

Endangered by engines

FROM PAGE 12
The road and rail track, which go through the forest, and are hit by vehicles and trains, said Shahriar Caesar Rahman, co-founder of the Creative Conservation Alliance.

Around 500 vehicles traverse the road and 10-12 trains run on this route daily, he added.

A leopard was killed on March 12 and two rare species of Phayre's leaf monkeys died separately on January 23 and February 7 this year after speeding vehicles hit them on the roads through the forest.

Last year, an endangered species of rabbit died on October 28, a rare civet on October 16, and a rare species of monkey died in mid-September in similar fashion.

These wildlife deaths were recorded by the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division, a government body.

Shamsul Haque, senior member secretary of non-governmental organisation Lawachhara Forest and Biodiversity Conservation Andolon, said many accidents which claim wildlife remain unrecorded.

Earlier, a survey conducted in the forest between September 2017 and February 2018 by Jagannath University zoology students found at least 95 animals died in road and railway accidents in the six month-period, said Salauddin, a member of the study group.

"We conducted the survey in winter. But we are sure that the death rate in such accidents is higher in the rainy season than in winter," he told The Daily Star.

Alongside deaths, many animals are also injured in accidents, said wildlife conservation activists.

Director of the Bangladesh Bonyo

Prani Sheba Foundation Swapan Deb Sajal said, "Every year, we rescue around 100 injured animals from and near Lawachhara."

Local driver Saddam Hossain said most drivers speed in the forest, causing such accidents frequently.

Md Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, divisional forest officer of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division in Sylhet, said despite multiple signboards of a "restricted speed" of 20km/hr on this stretch of road, no drivers pay any heed to these.

Apart from road and rail accidents, animals are also killed from electrocution, said environmentalists and wildlife experts.

Abdul Karim Kim, executive member of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said, "That is why we have been demanding an alternative road, railway and electric wire system outside the forest for a long time."

Government official Rezaul agrees. "If the alternative roads and rail lines are constructed, we will fence the roads and rail lines off. It will ensure safety for wildlife."

The government's local government engineering department has initiated a project to construct an alternative road from Sreemangal to Bhanugach.

LGED Executive Engineer Iqbal Ahmed said the project proposal has been sent to the planning ministry and is waiting to be placed at a pre-Ecne (Executive Committee of the National Economic Council) meeting for approval.

Contacted, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister Md Shahab Uddin said approval of the project was delayed due to the pandemic.

"However, we will now try to speed up the process," added the minister.



A girl mourns after the funeral of her 56-year-old father who passed away due to Covid-19, at the burial area provided by the government for Covid-19 victims, in Jakarta, Indonesia, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Man held for raping blind

FROM PAGE 12
worker at Sreepur upazila.

Arrestee Sagar Sheikh, 30, who hails from Rajbari, used to work at a garment factory and lived in a rented house in Sreepur's MC Bazar area.

The victim knew Sagar and they went to a safari park on Sunday where Sagar took the girl to a room near the park. Sagar's friends Babu, 32, and Nazmul, 30, were staying in the room. The trio gang-raped the girl.

The victim later went to police station and filed a case against the trio and the owner of the room -- Anwara -- for aiding and abetting, said Khandaker Imam Hossain, OC of Sreepur Police Station.

Police arrested Sagar from Indrabpur village yesterday morning, said the OC.

In Noakhali, police yesterday arrested two people from Sonaimuri municipality in a case filed over the rape of a teenager.

The arrestees are: Shariful Islam,

and hotel manager Din Mohammad.

Police said Shariful Islam was having an affair with the teen victim. On Sunday, he took the girl to a hotel where he raped her. Din Mohammad, the hotel manager, assisted Shariful in booking the room.

Jisan Ahmed, inspector of Sonaimuri Police Station, said the suspect fled after the victim lost consciousness. Police rescued the victim around 9:00pm on Sunday.

Hours later, the victim's uncle filed a case against Shariful. Din Mohammad was also made accused for assisting.

Police arrested the accused yesterday morning, said Mohammad Gias Uddin, OC of Sonaimuri Police Station.

Yesterday afternoon, they were produced before a court where they made confessional statements, the OC added.

[Our Correspondents from respective districts contributed to the report]

New spider species named

FROM PAGE 12
genus Icius was only recently found in India, with four species being described to date, indicating that the diversity spider species in this genus could be much higher than currently known.

According to the scientists, the study describes two new species of the genera Phintella and Icius from Maharashtra, of which one, Icius tukarami, is named after Omble.

"The specific epithet is dedicated to a hero of the 26/11 Mumbai terror attack, ASI Tukaram Omble AC, who took 23 bullets and captured the terrorist of the attack," the study, published in the journal Arthropoda Selecta, noted.

During the terror attacks, assistant sub-inspector (ASI) Omble grabbed the rifle of terrorists Ajmal Kasab and Ismail Khan when they attempted to flee after ambushing a police team outside the Cama hospital in the city.

The ASI took multiple bullets at

point-blank range to protect other officers at the spot, which gave them enough time and cover to overpower and capture Kasab alive.

He was posthumously awarded India's highest peacetime gallantry award Ashoka Chakra for his bravery.

During the attacks, the terrorist organisation Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) coordinated 12 shooting and bombings across Mumbai, including at the Taj Hotel, Leopold Cafe, and Chatrapati Shivaji Terminus, and Cama Hospital.

The attacks lasted for four days in the city from 26 November 2008, killing over 150 people and injuring more than 300.

By the morning of 28 November, 2008, security forces and Mumbai police had secured all sites except the Taj Hotel, and on the following day the National Security Guards (NSG) flushed out the hotel and killed the last remaining attackers.

US Covid cases raising again

FROM PAGE 12
A clear divide has emerged across the country, with cases rising rapidly in communities that have low rates of vaccination.

For example, the city of Springfield in the midwestern state of Missouri is experiencing a surge of 36.8 new cases per 100,000, and has just 35 percent of its population vaccinated with one or more doses, a dashboard maintained by Covid ActNow showed.

On the other hand, Burlington in the northeastern state of Vermont is seeing just 0.9 new cases per 100,000, and has 71 percent of its population vaccinated with one or more doses.

Nationally, 54 percent of the United States' 332 million people have received one or more doses while 46.1 percent have had two doses, according to the CDC.

The national immunization drive peaked in mid-April but has been declining since, with vaccine hesitancy much higher in states that lean Republican than those that predominantly vote for Democrats.

Cases dropped steeply across the country from mid-April to the beginning of June, a period that coincided with spring weather and increased socialization outdoors.

The summer heat however has brought more people indoors, where the primarily airborne respiratory illness mostly spreads. Air conditioning contributes by drying out the air and making conditions more favorable for the virus to remain viable.

All of this spells danger for unvaccinated people, who are more exposed than ever in the face of the highly contagious Delta variant.

Swedish PM resigns after losing no confidence vote

AFP, Stockholm

Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Lofven resigned yesterday, one week after he lost a vote of no confidence, leaving it up to the speaker of parliament to begin the search for a replacement.

Lofven could have either called a snap election or resigned following the no-confidence vote last week.

He told a press conference a snap election was "not what is best for Sweden," pointing to the difficult situation the Covid-19 pandemic posed, coupled with the fact that the next general election is a year away.

HC gives him bail, seeks answers

FROM PAGE 12
implicated and sent to jail instead of the actual convict and to find out who were behind this.

Meanwhile, writ petitioner's lawyer Partha Sarathi Ray told The Daily Star that Shariatpur's Senior Judicial Magistrate Md Shamsul Alam yesterday submitted a judicial probe report, which said that Manik Hawlader was innocent, before the HC bench.

Manik Hawlader and Manik Miah are two separate persons, he added, citing the judicial probe report.

Following the writ, filed by Manik Hawlader's wife Salma Begum on March 2, the HC bench on March 7 directed Shariatpur's chief judicial magistrate to conduct a judicial enquiry into the matter and submit a

report in this regard.

Sirajganj Special Tribunal-1 and its jail super were asked to provide assistance to the chief judicial magistrate in the investigation.

Manik Hawlader has been in Sirajganj jail since he was arrested on November 28 last year in the case.

The HC also issued a rule asking the respondents to explain why arresting Manik Hawlader and sending him to jail without verifying the authenticity of names, addresses and other details of both Manik Hawlader and Manik Miah should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, the court asked them to show causes as to why they should not be directed to release Manik Hawlader from jail.

The home and law secretaries,

deputy commissioner and CJM of Shariatpur, deputy commissioner of Sirajganj, judge of Special Tribunal-1 of Sirajganj, jailer of the district and other officials concerned have been made respondents to the rule.

Sirajganj's Special Tribunal-1 convicted and sentenced Manik Miah to four years' imprisonment on February 11, 2019 for possessing 600 bottles of phensidyl.

Before the judgement, however, Manik Miah secured bail from the HC and then absconded, DAG Tushar Kanti Roy said, adding that in the bail bond documents, Manik Miah mentioned his name as Manik Hawlader.

Police then arrested Manik Hawlader on January 13 this year.

Bangladeshis will not accept

FROM PAGE 12
impassioned appeal today to the Government of India for recognition of Bangladesh, and said reunion between Bangladesh and Pakistan was no longer possible.

Pakistan remained buried under the corpses of thousands of people, he added.

Appealing for assistance to all democracy-loving and friendly countries, especially India, Hossain Ali said the "civil invasion" had put India's economy in a lot of strain and the only way to get over it was to come to the assistance of Bangladesh even at this juncture.

He said that it was not only the destiny of Bangladesh that lay in this assistance but also that of India. "If we go down, you will also go down afterwards. The chaos will not be limited to Bangladesh but create a

situation where the whole region will be affected," he added.

STAMPS IN HONOUR OF BANGABANDHU SUGGESTED

The release of a commemorative stamp to honour Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was today suggested by SM Banerjee (CPI) in the Lok Sabha. "By doing so we will be able to give culturally a boost to the morale of Bangladesh people who are resisting heroically the tyranny of Pakistan," added SM Banerjee.

'ONLY TOTAL PULL-OUT CAN ENSURE NORMALITY'

The situation in Bangladesh would never become normal till complete withdrawal of all the occupation forces of the Pakistani military junta from its sacred soil, according to two sector commanders of the Bangladesh Liberation Army.

The two Mukti Foj commanders -- Major Khaled Musharraf and Major Ziaur Rahman -- in an interview today reacted sharply to the hope of Pakistan President Yahya Khan that normality would be restored within four months.

They said, "The absence of normal conditions in Bangladesh as admitted by the Pakistani President clearly belies his fond contention that Pakistani army was in full control of the situation."

Asked if four months' time signified any major Pakistani offensive in near future, the commanders said, "Yahya Khan had taken his most brutal offensive against us on March 25. Now it is our turn to launch the offensive."

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Life expectancy up even amid pandemic

FROM PAGE 1
million women, according to the report, which was unveiled yesterday by Planning Minister MA Mannan at the BBS office.

"Why can't we get real-time data? The technology is there -- why count the heads every 10 years?" Mannan asked.

With the click of a button, it is possible to know the number of people in a union at a given point in time, he said, while urging the BBS, which falls under the planning ministry, to provide clean and precise information since many remain sceptical about the government's statistics.

The government has made a significant increase in terms of electricity and sanitary toilet facility, according to the planning minister.

In 2020, 96.2 percent of the households owned electricity connections and 81.5 percent of households had sanitary toilet facility, according to the report.

The literacy rate among people over 15 rose to 75.6 percent in 2020 from 74.7 in 2019, with a large rural-urban gap. The adult literacy rate in rural areas was at 69.8 percent against 82.8 percent in urban areas.

Women were behind men in terms of attaining literacy, as 73 percent of women were literate compared with 78.2 percent of the men.

Females were also lagging in technology participation, according to the report.

Only 63.4 percent of the women in Bangladesh own a mobile phone and of them, 34.3 percent use the internet. The percentage of men using mobile phones is 87.6 percent and of them, 52.7 percent use the internet.

However, 73.5 percent of families in the country now use the internet.

Although the overall maternal mortality rate has fallen in 2020 as well as the complications during childbirth, the rate increased in the urban areas from 2019: for every 1,000 live births, there was 1.38 mortality as opposed to 1.23 in 2019.

However, rural women are still in a disadvantageous position with a higher risk of dying (1.78) than their urban counterparts.

The urban postneonatal (6 in 2020 from 5 in 2019) and the under-5 mortality rates (28 in 2020 from 27 in 2019) of male children have also increased in 2020.

The major cause of death of infants and under-5 children was pneumonia.

As pandemic eases, fatal gender violence worsens in Europe

AFP, Madrid

As life gradually returns to normal in Europe, there has been a resurgence of deadly violence against women as abusers experience a "loss of the control" they enjoyed throughout the coronavirus lockdowns.

And their faces are making the headlines. Like Chahinez, a French woman who was burnt alive by her estranged husband, or the five women killed in three weeks in spring in Sweden, whose images haunt TV bulletins there.

In the few European countries where official statistics for 2021 are available, the figures are indisputable:

in Spain, for example, since the state of emergency ended in May, one woman has been killed every three days, compared with an average of one a week before.

In Belgium, 13 women have died from violence since the end of April compared with 24 in the whole of 2020, while in France, 56 have been killed so far this year compared with 46 for the same period a year earlier, NGO figures show.

"With women gaining more freedom, the aggressors feel as if they're losing control and react with more extreme violence," explained Victoria Rosell, head of the Spanish

government's taskforce against gender violence.

"In the case of the increasing numbers we've seen in recent months, we've seen how easing the restrictions has exposed another underlying pandemic, that of male violence."

In 2004, Spain approved Europe's first law that specifically cracked down on domestic violence, making the victim's gender an aggravating factor in cases of assault.

And with the recent rise in deadly violence, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez has reiterated his desire to put an end to this "misogynist scourge" once and for all.

'Outlaw' shot

FROM PAGE 12
On information, police recovered the body and sent it to Pabna Medical College morgue for an autopsy yesterday morning.

The reason behind the murder could not be known immediately.

Police, however, said Bellal might have been killed over previous enmity.

Freeze eight

FROM PAGE 12
an application to it seeking permission to freeze their bank accounts, court sources said.

In the application, the enquiry officer said large sums of money were transacted using those bank accounts.

The accounts need to be blocked to ensure a fair investigation into the allegations. This needs to be done on an urgent basis to make sure that no money is withdrawn, transferred or handed over from those accounts, he also said.

During the enquiry, it was learnt that the accused were trying to transfer money from those accounts, the enquiry officer added.

On December 29 last year, Khokon and six others were sued over embezzling Tk 34.89 crore.

Delwar Hossain, president of Traders-Owners Association of Fulbaria City Supermarket-2 in the capital's Gulistan, filed the case with Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court of Dhaka.

The case is now under investigation. In the case statement, the complainant mentioned that the accused took around Tk 34.89 crore from the complainant and 26 other traders between June 21, 2015, and September 29, 2019 in the name of "allocating shops at the market's blocks- A, B, C". But the shops were being demolished for violating the original design of the market building.

On December 8 last year, the DSCC knocked down several hundred illegal shops at Fulbaria Supermarket-2, which were built violating the main design of the building.

Trial of Suu Kyi

FROM PAGE 12
Naypyidaw on Monday to hear four junta witnesses testify against her.

She is charged with flouting coronavirus restrictions during 2020 elections that her National League for Democracy (NLD) party won in a landslide, and illegally importing and possessing walkie talkies.

The Nobel laureate, 76, also faces separate charges of accepting illegal payments of gold and violating a colonial-era secrecy law. She could be jailed for more than a decade if convicted on all counts.

She was alert and appeared in good health at Monday's hearing -- which also heard testimony that former president Win Myint broke coronavirus regulations -- her lawyer Min Min Soe told AFP.

She asked "about the (Covid-19) situation for the whole country, and how it is in Naypyidaw as well."

"(Suu Kyi) asked all to be careful regarding covid. She's worrying very much for the people," Min Min Soe said.

Last month, Suu Kyi used her first in-person court appearance to voice defiance against the junta, insisting that the NLD would "exist as long as people exist because it was founded for people".

Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing has justified his power grab by claiming electoral fraud in the November poll, and has threatened to dissolve the NLD.

In an interview broadcast Monday he told Russian news channel RIA Novosti that the junta would "definitely organise new, fair elections," after "taking the measures necessary for them to take place," without providing details.

UK military top brass forced into Covid self-isolation

AFP, London

Britain's senior military commanders and the defence secretary are self isolating after the head of the armed forces tested positive for Covid.

Ben Wallace, secretary of defence, and the heads of the Navy, the Royal Air Force and Strategic Command were all ordered to isolate for a 10-day period last week, the Telegraph newspaper reported late on Sunday.

It added that the head of the Army, General Mark Carleton-Smith, also spent the weekend in self-isolation as he awaited the results of a Covid test.

They had all come into close contact with the Chief of the Defence Staff Nick Carter at a summit in Shrivenham in southern England on Thursday.

The meeting came a day after Britain and Russia squared up over a naval incident off the coast of Crimea, as Moscow said it had fired warning shots at a Royal Navy destroyer in Black Sea waters it claims.

But the UK's defence ministry swiftly denied that any warning shots were fired, saying it believed Russia was "undertaking a gunnery exercise" and had provided prior warning to shipping in the area.