

Number of birds rises at Baikka Beel

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

The Bangladesh Bird Club has completed its annual bird census at Baikka Beel Sanctuary in Moulvibazar's Hail Haor, recording a significant increase in bird numbers.

This year's census documented 7,870 water birds from 38 species, compared to 4,615 birds from 33 species in 2024 and 6,141 birds from 40 species in 2023.

Baikka Beel, a fish sanctuary and haven for migratory and resident aquatic birds, saw remarkable sightings, including 750 Grey-headed Lapwings and a record 639 Glossy Ibis, and 100 Black-headed Ibises. A peregrine falcon, the world's fastest bird, was spotted for the first time, said Moniruzzaman, site officer for Centre for Natural Resource Studies, who called it a "rocket bird."

He said around 59 percent of the birds are migratory, benefitting from Baikka Beel's peaceful environment and fishing ban.

Minnat Ali, president of the Baragangina Resource Management Committee, suggested introducing visitor fees to improve sanctuary management and fund additional staff to address challenges in overseeing the large area.

Hasina, her cohorts using laundered money to spread propaganda: Sarjis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon



Sarjis Alam, a key coordinator of the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement, has alleged that ex-prime minister Sheikh Hasina and her cohorts are using laundered money to fund propaganda cells to spread misinformation to confuse and divide people.

"The people of Bangladesh are conscious enough to see through these lies which serve only as a source of amusement for them," he told reporters at an event at Mokbulur Rahman Government College ground in Panchagarh yesterday.

Sarjis, also the chief organiser of the Jatiya Nagorik Committee, said they are working to uphold the dreams and spirit of people focusing on building a better future. "Giving importance to such propaganda is nothing but a waste of time."

"We don't need a separate government for neutral elections. Under the guidance of Dr Muhammad Yunus, we can witness transparent elections in Bangladesh," he added.

He said women were at the forefront of the mass uprising and they would have to play a pivotal role in shaping a new Bangladesh.



The number of birds have risen significantly this year at Baikka Beel, a fish sanctuary and haven for migratory and resident aquatic birds. This year's census documented 7,870 water birds from 38 species, compared to 4,615 birds from 33 species in 2024 and 6,141 birds from 40 species in 2023.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Leprosy cases keep rising in Sylhet

Tea workers worst-affected; lone hospital strained of resources

MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The number of leprosy patients rose in Sylhet district in recent times amid inadequate treatment facilities.

A total 150 new cases were identified in the district in 2024, up from 79 in the previous year, according to Dr Manisar Chowdhury, district civil surgeon.

At present, there are 190 active leprosy cases in Sylhet district, including 124 males, 66 females, and seven children, he added.

According to data of the Directorate General of Health Services, the number of cases identified in 2014 were 194 in Moulvibazar, 150 in Sylhet, 106 in Habiganj, and one in Sunamganj.

In 2023, the numbers were 257 in Moulvibazar, 79 in Sylhet, 117 in Habiganj, and 103 in Sunamganj.

A large proportion of the patients are tea garden workers and



Sylhet Leprosy Hospital, one of the only three government-run leprosy treatment centres in the country, is facing numerous operational challenges to cater to the needs of the patients in the district.

their families.

According to data of Sylhet Leprosy Hospital and Lepro Bangladesh, around 65 percent of leprosy patients identified in Sylhet district are from tea workers'

families. Contacted, Dr Mohammad Noore Alom Shamim, assistant director of DGHS's Sylhet divisional office, said lack of awareness and

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A weaver at work in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila. Once renowned as Lalmonirhat's "Tant Palli," Kaliganj was home to 450-500 active handlooms just five years ago. Today, only 60-70 handlooms remain, of which just 20-25 operate year-round, with the rest functioning merely three to four months a year.

PHOTO: STAR

LALMONIRHAT'S KALIGANJ UPAZILA Weaving heritage hangs by a thread

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Sirajul Islam, 55, a resident of Mahishamuri village in Lalmonirhat's Kaliganj upazila, sits silently outside his modest home, gazing at the remnants of the handloom he sold three years ago. Like his father, the late Mozahar Ali, weaving had been his life's work since childhood. But now, forced to make ends meet, he earns a living as a day labourer, leaving behind a profession that once defined his identity.

Mahishamuri and Kakina villages, once renowned as Lalmonirhat's "Tant Palli," were home to 450-500 active handlooms just five years ago. Today, only 60-70 handlooms

remain, of which just 20-25 operate year-round, with the rest functioning merely three to four months a year.

Most weavers have abandoned their ancestral trade, seeking



livelihoods as agricultural labourers, day labourers, rickshaw pullers, and ferry workers. Those still clinging to their craft find themselves at the brink of giving up.

Weavers explained that the decline

began a decade ago as demand for handwoven fabrics started to dwindle. Machine-made fabrics, with their brighter appearance, have overtaken the market, becoming the preferred choice for buyers.

Capital shortages and shrinking market opportunities have further exacerbated their struggles, as the value of woven cloth continues to fall and its user base shrinks, they said.

Shafiar Rahman, 48, another weaver from Mahishamuri village, has also left the trade. Once taught by his late father, Noor Islam, he now works as a farm labourer to support his family, including his wife and two daughters, who live in extreme

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Grabbers choke Char Fasson canal

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

The Char Fasson canal, stretching 20 kilometres through Bholia's Char Fasson upazila, was once a bustling waterway that facilitated navigation for large boats, trawlers, and launches, promoting communication and trade.

Over the years, however, rampant encroachment has choked the canal, reducing it to a narrow drain and transforming its vibrant waters into a lifeless channel.

Flowing through the southernmost part of the upazila, it connects to the Betua, Tentulia, and Meghna rivers.

In its heyday, it supported trading activities between Bholia and various regions, including Dhaka, with small passenger launches plying routes to Daulat Khan, Munsir Hat, Borhanuddin, Kachchhpia, and Monpura.



PHOTO: MONIR UDDIN ANIK

Today, the canal is on the brink of collapse due to illegal encroachment and the indiscriminate dumping of waste. The lack of tidal flow has suspended the transport of goods and passengers, raising concerns about a potential environmental disaster. Locals called for urgent action from authorities to evict encroachers and excavate the canal to restore its vitality.

"The canal was once about 75 feet wide and deep enough for launches. Now it's reduced to a mere 20-25 feet wide drain in most areas," said local resident Md Shahadat, citing pollution and siltation as major hindrances. Muhammad Hasanuzzaman, executive engineer of the Bangladesh Water Development Board in Bholia, said efforts are underway to save the canal.

"We listed and evicted some illegal occupants in 2019, but they returned. A 10-km stretch was also dredged to restore flow. We are working to identify and evict all illegal occupants," he said.

Man dies in elephant attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

A 50-year-old worker was killed in a wild elephant attack early in Lama upazila of Bandarban yesterday. The deceased, Md Kalu, was a labourer at a betel leaf farm in Ishaq Member Para. He was from Cox's Bazar's Maheshkhali upazila.

Kalu was fatally injured when a herd of elephants raided a storage hut in Ishaq Member Para around 4:00am, said Md Shahadat Hossain, officer in charge of Lama Police Station.

The elephants, driven by a food shortage in the hills, descended from the forest and broke into the hut in search of rice and paddy. Kalu, who was sleeping inside, suffered critical injuries during the attack, the OC said, quoting locals. He was declared dead by the on-duty doctor around 6:00am.

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