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A pile of illegally dumped waste was set on fire in the Boliarpur area on the Dhaka-Savar highway, polluting the surrounding air. The smoke is also a hindrance to passing vehicles, as it reduces visibility on the road and could even result in an accident. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Sylhet Flood leaves wildlife in peril

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The ongoing flood across the Sylhet division has left wildlife in the region in peril.

Locals in Kamalpur village under Ajmeriganj upazila of Habiganj district on June 24 rescued a fishing cat from the overflowing Kalni river, barely clinging to its life by clutching at water hyacinths to stay afloat.

Zobair Ahmed Javed, member of the local union parishad, said the fishing cat was fed after rescue and kept safe. Staffers of wildlife conservation department will come and relocate it, he added.

Another injured fishing cat was rescued in Sylhet's Companiganj upazila from a bridge.

Kabir Ahmed, a local, said the cat was there seeking shelter.

Continuous downpour, flood and landslides have caused significant damage to habitats of local wildlife as vast stretches of area have become inundated, leaving animals without food and safety.

Animals like fishing cats and foxes were seen looking for shelter in various localities, where they are unfortunately vulnerable to attacks by villagers.

Livestock are also suffering. "Flood water inundated our area last week. Our house and cattle-shed are submerged. We are worried that the

cattle might get bitten by snakes coming with floodwater," said Abdur Rashid of Mohammadpur village in Sunamganj.

Many others echoed him.

"The flood has left wildlife in Sylhet vulnerable. Also, ongoing panic over Russell's viper, instigated by misinformation, has left other snake species in danger. People are unaware and likely to kill other harmless snakes," said Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon's Sylhet Chapter.



A rescued fishing cat in Sylhet. PHOTO: STAR

Muntasir Akash, lecturer of zoology department at Dhaka University, expressed concern over possible loss of wildlife in Sylhet due to the ongoing flood.

Dr Jahangir Alam, divisional forest officer in Sylhet, said they are working on rescuing wild animals from flood-affected areas, when informed.

ROAD CRASHES DURING EID Govt, NGO data don't match

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 230 people were killed and 301 were injured in 235 road crashes across the country in 13 days during the rush centring Eid-ul-Azha, according to Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA).

BRTA Chairman Nur Mohammad Mazumder yesterday revealed the information at a press conference at BRTA headquarters in the capital's Banani.

However, the BRTA statistics are much lower than the road crash data of a non-government organisation for the same period.

13-DAY EID VACATION	BRTA	ROAD SAFETY FOUNDATION
Total accidents	235	251
Number of deaths	230	262
Injured	301	543

The growing number of road crashes and deaths has turned into a major concern lately and the number usually sees a rise during the Eid rush as the number of vehicles and road users rises sharply at this time.

Nur Mohammad said BRTA, along with other government agencies, took numerous steps to make people's Eid journey safe and hassle-free.

"Our steps worked and we could offer a relatively hassle-free Eid journey," he said, adding, "But road crashes and deaths often undermine the success."

He said between June 11 and June 23, around 230 people were killed and 301 were injured in 235 road crashes.

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AFTERMATH OF FLOOD, REMAL

Over 250km of RHD roads damaged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Over 250 kilometres of roads under 13 divisions of Roads and Highways Department were affected due to the ongoing flood in the northeast region and the cyclone Remal last month.

RHD, however, could not assess the financial losses caused by the flood and cyclone yet, officials said.

Earlier, floods in 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2022 damaged many roads under RHD network, and the authorities had to spend a large amount of money to repair them.

Transport experts and environmentalists often blame poor planning ahead of road construction and ignoring the impacts of climate change as the main reasons for floods causing so much damage to roads and resulting in high repair costs.

RHD officials, however, said although many roads built decades ago were not properly engineered structures, they were now constructing properly engineered structures with climate-adaptive designs.

According to RHD data, 25 roads under Sylhet, Sunamganj,



A damaged road in Bagerhat after cyclone Remal.

and Moulvibazar with a length of 155.41km were damaged till June 23 due to ongoing flood.

Of the affected roads, 6.90km are national highways; 45.44 km are regional highways and 103.07km are district roads.

Some parts of these roads were washed out partially while the embankment of some roads collapsed and numerous potholes were developed in many roads,

reads the preliminary report.

Zikrul Hassan, superintendent engineer (maintenance circle) of RHD, said they have already formed a monitoring team that will visit the affected areas next week.

They will give a report assessing the extent of damage caused by the flood and will take necessary measures accordingly, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

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Daughter to visit Kolkata on July 3 for DNA test

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mumtaz Ferdous Doreen, daughter of Jhenaidah 4 MP Anwarul Azim Anar, is scheduled to travel to Kolkata on July 3 along with family members and DB investigators. She will provide DNA samples to match against recovered flesh and bones from a septic tank and canal in Kolkata.

The results aim to confirm whether the remains belong to her father, MP Azim, who was allegedly murdered in a New Town flat in Kolkata.

Abdur Rouf, the lawmaker's personal assistant, said they are now waiting for the government's final approval for the trip. A source within DB has also confirmed the development.

Meanwhile, Kazi Kamal Ahmed Babu, the relief and social welfare affairs secretary of the Jhenaidah Awami League, was shifted to Jhenaidah prison from Keraniganj central jail yesterday following a court order.

Babu has allegedly used his mobile phone to communicate with and exchange photos with the suspected killer of Azim.

He later disposed of three mobile phones used in communication to destroy evidence, claimed DB.



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'Be scared of humans, not snakes'

PM suggests caution, saying animals vital for ecological balance

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stated yesterday that animals and snakes do not attack humans unless they feel threatened.

The premier said this while replying to a question at a press conference in

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The Russell's viper conundrum

Misinformation leads to killing of snakes, experts blame lack of awareness campaigns

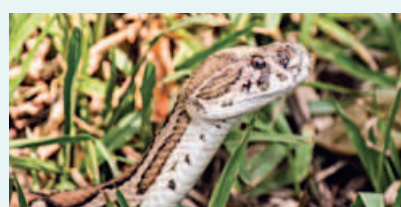
SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Russell's viper is not a snake species of a foreign land, rather they have coexisted in the natural ecosystem of the Indian sub-continent for centuries.

Although the name gives off a mysterious vibe, these vipers also have a simple Bangla name -- Chandrabora. These snakes are in fact, beneficial, especially to farmers, as they mainly feed on rats on agricultural lands.

Recently, however, their population has proliferated. This surge is linked to the decline of their natural predators -- mongooses, monitor lizards, forest cats, eagles, and cranes due to indiscriminate hunting.

Misinformation on social media fueled panic, leading people to kill



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any snake they saw, fearing it was a deadly viper. In the frenzy, many

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ANTIVENOM Govt served legal notice to ensure supply

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Supreme Court lawyer yesterday served a legal notice on the government yesterday, asking it to ensure adequate supply of antivenom to every hospital, clinic and health centre.

Advocate Bahauddin Al Imran sent the legal notice to the secretary at the public security division of the home ministry; secretary at the health services division of health ministry; director general of Directorate of Health Services and director general of Directorate of Drug Administration for taking necessary measures in seven days.

Antivenom shortage at Barishal hospitals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, the largest healthcare centre in Barishal division, does not have any antivenom in stock for treating snake bites.

Dr Saiful Islam, director of SBMCH, stated he plans to visit Dhaka soon to secure a supply.

He noted that in the last three days, three snake bite patients were treated, but none required anti-venom as the snakes were non-venomous.

On average, SBMCH treats 50-60 snake bite patients annually, with 80 percent bitten by non-venomous snakes.

Meanwhile, in the last three months, 70 snake bite patients were treated at upazila hospitals, with only seven bitten by venomous snakes.

However, three deaths were reported in the past two months in Bhola,

Jhalkathi, and Barguna districts.

Dr Shyamal Krishna Mondal, director of the Divisional Health Office, claimed there are adequate antivenom stocks. However, medical staff and locals from the grassroots alleged otherwise.



Dr Shishir Kumar Gain, resident medical officer in Agailjhara upazila, said they have 30 vials of antivenom, sufficient for treating only three patients.

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