

CITY

Bangladesh stable for investment
Says EIB VP

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

European Investment Bank Vice-President Nicola Beer yesterday expressed confidence in Bangladesh's current stability for investment and confirmed the Bank's plans to finalise agreements for water, sanitation, and energy projects.

"I see the current situation as stable for investment, so we proceed with what we have already decided. Further signatures are expected this year," she told reporters after meeting Foreign Adviser Md Touhid Hossain at the foreign ministry.

Asked if EIB investments would depend on the election or political transition, she said that such matters are for the people of Bangladesh to decide.

Nicola emphasised EIB's support for the interim government and its engagement with various ministries and sectors to determine investment priorities. "I am optimistic about signing deals on significant projects, especially in water and sanitation, this year," she said.

Leading a high-level delegation on a three-day visit, Beer is set to meet Finance and Planning Adviser Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, Power and Energy

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Two sent to jail over trader's abduction

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Benapole*

A Jashore court has sent two men to jail in connection with the abduction of a gold trader in Chaugachha upazila.

The accused, Abu Said Al Mamun Babu, 42, of Bodhkhana village, and Firoz Hossain, 45, of Ichali village, were produced before the court after a case was filed by the victim's son, said Kamal Hossain, officer-in-charge of Chaugachha Police Station.

Dhirendra Nath, 50, who owns a jewellery shop in Chaugachha, was abducted on Monday night while returning home.

The criminals demanded Tk 20 lakh in ransom, which was reported to the police. Officers later identified a suspicious microbus near Chaugachha bus stand, and after a brief chase, the abductors abandoned Dhirendra and fled. Based on his statement, police arrested Babu and Firoz, seizing the vehicle after multiple drives.

MINTU DESHWARA, *Moulvibazar*

Hakaluki Haor, one of the largest freshwater wetlands in Bangladesh, spanning five upazilas in Sylhet and Moulvibazar districts, was once a safe haven for migratory birds during winter.

Each year, the arrival of thousands of migratory birds of various species transformed the haor into a vibrant sanctuary, enhancing the natural beauty of the region and drawing tourists from across the country and beyond.

In recent years, however, the population of these winter visitors has significantly declined, raising alarm among bird experts and environmentalists.

According to the Bangladesh Bird Club's census data, the number of birds in 40 wetlands within the Hakaluki Haor area plummeted from 58,281 in 2017 to 18,660 in 2020.

The bird census was not conducted in 2021 due to the pandemic and in 2022 due to financial constraints.

In January 2023, a joint survey by

the Bangladesh Bird Club and IUCN Bangladesh recorded 37,778 birds of 52 species, including 12,732 ducks and 4,537 small waterfowl, in Hakaluki Haor. The increase compared to 2020 was attributed to the absence of new development projects in the area.

However, the rise in bird numbers also saw an increase in illegal hunting activities, with poachers using traps and baits in the unprotected waters of the haor. This has made the wetlands increasingly unsafe for migratory birds.

Additionally, a sharp decline in the fish population and the depletion of aquatic vegetation have caused food scarcity, further discouraging the birds from returning to Hakaluki Haor.

"Soon after the birds begin arriving with the onset of winter, poachers actively prowl the wetlands to hunt

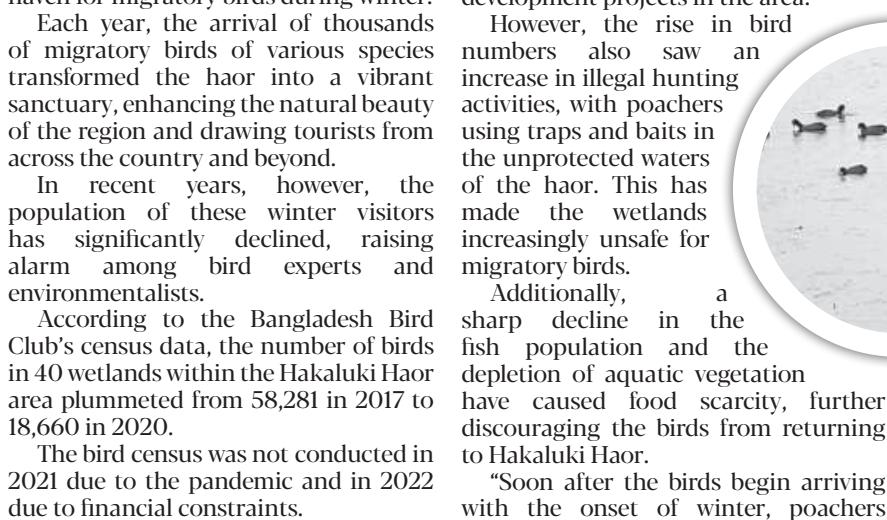
them. Climate change, environmental pollution, and human activities further threaten their safety," said Fakhruzzaman, a resident of Ashighar village in Kulaura upazila of Moulvibazar.

Kamrul Hasan Noman, an environmental activist and member of the Patharia Wildlife Conservation Team, said rivers flowing into the haor are polluted with plastic, polythene, and other waste discarded by neighbouring communities.

"Hunters are also using nets and poison baits to capture birds, exacerbating the decline. It is an alarming scenario," he said.

Sahadat Hossain, a student of Kulaura Degree College, said, "If indiscriminate hunting doesn't stop, a time will come when birds will stop coming to Hakaluki Haor."

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47 citizens condemn attack on Santal community

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Forty-seven eminent citizens of the country in a statement yesterday strongly condemned the assault on a Santal woman and the arson attack on their homes in Gobindaganj of Gaibandha.

They called upon the government to ensure the safety of the Santal community and demanded punishment for those responsible. Additionally, they also asked for a high-level impartial investigation into how 250 acres of land and the government-owned pond belonging to the Santals of Rajahar Union in Gobindaganj were illegally occupied, according to a statement sent to media yesterday.

Since the era of Pakistan, influential groups and political leaders in Gobindaganj, or their agents, have repeatedly sought to take control of the Santals' land. At times, the state seized their land in the name of sugar mills. On other occasions, the police and administration set fire to their homes to evict them, the statement said.

"At a time when the nation is raising its voice to break the chains of discrimination, such unjust oppression and persecution of the Santals is unacceptable. We strongly condemn and protest this heinous act. We demand an impartial investigation into the physical assault on the

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Electric fence kills elephant, man dies in retaliatory strike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bandarban*

Amid the escalating conflict between humans and elephants in the country, fuelled by the loss of the latter's habitat, another tragic incident occurred in Bandarban on Monday, resulting in the death of an elephant and a man.

A pregnant elephant, who entered a paddy field with the other members of her herd in search of food, got electrocuted by an electric fence protecting the land.

Meanwhile, her death led to a retaliatory attack by its herd that claimed the life of a farmer.

The incident occurred late Monday night in Kumari Para village of Bandarban's Lama upazila.

The deceased was identified as Faridul Alam, 44, of the Bichamari Chara area.

He had placed the live wire around the field to deter wild elephants, in which the pregnant elephant got caught and died.

After her death, the other elephants, angered by the death of their pregnant member, kept roaming the area around the field, according to witnesses.

Seeing the elephants, Faridul went to his field to drive away the elephants. The herd attacked him.

"Locals rushed him to Chakaria Hospital, but

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3 killed in truck-autorickshaw collision in Gazipur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Gazipur*

Three people were killed in a collision between a brick-laden truck and a passenger-carrying autorickshaw in Kaliakoir yesterday.

The accident occurred on the Fulbaria-Kaliakoir regional road in the upazila in the afternoon, said Kaliakoir Police Station Sub-Inspector Niharika.

The deceased are Karim Mia, 42, of Boro Gobindapur village in the upazila, Ayan Roy, 35, of Nayanagar village in

Sutrapur, and Sudip Das, 37, of Tan Sutrapur village.

Police and locals said the brick-laden truck was heading towards Maona from Kaliakoir Bazar around 4:30pm. When it reached the Kanchanpur Chairman Bari Bazar area of Chapair union, it collided with the autorickshaw.

Kaliakoir Police Station SI Zahid Hasan said the truck loaded with bricks was seized.

However, the truck driver and his assistant fled.

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