

Dry fish traders cry for storage facilities

Huge quantity of fish get damaged every year in Teknaf and Moheshkhali

MUAZEM HOSSAIN SHAKIL,
Cox's Bazar

A huge quantity of dry fish get damaged here every year due to lack of storage facilities in Moheshkhali and Teknaf, the two main hubs of dry fish trading.

As a result, dry fish traders are incurring a huge loss every year. Thousands of people in Najirartak, Sonadiya, Dhalgata, Matarbari and Khatobdiya villages earn a living by drying sea fish.

'We don't have a single cold storage at Moheshkhali and Teknaf. The government should come forward immediately to set up cold storage to help our dry fish trade', said Abul Hashem, a dry fish trader.

'We face a serious problem when we stock a large quantity of dry fish. When naturally preserved, insects attack dry fishes most often. So, we are badly in need of cold storage', he said.

'Dry fish sector is yet to get any help and support from the government though it is struggling to flourish against all odds', Hashem said.

'If the government provide us proper support, it will be easy to export dry fish to more countries in large quantity fetching huge foreign currency', he said.

At present dry fish is exported to some Middle East countries, including Saudi Arabia, Dubai and Qatar in small number, he said.

Supply of dry fish from Cox's

Bazar to the northern districts has decreased following last year's flood, he said adding it has caused a slump in dry fish business here.

Hashem further said production of dry fish has also dropped in recent years following poor catch of sea fish.

In reply to a question, he admitted that insecticides are used at field level to preserve dry fish.

Dry fish has rich food value if prepared in a proper manner. But it becomes a health hazard if processed with insecticide or unsafe preservative.

Dry fish is usually produced in a natural way under the open sky in the coastal areas of Cox's Bazar.

Pintu Dutt, another dry fish

trader said dry fish business has become dull in the recent years.

'Supply of dry fish has declined due to sea pollution caused by dumping of wastes from foreign vessels. This has resulted in poor catch in deep sea and in its stock, he said.

Because of short supply, prices of dry fish also marked a sharp rise. 'Pomfret' which was available between Tk 300 and 400 a kilogram about a year ago is now being sold at Tk 700 per kg. 'Latia' is being sold at over Tk 120 per kg, traders said.

Mobarak Hossain Babul, an exporter said, 'Dry fish has a good demand abroad, but it is not being exported in a large scale due to various problems in its shipment.'

A unique day for Satkhira villagers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

It was a unique day for villagers in Romjan Nagar union in Shyamnagar upazila close to the Sundarbans.

Over 1500 enthusiastic people took part in a day-long 'open budget session' on Saturday, held at the UP office compound.

UP chairman Sheikh Alamgir Haidar placed a Tk 10,11,000 budget for the union for 2006-07 financial year and replied to various questions.

The programme, first of its kind in the area, was organised by two NGOs- Manusher Jonno and Agragati Sangstha- to ensure transparency and accountability of the local government body.

Shyamnagar Upazila Nirbahi officer (UNO) Zahidul Islam was the chief guest while local elite also attended the programme.

The enthusiastic villagers asked how the money would be spent and also gave suggestions.

Speaking on the occasion, the UNO said such open discussion on Union Parishad budget will ensure transparency in activities of local governments and development. Such programmes should be organised in other areas also, he said.

2 electrocuted in Katiadi

BSS, Kishoreganj

Two youths were electrocuted while repairing the electric line of a rice mill at Baliagaon under Katiadi Upazila of the district on Sunday.

Police said the accident occurred as the victims Sabuj, 16, and Joyanal, 18, were working without switching off the supply line.

Locals said at first Sabuj came in contact with a live wire and Joyanal met the same fate while trying to rescue Sabuj. Both were critically injured in the incident and breathed their last on way to the Bazipur Zahurul Islam Medical College Hospital.

Killing of Sechhasebak League leader protested

RU CORRESPONDENT

Two units of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) here yesterday held a joint rally at Shaheb Bazar in Rajshahi protesting killing of Sechhasebak League leader Golam Mostafa Milton during Sunday's blockade programme.

BCL leaders of Rajshahi city and Rajshahi University (RU) units urged the people to make today's countrywide hartal successful. They also criticised government for resisting the people's movement. They said the government has no other option but to accept the 14-party reforms proposal or to step down.

They demanded resignation of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and two other commissioners. They threatened a tougher agitation against the government if they do not step down. They asked the government to halt repression on the opposition leaders and activists by police. They called upon the people to build up a greater agitation to unseat the government.

Among others, the Rajshahi University unit general secretary of BCL Ayen Uddin, the city unit general secretary Zedu Sarker, central committee members Zahid Ali, Rashidul Islam Polin and BCL leaders Prince and Uzzal addressed the rally.

Later, a joint procession was brought out in the city. The processionists paraded the main streets of the city chanting slogans against the government.

Tk 1.20 crore Faridganj pouro budget

A CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

The newly-created Faridganj Poursabha announced its first budget on Friday at the office of its administrator Manjil Hossain.

In the Tk 1.20 cr budget, an amount of Tk 23 lakh 50 thousand was earmarked as revenue tax, Tk 1.20 lakh shown as government grants, Tk 10 lakh allotted for development work, Tk 3 lakh allocated for kitchen market and its development, Tk 3 lakh for street lights and Tk 3.10 lakh for development of health and sanitation sector.

Faridganj upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) A F M Rafi Uddin was present as the chief guest while the ceremony was attended by the upazila elite in presence of newsmen.

SATURDAY'S STORM IN BAY

26 fishing trawlers with over 300 still missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

At least 26 fishing trawlers with 335 crew members and fishermen are still missing in the Bay of Bengal yesterday.

Thirty-three fishing trawlers with 426 crew members and fishermen went missing in the Bay of Bengal after being caught in a sudden storm on Saturday.

Most of the fishing trawlers sailed from Patharghata Kalapara coasts of Barguna and Patuakhali on Thursday.

Meanwhile, pirates allegedly kept 180 fishermen and crew members of 15 trawlers hostage after the trawlers took shelter in the narrow canal of the Sundarbans during the storm. They demanded Tk 30 lakh as ransom for the trawlers and the crew members.

Barguna District Trawler Workers' Union president Dulal Master said local administration and police failed to rescue their men and property from the clutch of pirates. So, they are trying to contact the pirates directly to rescue the trawlers and

freedom of hostages. Abdul Mannan, owner of a trawler, has gone to Khulna to negotiate with the pirates to rescue the trawlers and freedom of hostages.

Barguna District Trawler Owners' Association president Golam Mustafa Chowdhury said a rescue team has been sent to Narkelbaria on board FB Lechu Shah in search of the crew and fishermen.

Meanwhile, seven trawlers with 91 crew members and fishermen returned to Patharghata and Kuakata coasts safely yesterday morning.



PHOTO: STAR

The bridge over Dakatia river connecting old and new parts of Chandpur town awaiting inauguration.

40 DAYS INTO ABDUCTION Mohalchhari UP chairman, 2 others still untraced

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Abducted Mohalchhari Sadar Union Parishad (UP) chairman Arkimidis Chakma and his two companions are yet to be traced after 40 days of the incident.

UP chairman Arkimidis, member Bipul Chakma and Tiral Chakma, another indigenous person, were abducted by a gang of criminals from Lernuchhari in Mohalchhari upazila on May 21 this year, local people and police said.

Earlier, four UP chairmen, in a joint statement, recently criticised the law enforcement authorities for failure to rescue them. They are Mubachhari UP chairman Kongjuri Marma, No 3 Kayanggat UP chairman Biswazit Chakma, Maischhari UP chairman Sajai Marma, and No 5 Sindukchhari UP chairman Sunupru Chowdhury.

United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) leader Samari Chakma blamed the authorities concerned for their inefficiency to rescue the abducted persons.

Khagrachhari additional superintendent of police (ASP) Giasuddin told this correspondent over a telephone that army and police jointly conducted raids at different places to rescue them but in vain.

Police said the abducted chairman is the main accused of Trader Rupom Mohazon Missing Case. Rupom went missing on August 24, 2003. He mediated to free three foreigners abducted from Rangamati the same year.

Parents and wife of Arkimidis are moving from door to door seeking justice. Arkimidis has a six-year-old daughter, Shampa Chakma. She does not know that her father had been abducted.

Bridge on Dakatia awaits opening

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

Construction of the much awaited bridge over Dakatia river connecting old and new parts of Chandpur town has been completed.

Prime Minister Khalada Zia will inaugurate the bridge soon, but the schedule is yet to be fixed, official sources said.

The 260-metre bridge built at a cost of Tk 22.3 crore has been named Chandpur Natun Bazar Pura Bazar Sangjog Shetu. Awami League government which laid its foundation had proposed its name as Abdul Awal Shetu.

The bridge will open Chandpur's direct road link with Raipur, Laxmipur, Shariatpur, Faridpur and other districts in the area and boost trade and commerce, local people said. Roads and Highways Department (R&D) engineer Ziaul Haider said finishing touches are being given ahead of its inauguration, possibly within a month. Construction of a bridge on the Dakatia river in the town was an election pledge of Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina when she was Leader of the Opposition during the previous BNP government.

Voted to power, the then prime minister Sheikh Hasina laid the foundation of the bridge on November 28, 1999.

Two drown in Cox's Bazar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Two children drowned while diving in the Bakkhali river here Sunday.

Mohammad Saha Alam, son of Moktar Ahmed of Naritihali village in Islampur and another unidentified child dived in the river at noon, but failed to swim ashore, local people said.

Later, police recovered the bodies from the river.

Hashish seized in Jessore, Jhenaidah

BSS, Khulna

Members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered 900 grams of hashish and arrested two persons from separate places in this connection on Sunday.

Rab sources said a team of the force raided Noapara Jute Mills area and arrested drug peddler M Shahid, 26son of Niamat Ali of village Moshor Hati under Avaynagar upazila under Jessore district with 800 grams of hashish.

Another team of the Rab raided Issarba village under Kaliganj Upazila of Jhenaidah district and arrested another peddler M Shakawat Hussain, son of Late Bazul Rahman, with 100 grams of hashish.

In Satkhira, members of Anti-Drug Taskforce arrested a woman and recovered contraband phensidyl and hashish from a night coach on Saturday.

Police said the taskforce headed by Magistrate Zahid Hasan raided the Barisal bound bus in Jhaudanga area under Sadar upazila and arrested the woman with 89 bottles of phensidyl and 200 grams of hashish.

The woman, Sofia, 30, is a member of drug trafficking gang, police said.

Youth beaten to death in Pabna

A CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A young man was beaten to death in Bera upazila Saturday midnight.

Md Shanwar Hossain, 30, son of Md Idris Ali of Pachekola village was killed by a gang of miscreants while he was going to his father-in-law's house, police said.

The motive behind the attack could not be known immediately.

Sylhet-Dhaka regional highway remains a distant reality

RAJAT KANTI GOSWAMI,
Moulvibazar

A proposal for Sylhet-Dhaka regional highway via Sylhet-Fenchuganj-Jagdishpur-Moulvibazar remained a distant reality for the last 33 years.

About 20 lakh people of Sylhet, Moulvibazar and Habiganj districts are suffering for lack of smooth road communication.

It had always been an election pledge of the political leaders in the region since 1973. But after each and every election, the politicians forgot their promises.

In 1991, when BNP came to power, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman who is also an influential policymaker in his party, took an initiative to construct the regional highway. But, only the Fenchuganj to Rajnagar portion of the highway was constructed. Now local vehicles are plying through their road and

fertilisers produced in Fenchuganj Fertilizer Factory are being transported through it.

In 1996, when Awami League came to power, the government constructed a new Dhaka-Sylhet highway changing the original sketch of the highway. The new highway was constructed through Sherpur, Nabiganj, Bahubal, Nawapara and Madhabpur while it was opened for vehicular traffic in early 2005. But Moulvibazar district headquarters, Srimongal and Chunarughat upazila headquarters were excluded from the route.

After its opening, the inter-district buses and trucks started plying along the route by avoiding the old highway. As a result, the sufferings of the passengers from Fenchuganj, Rajnagar, Srimongal and Chunarughat upazilas including those of Moulvibazar district headquarters have multiplied. This has left an adverse impact on trade and commerce in the areas. Now the

general passengers and businessmen have to go Sherpur or Shayestaganj to avail the inter-district buses. Similarly, the passengers coming to Srimongal and Moulvibazar have to descend at Sherpur or Shayestaganj to avail local buses to Srimongal and Moulvibazar.

While inaugurating the Khowai Bridge at Shayestaganj in October, 1997, former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also promised to construct the regional highway. She repeated her promise during a foundation laying ceremony of Khushiara Bridge at Fenchuganj in February, 2000. But her promise was never fulfilled.

In mid-2005, the present government took a step to repair part of the old highway from Mirpur to Sherpur via Srimongal and Moulvibazar.

Although the expansion work of the project began, it is progressing at a snail's pace.



PHOTO: STAR

Condition of the main road in Teknaf. Tourists visiting the border town in Cox's Bazar often find the road littered with garbage and human waste.