



**Known as a sanctuary for guest birds and native species of fish, Dewchhara beel has been reduced to narrow stream. Inset, migratory birds are seen flying at large in the area in 2018.**

PHOTOS: STAR/FILE

# Dewchhara Beel: Once full of lives, now a wasteland

Poaching, siltation and abundance of bushes make the water body an inhospitable place for guest birds

MINTU DESHWARA WITH MD MIZANUR RAHMAN HIMADRI

Dewchhara beel in Kamalganj upazila of Moulvibazar used to be a sanctuary for thousands of migratory birds and different species of native fish but for the last two years, the water body has not been frequented by the guest birds mainly because of poaching, depletion of water, siltation and abundance of bushes. During the winter season, different species of native birds, including thousands of guest birds, used to roam here for a long time. But that is not the scene to be seen here now. Joyal Mia, a resident of the area said, the waterbody used to be buzzing with the chirping of migratory birds at the beginning of winter every year. Although there are many other ponds and open spaces in the vicinity, the migratory birds used to roost in the beel. Sometimes they would fly in the sky in groups, and

sometimes they would float in the water of the lake filled with water lilies. He said that the number of birds on the beel has been slowly declining over the last six years. Last two years, the migratory birds have not been coming in the beel and there is hardly any fish here. Lots of native fish were also found in the past. Due to excessive growth of aquatic herbs and depleting water, the waterfowls have stopped coming here, he added. Muhibur Rahman, a farmer from Dhupatila village near the Dewchhara beel, said, “Thousands of guest birds would flock the waterbody in winter every year. We used to wake up in the morning with the chirping of birds. From the time immemorial, there have been various species of birds including ducks and hawks.” The quality of water of the beel has exacerbated creating a shortage of food for the bird population. Therefore, the

birds have stopped coming to the beel, he added. He also said that some poachers are active with net and poison traps. Some are fishing in the beel violating rules. These have harmed the roosting of guest birds in the waterbody. He expressed concern saying that many species would be extinct as the hunters are using poison traps. Nurul Muhaimin Milton, general secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Sanbadik Samitee of Moulvibazar unit, said that aquatic animals including fish and guest birds are now in dire straits. The miserable condition of the water body is causing irreparable damage to local agriculture, aquatic life and biodiversity, said Durud Ali, a social worker from Keshuluti village. Jubel Ahmed, general secretary of Dakshin Dhupatila Fishermen’s Cooperative Society Ltd, said that due to the shortage of water in the beel, birds are not coming here.

“We have long been demanding dredging of the waterbody for the sake of agriculture and fishing,” he added. Kamalganj Upazila Fisheries Officer Siddiqur Rahman said, “I have heard that this place is a wonderful place for birds and fish. The population of birds and fish can be increased by excavating the Dewchhara beel. Proposals have already been sent to the higher authorities for its excavation.” Sylhet Divisional Forest Conservator Rezaul Karim Chowdhury of the Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Department said, “I will try to take the next step by visiting the place.” Kamalganj Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Ashekul Haque said, although the proposal was sent earlier, it is yet to be approved. “However, I will try to take initiative to increase water supply by renovating the reservoir in Dewchhara through the Upazila Agriculture Department,” the UNO assured.

## SLAPPING EDUCATION OFFICER AL expels Dewanganj municipality mayor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Jamalpur’s Dewanganj Municipality Mayor Shah Newaz Shahanshah, also a member of the upazila unit Awami League (AL), was expelled from the ruling party in connection with a case for slapping the upazila secondary education officer during the Victory Day programme on Thursday. The incident occurred when Upazila Secondary Education Officer Md Meher Ullah was anchoring the Victory Day celebration programme at Dewanganj Govt High School ground, where different organizations and educational institutions placed floral wreaths at the school’s Shaheed Minar on Thursday. The decision was taken at an emergency meeting of Jamalpur District Unit AL on Sunday night, says a press release. The notice was signed by Advocate Baki Billah, president of district unit AL, and its General Secretary Faruq Ahmed Chowdhury. The incident went against the party’s discipline and it also tarnished the party’s image, says the statement. While talking to this correspondent, Advocate Baki Billah said Dewanganj Municipality Mayor Shah Newaz Shahanshah has been expelled from the party to restore the discipline and image of the ruling party. Earlier around 7:00am on Thursday, Mayor Shahanshah along with his other employees went to the Shaheed Minar to place floral wreaths when the official was announcing names of different organizations according to the list. But, the mayor became furious when the name of the municipality came at number five, and locked in an altercation with the officer. At one stage, the mayor slapped the government official in presence of a huge crowd. Upazila Secondary Education Officer Md Meher Ullah said he informed Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Kamrunnaha Shefa of the matter soon after the incident. Terming the incident unexpected, UNO Kamrunnaha said she immediately informed the Jamalpur deputy commissioner about the incident. Meanwhile, Meher Ullah lodged a case with Dewanganj Police Station accusing Mayor Shahanshah on Thursday night, Officer in Charge of the PS Mohabbat Kabir sai. Contacted, Mayor Shahanshah said he felt dishonoured and had an altercation with the education officer but he didn’t slapped the official.



## UP chairman Lawyer files writ seeking HC

FROM PAGE 12 Badiul Alam, secretary of Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik, said, “The ruling party men do not want to take risks. They want to be elected unopposed... The number of candidates elected unopposed are on the rise because many individuals outside the ruling party are unwilling to participate in elections for fear of harassment and attacks.” The EC released the related data yesterday, a day after the last day of withdrawal of candidature in the fifth phase. Asaduzzaman said another 109 general member candidates and 32 member runners for the reserved seats for women were also set to be elected uncontested in the fifth phase. EC data shows 71 chairmen, 63 general members and six member candidates for reserved seats for women were elected unopposed in the first phase on June 21 and September 20; 81 chairmen, 203 general members and 76 member candidates for reserved seats for women in the second phase on November 11; 100 chairmen, 337 general members and 132 member candidates for reserved seats for women in the third phase on November 28; and 48 chairmen, 135 general members and 112 member runners for reserved seats in the fourth phase.

FROM PAGE 12 travel abroad for treatment, but the government said she must return to jail first to apply for permission -- an exercise not possible given her critical condition. There is no legal bar to allow Khaleda to go abroad for treatment on the humanitarian ground under section 401 (1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and under the preamble and relevant articles of the constitution, Akond said in the petition submitted as public interest litigation. Section 401(1) of the CrPC has a provision to suspend the sentence, he said. Subsequently, the respondents should be directed to allow Khaleda to go abroad for treatment and to ensure her fundamental human rights as per the United Nations Charter and UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The secretaries to the ministries of law, cabinet division, president’s secretariat and home and principal secretary to the

prime minister’s office have been made respondents to the required directive. Under articles 3, 5, 11, 13(2) of the constitution and UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Khaleda, whose health condition is deteriorating, is entitled to go outside Bangladesh for better treatment, the petition said. The writ petition will be placed before the HC today for its hearing, Akond told The Daily Star. Law Minister Anisul Huq on December 5 told reporters that the government was looking for a legal scope to allow Khaleda’s medical treatment abroad. “Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has considered the issues of Khaleda Zia’s treatment from a humanitarian aspect.” Two applications for allowing Khaleda Zia to go abroad have been rejected earlier. “Now, we are examining whether there is any scope in this regard. The decision would be made examining all the aspects so that the law is not violated,” Huq added.

## Shobdo Sainik Probe reveals mass murder

FROM PAGE 12 respiratory complications. She was brought to Dhaka Specialised Hospital from Chattogram on December 2 and then shifted to CMH on December 14, said Tahsin. He added that his mother was put on life support yesterday morning but she suffered a cardiac arrest around 4:45pm and doctors declared her dead at 5:10pm. Her body would be taken at Dhaka Central Shaheed Minar this morning, after which a namaz-e-janaza would be held at the Dhaka University Central Mosque. She would be brought to Chattogram on Wednesday and kept at the Shaheed Minar there. She will later be buried in the port city. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed deep shock at the death of Begum Mushtari Shafi, reported UNB. In a condolence message, she recalled with gratitude the role of Mushtari Shafi, a valiant freedom fighter, in the progressive cultural and citizen movements. She prayed for the eternal salvation of the departed soul and expressed sympathy for her bereaved family members. Mushtari Shafi was honoured with the Bangla Academy Fellowship in 2016 for her role in the Liberation War. She was also awarded the Begum Rokeya Padak in 2020. She, her husband late physician Dr Mohammad Shafi, and Shobdo Sainik Mohammad played important roles in the formation of Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendro in Chattogram. The couple gave shelter to many freedom fighters at their Enayet Bazar residence in the port city. On April 7, 1971, her husband and brother Ehsanul Hoque Ansari were picked up by local Razakars and later killed. Born on January 15, 1938, Mushtari Shafi played an active role in the progressive citizen’s and women’s rights movements.

FROM PAGE 12 were killed and their mutilated bodies were buried in shallow graves. General Zaw Min Tun, Myanmar’s deputy minister for information and a military spokesperson, did not deny the mass killings when the BBC inquired about the allegations. “It can happen,” he told the public broadcaster. “When they treat us as enemies, we have the right to defend ourselves.” The greatest number of killings took place in Yin village, where 14 men were tortured and killed, after which their bodies were dumped in a forest. In Zee Bin Dwin village, 12 mutilated bodies were found buried in shallow mass graves. This included a small body, possibly that of a child, and the body of a disabled person, the report added. The BBC said it had video footage that showed that a man in his sixties was tied to a nearby tree and tortured. One of the survivors of the killings in Yin village said the men were tortured before they were killed. He also identified some of the soldiers to be as young as 17 and said that a woman had accompanied

them as well. Myanmar has been in the grip of civil unrest since the military wrested power from Aung San Suu Kyi’s elected government on 1 February this year. The coup returned the country to full military rule after the country had become a quasi-democracy after the junta – which had been in power since 1962 – carried out elections in 2011. While Suu Kyi has been sentenced to prison, protests against junta rule have spread onto Myanmar’s streets since the coup. Meanwhile, a junta court yesterday postponed giving its verdict in Suu Kyi’s trial for illegally importing and possessing walkie talkies, a source with knowledge of the case said. The judge adjourned the case until December 27 without explanation, a source with knowledge of the case told AFP. Suu Kyi could had faced three years in prison if found guilty on the walkie-talkie charges, which stem from the early hours of the coup when soldiers and police raided her house and allegedly found her in possession of the contraband equipment.

## Why do we

FROM PAGE 12 daytime affects our circadian rhythm. Circadian rhythm or circadian cycle is an internal process that regulates bodily activities like sleep-wake cycle or metabolism. The rhythm is influenced by outside things like light and dark or other factors. The influence occurs when our brain receives signals based on the environment and activates certain hormones to keep us alert or make us feel sleepy. Therefore, the colder and darker the season or the region, the sleeper you feel. According to a recent American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM) survey, 34 percent

of US adults report sleeping more in winter. But the question remains if we should sleep more during winter just because we feel like it. In general, it is a good idea to accommodate one’s need for sleep, scientists say. So, if you do not have flexible work hours and need to wake up at the same time as in summer, you could go to bed early to get some extra sleep. But if you still feel sleepy in winter mornings, exposing yourself to bright light can help you be alert and ready for the day. You can also have tea or coffee to feel awake.

## Kushtia court bins case against

FROM PAGE 12 general secretary of Kushtia unit Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum, a platform of pro-BNP lawyers, lodged the case with Kushtia Senior Judicial Magistrate’s Court yesterday. After hearing the case around 3:00pm, Judge Selina Akhter dismissed the case, confirmed Anup Kumar Nandi, public prosecutor of Kushtia, saying that as the case had no merit, the court did not accept it. In Manikganj, Azad Hossain Khan, general secretary of Jatiyatabadi Ainjibi Forum of the district unit, filed a complaint with a local court against Murad and Nahid yesterday. Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate Alina Khan heard the plaintiff and recorded his statement, but did not pass any order. According to the statement, Murad and Nahid used “profoundly vulgar, misogynistic, and derogatory language” against BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, its acting chairman Tarique Rahman and his daughter Zaima Rahman during a Facebook Live and disseminated false information. Mejbaul Haque, president of Manikganj district Lawyers’ Association, confirmed it. [Our Kushtia and Manikganj correspondents contributed to this report.]

of US adults report sleeping more in winter. But the question remains if we should sleep more during winter just because we feel like it. In general, it is a good idea to accommodate one’s need for sleep, scientists say. So, if you do not have flexible work hours and need to wake up at the same time as in summer, you could go to bed early to get some extra sleep. But if you still feel sleepy in winter mornings, exposing yourself to bright light can help you be alert and ready for the day. You can also have tea or coffee to feel awake.

## Superman #1 comic fetches

FROM PAGE 12 through college by buying and selling comics. The character created by writer Jerry Siegel and artist Joe Shuster is a pioneer of the superhero genre, and comics featuring the Man of Steel have netted super prices recently. ComicConnect announced in April that

a copy of Action Comics #1, the comic that introduced Superman in 1938, sold for \$3.25 million. “Now you look at the comic books and you go ‘superheroes everywhere.’ You look back in the ‘30s, there was no such thing. So this was literally the first superhero,” said ComicConnect CEO Stephen Fishler.

## Saudi jails Yemeni man for 15 years

AFP, Dubai Human Rights Watch said yesterday a Saudi court had sentenced a Yemeni man to 15 years for apostasy, urging the kingdom to prioritise decriminalising blasphemy amid a modernisation drive. The rights group said that Ali Abu Luhum, 38, had been accused of making comments “via two anonymous Twitter accounts”, which prosecutors argued were registered with phone numbers linked to him.

## Commute appalling

FROM PAGE 12 Asked why the city corporation does not repair the road in places where it is done working on the drainage, Shawkat said he is taking note of the issue and will take necessary measures. MAN Siddique, managing director of Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited which is implementing the Metro Rail project, said he had received complaints

from the mayor of DNCC. He said, “At this moment, the city corporation is not allowing us to do any work on the road. After the corporation finishes the work we will fix it.” Asked why they do not repair the road where the city corporation is not working, MAN Siddique said, “I will order repairs if any potholes are found on the road where the city corporation is not working.”

## Ruma Sarkar gets bail after 61

FROM PAGE 12 providing legal assistance to Ruma, told The Daily Star that the HC granted bail on the grounds that she is a woman, has two children and been suffering in jail for a long time. Lawyers Laboni Akhter and Shahinuzzaman Shahin also appeared for the petitioner, while Deputy Attorney General Sarwar Hossain Bappi opposed the bail petition. Rapid Action Battalion arrested Ruma Sarkar on October 20 from her home on the capital’s Bailey Road after filing a case against her on charges of spreading provocative speeches and false videos on Facebook. Rab filed the case under the DSA with the Ramna Police Station on October 19.

On that day, Ruma posted a video on her Facebook of businessman Shahinuddin’s murder in the capital’s Pallabi area on May 16, claiming it to be the attack on Jatan Kumar Saha in Noakhali, which led to his death, according to the case statement. Jatan was beaten to death on the afternoon of October 15, when Hindu temples in Noakhali’s Begumganj upazila were attacked. On May 16, Shahinuddin was hacked to death in front of his son by a group of criminals. Several persons, including a former lawmaker, were arrested a few days after the incident over the murder. Ruma also went on Facebook Live and spread provocative information, said the case documents.