedp@gmail.com">shahidsmritigovtcollegecedp@gmail.com</a>
31	The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.			
GD-411	Professor Md. Idris Ali IDG Manager & Principal Shahid Smriti Govt. College Muktagacha, Mymensingh			