



Fishermen set large trap nets at Harinbaria canal in Taltali upazila, and, *inset*, in a char area of Padma village in Pathorghata upazila of Barguna although the authorities long ago banned the use of such nets, on the grounds that those pose threat to fish species.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Illegal nets pose threat to fish in coastal area

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

A section of fishermen have continued catching fish with illegally set large trap nets in the rivers of the coastal area and the shore of the Bay of Bengal, posing threat to different species of marine as well as sweet water fish.

The callous act seems unstoppable despite frequent drives by the Coast Guard and the Department of Fisheries.

During this winter, fishing with the large trap nets, locally called chargara, behundi and ghopjals, is a common scene at the mouth of the Baleshwar, Payra and Bishkhali rivers adjoining the Bay, Lalদিয়া, Haringhata, Padma, Rohita, Chhoto Tengara and Charduani in Barguna's Pathorghata upazila, and Asharchar in Taltali upazila.

The banned nets are also used in Gangamati, Fatrar Char, and the char areas near the rivers of Mahipur area in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila.

In a recent visit to Gangamati, this correspondent saw with chargara nets spread in a large part of the beach area.

The trap net, each 300 to 400 metres long, and 1.5 to two metres high, is set on the slopes of the river and beach. Fish coming with high tide often get trapped there during the low tide. Ghopjal, a similar kind of net, is tied to poles set in the coastal areas of the Bay and mouth of rivers.

Located 12 km south of Pathorghata, Lalদিয়া Char is a coastal island in the Bay of Bengal. During the winter, different species of fish including the young ones are caught there with the banned nets.

Hiran, known as the owner of the largest ghopjal and chargara nets in Padma, Ruhita, Haringhata and Tengra areas of Pathorghata upazila, said, "I got permission to catch fish with the nets from Khulna last year. I have sold my nets. Now I'm not involved with it."

Nurul Islam, Kalam Mia and Abul Hossain, residents of Haringhata area of Pathorghata, said the administration should take a strong stand to stop use of chargara, ghopjals, and current nets to save fish stock in the coastal areas.

Zakir Hossain Miraj, proprietor of Sonatla Fisheries Hatchery in Pathorghata upazila, said, "The fish resources in our rivers will be threatened if those are caught with sparrow and snake nets [other names of the trap nets] in different rivers of

Barguna.

Rabindranath, acting district fisheries officer in Barguna, said they conduct regular drives against fishing with illegal nets in the rivers of the coastal areas of the district.

Biswajit Barua, Coast Guard's commander at Pathorghata, said, "Despite shortage of manpower, we often conduct joint operations to stop use of the banned nets. But a section of the fishermen are too reckless and cunning."

Barguna Deputy Commissioner Mostine Billah said, "We are sincerely trying to stop these unscrupulous fishermen. Alongside conducting drives, we also called them at various meetings to make them aware about the harmful effects of the fishing with these nets."

Dinajpur JCD leader stabbed dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Unidentified criminals stabbed a Jatdiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) leader to death at Shukbebpur village in Bochaganj upazila on Friday night.

The deceased, Majnur Rahman, 32, son Obaidur Rahman of Dhontola village, was general secretary of Bochaganj upazila unit JCD.

Quoting locals, Officer in Charge of Bochaganj Police Station Ayub Ali said, a group of seven to eight unidentified criminals waylaid Majnur while he was crossing Shukbebpur village around 11:00am.

They stabbed him indiscriminately with sharp weapons and fled the scene, leaving him critically injured, he said.

Hearing cry for help, villagers rescued injured Majnur and admitted him to Bochaganj Upazila Health Complex, from where he was referred to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur.

He succumbed to his injuries on way to the hospital the same night, police said.

Meanwhile, victim's cousin Al Maruf Reza alleged that it was a planned murder.

The JCD leader might have been killed over personal feud, the OC said, adding that, being informed, they recovered the body and sent it to the hospital for autopsy.

Stone crushing worker dies of silicosis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A silicosis-affected former stone-crushing labourer in Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila died on the way to Rangpur Medical College Hospital yesterday afternoon.

The deceased, Momin Ali, 40, son of Sahidar Rahman of Ufarmara village in Pagram upazila, was the president of silicosis affected stone crushing labourers' compensation movement in Burimari land port area of Patgram.

He also was the plaintiff in one of the 62 compensation cases filed with Rajshahi Labour Court.

In a critical condition, he was admitted to Patgram Upazila Health Complex yesterday morning from where he was referred to Rangpur Medical College Hospital.

But he died shortly after he started in an ambulance.

"Momin had been bedridden for a month but we could not arrange his treatment for lack of money. I went to public representatives, administrative officials, and stone traders for help, but none gave even a taka," said Sahidar Rahman.

Momin left the job at a stone crushing factory at Burimari land port after he got silicosis seven years ago. Treatment in Rangpur and Dhaka failed to cure him.

"Momin Bhai was our leader. He moved to different places in a bid to realise compensation for us. He used to look after labour court cases. Finally he expired, leaving us helpless," said Abul Kalam Azad, a stone-crushing labourer in the same village, also suffering from silicosis.

"The former employers abandoned us. Now the compensation seems far away," said Mahir Uddin of Khalpara village, also seriously ill with the same disease.

According to Burimari union parishad Chairman Abu Sayeed Newaz Nishat, 66 stone crushing workers died from silicosis in the last six to seven years.

"Hundreds others are affected, of them 70 critically ill. The workers got the deadly disease as the stone dust entered the lungs through the nose and mouth while crushing stones without using safety masks," he said.

Lalmonirhat Civil Surgeon Dr Kashem Ali told The Daily Star, "Silicosis infects the lungs and eventually leads to death. Treatment for this disease is given only at the Chest Diseases Hospital in Dhaka."

Schoolgirl saved from early marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A schoolgirl was saved from early marriage in Thakurgaon Sadar upazila of Friday night following timely intervention of local police.

Acting Officer in Charge of Sadar Police Station Golam Mortuza said the marriage ceremony of a 16-year-old girl, also a Class X student at Thakurgaon Ideal High School, was set to take place in Shahapra of the municipality with one Raju Ahmed, 22, son of Abu Bakkar of Laututhi village, on Friday night.

On information, a team of police went to the bride's house and foiled the marriage.

They also asked the girl's guardian not to arrange her marriage before the age of 18.

14 students food poisoned in Kurigram

They took pickles and jhalmuri from a street vendor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

At least 14 students of Chandipur Model Government Primary School in Kurigram's Nageshwari upazila fell sick after having unhygienic food from a street vendor yesterday morning.

All the victims, who took pickles and jhalmuri from a vendor in front of the school gate, were immediately admitted to Nageshwari Upazila Health Complex, a number of students and teachers said.

Medical Officer at the hospital Dr Abu Bakkar Siddique said the students fell sick as they might have taken rotten and unhygienic food or due to mass hysteria.

Sharifa Khatun, an assistant teacher of the institution, said at first as eighth grader suddenly started suffering from headache and vomiting during class hours before she fainted.

Within a short time, another 13 students of different classes started suffering from the same symptoms and fell sick, she added.

Being informed, they went to the spot and took the street vendor to the police station for quising, Officer in Charge of Nageshwari Police Station Rowshan Kabir said.

If found guilty, legal action will be taken against the street vendor, the OC said.



Shariful Islam at his pigeon farm in Magura Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Magura pigeon farmer now idol for unemployed youths

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

With almost empty hand, Shariful Islam returned home from Dubai in 2011 and became very upset. At one stage, he tried his luck in pigeon farming following suggestion of a local pigeon lover and since then he did not need to look back.

Many residents of his locality, especially youths, are now following his footsteps.

Son of late Sabdal Mollah, a marginal farmer from Chandpur village in Magura Sadar upazila, Shariful is the second among eight siblings.

After completing BA (Pass) from a college in Dhaka, Shariful went to Kuwait to seek fortune in 2002, where he worked as an electrician for about eight years. In 2011, he returned home after losing his job. The same year, he went to

Dubai but returned home after 36 days.

He could not continue his job there for low wages and returned home with almost empty hand, said Shariful, adding that after some days, he started farming pigeon with an investment of Tk 50,000 on the roof of their house following suggestion of pigeon lover Saiful Islam.

Apart from this, he made pigeons' cages and feed and sold them to traders of different areas in the country.

At present, he earned a profit of Tk 80,000 from the farming every month, said Shariful, now father of two children.

Shariful further said he has 35 local and international varieties of pigeons. Of them, each pair of Bold Head is sold at Tk 1.80 lakh and Gerafer at Tk 1 lakh while Feel Back, English

Trumpeter and Black Laurie are sold at Tk 40 to Tk 50 thousand a pair.

He sells the younger ones at Tk 20 to Tk 25 thousand each pair. He gathered primary knowledge about pigeon farming from one of his close friends who works at Acme Veterinary.

He has also set up a sale centre at Binodpur Bazar in the upazila, said Shariful, adding that he opened a Facebook page and sold pigeons through it.

Seeing Shariful's success, around 15 unemployed youths started pigeon farming and they are now earning good profit, said locals.

A local youth, Rakibul Hossain of Dharla village, said he is very happy running the business. He sells pigeons at Tk 30,000 per month.



Sand extraction from rivers to fill up low-lying land has become a common scene in Pirojpur villages. Sand is being carried through plastic pipe on a busy road, causing immense sufferings to commuters. The photo was taken from busy Charkhali-Tushkhali-Mathbaria road in Mathbaria upazila on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR