

WORLD FISHING CAT DAY

THE ‘MISUNDERSTOOD’ CAT



MINTU DESHWARA, Moulvibazar

The endangered fishing cat is a nocturnal species, which is often misunderstood and feared due to its misleading name, “Mechhobagh.”

This misconception has led to unnecessary persecution, especially in haor and wetland regions where they primarily reside. Many people mistakenly associate them with tigers or leopards, resulting in frequent killings.

Researchers stress that raising awareness among local communities is crucial for conserving this species. Fishing cats typically hide in bushes near water bodies during the day, making them difficult to spot.

Prof MA Aziz of Department of Zoology at Jahangirnagar University said while large carnivores are often the focus of SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Each day, this farmer travels from a nearby village where he lives with his cattle to this field near the Bangladesh-India border in Rajshahi, allowing them to graze on the abundant overgrowth. The photo was taken from Padmar Char Majhardiar yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

Ex-minister
Nuruzzaman
on 5-day
remand

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Dinajpur

A Rangpur court yesterday placed former social welfare minister Nuruzzaman Ahmed on a five-day remand in a murder case.

Rangpur Metropolitan Magistrate Court-3 Judge Devi Rani Roy issued the order after police produced him before the court.

Nuruzzaman, a former lawmaker from Lalmonirhat-2, was arrested on Thursday night in Rangpur, said Kotwali Police Station Sub-Inspector Mostafizar Rahman.

Following his arrest, police sought a 15-day remand for interrogation. However, his lawyer, Ifrat Akter, appealed for dismissal of the remand petition.

The court granted a five-day remand.

Nuruzzaman is accused in the case filed over the killing of one Mahmudul Hasan Munna during the anti-discrimination movement in Rangpur.

Rangpur Metropolitan Police Commissioner Md Majid Ali said the former minister faces multiple charges, including attacks on students, murder, and attempted murder.

According to police, Munna's father, Abdul Majid, filed a case against Nuruzzaman, his son, and 128 others on August 29 last year.

On January 28, police arrested Al-Amin Hossain, a leader of banned Chhatra League in the same case.

HOMELESS AGAIN

60 families forced out of their Ashrayan homes by armed criminals

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU,
Pabna

Md Alam sits on the edge of a flood-protection embankment, hammering wooden planks into place for a makeshift shelter. The 50-year-old day labourer, who has been homeless twice in his life, never thought he would end up here – again.

“I was barely surviving as a child without a home. Then, four years ago, I finally had a roof over my head when my mother was allotted a house under the Ashrayan project,” he said. “But last year, after August 5, armed criminals came, looted everything, and threw us out. Now, we're back to living like this – under the open sky.”

Alam's fragile shelter is made of borrowed materials, the structure barely holding up against the cold winter wind. He and his family, along with around 60 other families, were evicted from their homes in Jamuna village, Bharara union of Pabna Sadar upazila, on August 8, 2024.

The houses, built under the government's Ashrayan Project-2, were supposed to provide permanent shelter to ultra-poor families.

Like Alam, Md Bachchu Miah, another day labourer, struggles to adjust to life on the embankment.

His wife, Fatema Begum, had received an Ashrayan house in 2021, and the family planted trees, hoping for a secure future.

“We left behind everything—the house, the trees, the small comforts we had built,” he said.

“Now, we survive in misery, borrowing money to put up a roof over our heads again.”

HOMES REDUCED TO RUBBLE
When this correspondent visited the project site, he found out that not a single structure remained intact. Bricks, doors, windows,



At least 60 families evicted from their Ashrayan homes in Jamuna village, Bharara union of Pabna Sadar upazila, on August 8, 2024. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

and roofs had been looted. A signboard hung by the alleged criminals claimed ownership of the land.

The names listed included Akram Pramanik, Ummat Pramanik, Akkash Pramanik, and Ismail Pramanik.

The victims were forced out under threat of violence, according to Bharara Union Parishad Chairman Md Sultan Mahamud.

“The families abandoned everything, fearing for their lives. They are now living on the embankment in inhumane conditions,” he said.

THE DISPUTED LAND
The Ashrayan Project-2, initiated by the previous Awami League government in 2021, granted each of the 60 families two decimals of land and a home with official

registration. However, following the fall of the AL government on August 5 last year, armed individuals claimed the land as their own.

Atik Pramanik, son of one of the alleged land claimants, said the land belonged to their family but had been mistakenly recorded as khas land in the RS record.

“We've filed a case, and it's still pending in court,” he said, accusing former UP chairman Abu Sayeed of misusing his power to allocate the land for political gains.

Atik said they had no role to play behind the recent violence and eviction.

Md Naharul Islam, the upazila nirbahi officer of Pabna Sadar, refuted these claims, insisting the land is government property.

“The Ashrayan Project was legally established there. No one previously claimed it as private property. We are investigating the incident, and those responsible for damaging government property will face legal action,” he said.

The UNO acknowledged the plight of the victims and assured efforts were underway to rehabilitate them. “We've informed higher authorities and are working to resolve the matter,” he added.

For the displaced families, life on the embankment is a harsh reality. Without basic amenities or security, they struggle to rebuild their lives. “We don't know how long we'll have to stay here,” Alam said, staring at the crumbling remains of the community they once called home.

ST MARTIN'S ISLAND
9-month travel
ban starts today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Tourism at Saint Martin's Island in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar comes to a halt from today as the government's ban on tourist travel takes effect.

The island will remain closed to visitors until November when the next tourism season begins.

Despite repeated appeals from islanders to extend the season until the end of February, the government did not respond to their requests.

Authorities had announced in October last year that all tourist travel to St Martin's would be prohibited from February to October to protect the island's ecosystem.

Tourism had already been restricted to November, December, and January under directives from the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change.

Previously, tourist vessels operated from October to March, but the revised schedule has caused financial strain on local residents who depend on tourism for their livelihoods.

Hossain Islam Bahadur, general secretary of the Sea Cruise Operators Owners Association of Bangladesh, confirmed that the six ships ferrying tourists were returning from the island today.

Hills razed to build
makeshift houses
for Rohingyas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At least 50 makeshift houses were being built by razing three hills in Teknaf to accommodate newly arrived Rohingyas.

However, the authorities intervened and stopped the activities.

“Some newly arrived Rohingyas had built houses in the hilly areas, which pose a landslide risk during the rainy season. We carried out a drive recently to relocate them,” said Khanzada Shahriar Bin Mannan, senior assistant secretary and in charge of Rohingya Camps 25 and 27.

The Rohingyas will be sent back to the camps for now, and arrangements will be made to relocate them to suitable living areas, he said.

“We will continue our drives,” he added.



Locals said at least three hills were partially razed. Hnila Union Parishad member Mohammad Ali said the eviction drive was carried out through discussions with the Rohingyas. However, most of the vast hilly area remains inhabited by Rohingyas.

Md Harun, a Rohingya who fled from Bolibazar village in Myanmar's Rakhine State and settled in the hilly area of Hnila, said, “I fled with my family five months ago to save our lives. After struggling to find a place in different camps, we took shelter here.”

Meanwhile, locals alleged that a public representative allegedly built the houses by cutting the hills and then rented those out to the Rohingyas.



The construction of the new buildings of the Basail Upazila Health Complex has remained stalled for nearly 20 years, depriving over 2.5 lakh people of quality healthcare facilities. For this delay, the authorities concerned and the construction firm blame each other.

PHOTO: STAR

UPAZILA HEALTH COMPLEX
Construction of
new buildings
stalled for 20yrs

MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Over 2.5 lakh residents of Tangail's Basail upazila are deprived of quality healthcare facilities as the construction of the upazila health complex's new buildings remains stalled for nearly 20 years.

The authorities concerned and the contractor firm responsible for the construction blamed each other for this delay.

Khandakar Meraj, a representative of the construction firm, blamed the Health Engineering Department, saying, “We stopped the work due to non-payment of Tk 1.56 crore in bills and an additional Tk 60 lakh in dues as per the tender.”

Habibur Rahman, executive engineer of HED in Tangail, blamed the firm for negligence and non-cooperation.

According to sources, the government in 2005 SEE PAGE 4 COL 7