

Shrimp cultivation threatened

Fry from natural source is being exhausted due to rise in salinity

From Our Correspondent

KHULNA, Nov 1: Shrimp may be the leading item of the export list of the country. A huge amount of foreign exchange can be earned from this booming sector. Even Tk 5000 (five thousand) crore may be earned exporting the tiger prawn and lobster (golda) if the shrimp farming comes under planned cultivation with the modern technology as viewed by the experts.

Shrimp cultivation and export is highly considered as the supreme contribution to build our national economy. Chittagong and Khulna coastal belts are very fertile to grow shrimp abundantly. As per export statistics of some previous years it obviously indicates the rapid increase in this sector.

The country earned Tk-82, 30, 24, 035 from the shrimp export in the financial year of 1984-85, Tk-144,45,76,527 in 1985-86, Tk-167,59,74,558 in 1986-87, Tk-170,40,70,111 in 1987-88, Tk-171, 41,00410 in 1988-89, Tk 199,78, 19, 569.23 in 1989-90, Tk 206, 58, 50, 079.33 in 1990-91, Tk-219, 50, 28, 68, 22 in 1991-92, Tk 318, 87, 80, 305.90 in 1992-93, Tk-417, 89, 49,629.95 in 1993-94, Tk 547, 60, 58, 3798.80 in 1994-95 financial years only from Khulna zone. This export picture shows a jumping augmentation of shrimp products from Khulna zone.

At present almost all shrimp enclosures (locally called gher) are fully dependant on natural farming resulting only in 600 Kgs production per acre land. But 2200 kgs to 2500 kgs production per acre of land is very easy to breed in using semi-intensive cultivation while 4500 kgs to 5000 kgs can be expected in intensive cultivation. Bringing the whole shrimp cultivation in a scientific system the country can earn Tk 5000 crore per year from Khulna zone alone.

The country earned Tk-548 crore exporting shrimp from Khulna in financial year 1994-95 as recorded at Mongla Port authority depending on absolutely natural cultivation. So it can be calculated that if the whole area of shrimp cultivating land comes under semi-intensive system then the export volume can be reached to Tk-219,042,33,515 and Tk 438,084,67,030 under intensive system per year only from Khulna zone as predicted by shrimp experts.

About three lakh acres of land are now under shrimp cultivation in greater Khulna zone comprising of Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat districts. Another one lakh acre of land is under lobster (golda) cultivation in this zone. It is another unique booming sector with bright possibility to earn huge foreign currency. It has been started recently with a new enthusiasm. It is making great stride in Khulna, Satkhira, Bagerhat, Gopalganj, Madaripur, Faridpur and Protopur districts. This newly emerged lobster sector may exceed the tiger prawn production.

This prospective shrimp farming is expanding in a quicker pace in Khulna coastal areas with manifold problems. One third of the shrimp farms out of 5000 in greater Khulna district have no licence for the cultivation of shrimps and lobsters. For which the government is being deprived of a sizable amount of revenue every year. On the other hand, clashes between the shrimp farmers and the owners of

land (within gher) are occurring regularly over the compensatory payment to the owners of land known as hart as per scheduled rate. The innocent peaceful land owners or the marginal farmers are being evicted from their lands by the powerful shrimp farm owners. As shrimp farming involves a huge capital and a large area of land, the richmen from town area engaged in shrimp farming, care little to follow the principles laid down by the government for shrimp farming in the coastal areas in order to ensure unhindered cultivation of the crops.

Unplanned and unauthorised shrimp cultivation is resulting in a growing unrest and deep resentment amongst poor and innocent farmers of coastal districts. It is often recorded that in most cases the farm owners illegally encroach the land of helpless peasants through intimidation and violence which sometimes results in bloody clashes between powerful farm owners and helpless peasants.

According to a survey by a NGO 2000 farms out of a total of 5000 have valid licences as per the shrimp cultivation rules set up by the government. And the owners of the rest 3000 farms are cultivating shrimp without licence. The government has already made a number of rules and regulations with a view to encouraging shrimp

farm owners in grabbing the land from peasants. Being oppressed by the farm owners the poor peasants move to police with wrath seeking justice. But it is alleged that they come back not getting any justice. All these untoward incidents are causing constant setbacks of the smooth farming. As it is a glorious and prospective sector, the government should come up to curb the oppressive attitude of the powerful farm owners with iron hands viewed by a large number of owners of small land.

On the other hand abnormal crisis of shrimp fry created a mounting setbacks in this sector last year. The tiger prawn fry from natural sources radically declined recently. In the preceding years the demand of fry would be met from this source. But a serious crisis of fry occurred last year. The fry from natural source could meet only 10 pc of total demand at very high price. One piece of fry of tiger prawn was sold at Tk 3.50 while a fry of lobster at Tk 2.50 last year.

As a result, a good number of farm owners could not afford to buy fry at that exorbitant rate to release in the gher. A large number of gher were left abandoned due to lack of fry. The abnormal price hike of fry hampered the shrimp production severely. At the mid-pink season of fry releasing some businessmen imported

pieces per year. As 80 pc of tiger prawn of the country grows in Khulna zone, the requirement of Khulna zone is 24 crores in proportion to cultivation while intact 5 crores pieces of lobster fry is required for Khulna zone for cultivation in the six districts of the southern part of the country.

The supply of shrimps fry from natural source and hatcheries is only 20pc of the total demand of the country. Major supply of fry comes from natural sources and very negligible portion from standing hatcheries of the country. There are only 27 hatcheries in Bangladesh engaged in nurturing the fry collected from the natural sources. Only one hatchery established in Batiaghata thana adjacent to Sundarban of Khulna district by SABINCO recently to hatch fry from the spawn of mother shrimp. It went on production last year on trial basis and hatched a limited fry. The production capacity of it is about 4 crores fry per year. If seventy per cent hatching capacity of it is utilised in the present season, that would be able to meet up a good proportion of demand. Besides, a handsome portion of fry comes to Bangladesh from India being smuggled in through various routes. Another hatchery of lobster fry was established in Satkhira. It can hatch from the spawn of mother shrimp but the hatching capacity of it is very small against the demand.

So it is clear that a gap between the demand and supply is prevailing in the country. It is obvious in record that import of fry is the ultimate hope to meet the acute demand. In the meantime, the Thai government declared that they would not export any fry to Bangladesh in the current season. The farm owners will have to depend on Indian fry available either by import or smuggling.

The present picture of fry crisis clearly indicates a serious threat to our shrimp cultivation.

To meet up the whole demand of fry of the country, minimum five modern hatcheries are needed to be established in country to foster this sector for the interest of the country. As per experts' opinions each modern hatchery with latest technology would cost Tk-50 crore. So 250 crore taka is good enough to establish five modern hatcheries which would be able to meet the acute crisis of shrimp fry in the country. If the proposed hatcheries are set up the crisis will be and huge foreign currency will be saved. The shrimp cultivators would get the fry timely at fair price as well.

To minimise the fish meal rate, 10 big scale fish meal producing units were recommended by the Bangladesh Shrimps Producers' Association to government last year to establish in the country for supply of fish meal at concession rate giving subsidy with view to patronising this important sector for the interest of the country.

If the setbacks of shrimp farming are waived and planned cultivation with latest technology is used having all sorts of expected helps from the government then 5000 crores taka can be earned within 2 to 3 years from this content sector alone.

The farmowners have to fulfil the following terms and conditions before being given the licence. The terms and conditions are: (1) Written consent of the owners of 80 pc land where the shrimp will be bred (2) NOC from the landowners (3) Written commitment of causing no damage to the paddy land and their crops in and around the fish farms (4) Written assurance of not cutting the embankments illegally (5) NOC from the revenue office of payment of taxes for each high land for cultivation of shrimp.

sector, to earn foreign currency. Interested parties to cultivate shrimp are bound to abide by the rules and regulations. So the farm owners have to get licence from Thana Shrimp Cultivation Controlling Authority.

It is observed that unfortunately most of the farm owners who are very influential never care about the rules and regulations of shrimp cultivation. They possess paddy land and manage the big and influential land owners of the gher, giving same additional sum to allow the saline water to enter into the paddy field within the gher with the help of the hired hoodlums. The saline water is very helpful for tiger prawn cultivation but it affects the paddy land and crops very badly. The marginal farmers or the owners of small quantity of land are against this system. On the other hand they do not get hari from the farm owners. Even the marginal farmers can't go to their land in order to cultivate paddy in fear of hired goons by the farm owners.

Lands are often registered for shrimp cultivation through forged contact deeds. They have no strength to fight against them for fear of harassment. In many cases shrimp farm owners register false cases like robbery, dacoity looting against the innocent small land owners.

It is observed as well as alleged that the police and a section of members of the administration assist the

about 20 crores, fry of tiger prawn and lobster from India and Thailand to meet the crisis of fry last year. Those imported fry were released in the gher directly not nurturing in Bangladesh for adjustment in prevailing level of salinity. As a result of the fact a large portion of fry died just after a few hours of releasing in gher and alive rest fry could not grow up as expected. Whereas the local fry were grown up beyond the expectation as well as the mortality of fry was very meagre.

As per experts that the fry from natural source is being exhausted dramatically for abnormal rise of salinity in the Bay of Bengal due to adverse effects of Farakka Barrage. So the target of production could not be achieved last year due to acute crisis of fry.

The shrimp cultivators are apprehending that the serious crisis of fry may occur in the current season like preceding year because of increased salinity in water at earlier stage. If the salinity exceeds 7 to 8 PPT in October, it is a dangerous signal that salinity may rise at 20 to 25 PPT in February to March which level of salinity creates hurdle for fry. This salinity is caused by adverse effects of Farakka Barrage viewed by the experts. They further spelled out that the natural fry would be reduced gradually due to harmful rise of salinity in the water.

The total demand of the tiger prawn fry is 130 crore and lobster fry is 5 crores

People of Khulna zone cry for security

by Naimul Haq back from Khulna

Nov 1: In recent months the entire Khulna zone has witnessed an alarming decline in law and order. A record number of crimes including social violence were reported reflecting adversely on the effectiveness of the police force in ensuring a peaceful environment in the society.

This zone has been notorious for crimes, especially for the types carried out by the members of the outlawed Sarbahara Party and Purba Bangla Communist Party who are active mostly in the districts of Magura, Jhenidah, Chuadanga and Meherpur.

Killings following abductions, robberies, highway holdups, and social violence have greatly increased over the last eight months.

Shrimp farmers in Khulna Division are constant hostages at the hands of toll collectors. Many say that the extortionist gangs often kidnap or kill their victims when their ransom demands are not met. There were reports of as many as 14 such abductions and three killings in the past few months in Satkhira and Khulna districts. Resistance is risky and, therefore, rarely attempted. Most farmers take the line of collaboration in the hope of carrying on with their farming activity.

Shyamnagar, Rampal, Batiaghata, Paikgacha, Dakob and Joynagar are some of the areas in Khulna, Satkhira and Bagerhat which are frequented by the extortionist gangs exacting handsome ransom.

Villagers, who begged for anonymity, named a few who have been terrorising them by sending letters threatening to kidnap their school-going children. The ordinary people are not aware of their whereabouts but it hardly matters as there is none in the villages to challenge them.

The role of the police force is bitterly criticised. Violent clashes took place in Dakob, Batiaghata and Paikgacha early this year. The police were informed but no one was arrested although the criminals were identified. There were also reports that the thana officers often refused to record cases. Gher or shrimp cultivation in the region has been slow to grow mainly due to lack of security.

There has been a sharp rise in murders in the region in the past eight months. In Meherpur district alone more than 20 murders were committed, including seven in a single night.

Out of all these cases, the most sensational one was in Arpara village in Gangni thana where four people were dragged out of their houses at night and slaughtered. The same night three persons were similarly murdered in village Jalsuka. The killing of Golam Sarwar Tipu and two others on May 25 and June 27 created panic in Meherpur town. Police failure to arrest any one was widely criticised and this resulted in a hartal by the people. The miscreants even attempted to kill the Meherpur Pourashaha chairman. Security of life was in serious jeopardy. This ultimately led to demonstrations demanding removal of the Police Super.

In Khulna city 16 murders were recorded in just ten months. Jatiya Party leader Sheikh Abul Quasem's killing was one such act of terrorism which created panic among the citizens. Abdul Halim, General Secretary, Abul Quasem Pathan, AGS, and Rahmat Ali, Cultural Secretary, all of BL College, were killed in attacks by their opponents. JCD workers Abdul Kalam Azad and Abu Sayed Khan and BNP worker Mohibullah Suja were killed almost the same way in sudden attacks.

In Kaliganj thana of Jhenidah district, at least 10 people were brutally murdered between January and August this year. Abdul Hannan of Dulalmundia village, Kripasindhu Biswas and Shahidul Islam were chopped to death. Izzat Ali was killed on March 13 while he was returning home. Shahida Khatun of Jagannathpur village and Amena Begum were beaten to death.

Miscreants ransack nursing institute, situation tense

From Our Correspondent PABNA, Nov 1: The students of Pabna Nursing Institute are passing their days in great fear following the attack by local alleged miscreants which left several students injured.

According to reports, a group of 10 to 12 mastans called Jarlina, a Christian student of the nursing institute and on being refused to be attended, walked into the residential hostel. They ransacked different compartments and assaulted Jarlina, 25, Dolly, 22, Shafaly, 25, Asma, 22, Marjina, 24, and several others in the noon of October 27 last.

To be mother beaten to death

HABIGANJ, Nov 1: A pregnant housewife is beaten to death allegedly by her husband and his kith and kins at Baghasura village of Madhobpur thana on Saturday last, reports UNB.

According to neighbouring people, nine months' pregnant and mother of six children Somraj Begum, 32 was mercilessly beaten by her husband Syed Miah and the inmates of his family following a family feud. She died on the spot.

The body was sent to Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case has been filed with the police.

Water supply project of Gaibandha pourashava faces closure

From Our Correspondent

GAIBANDHA, Nov 1: The water supply project of Gaibandha pourashava is on the verge of closure owing to debt of about Taka 26 lakh with PDB as power bills.

None of Gaibandha pourashava or Department of Public Health Engineering agree to take responsibility of the project. As such water could not be supplied as per requirement. On the other hand, Power Development Board (PDB) cannot continue power supply any longer for its heavy outstanding.

The programme undertaken for supplying of drinking water among 51,000 town dwellers around 10.53 square kilometre of Gaibandha pourashava.

In 1986-87 fiscal year the implementation of water supply started here at Gaibandha poura area under the financial assistance of Japanese government. Lastly, the work was completed spending about Taka seven crore, including Japanese grant.

The plan included two overhead tanks — one is 600 cubic metre capacity at Mastepara and another 300 cubic metre capacity tank at Khanka Sharif, three water lifting pump sets, three water treatment plants and 25

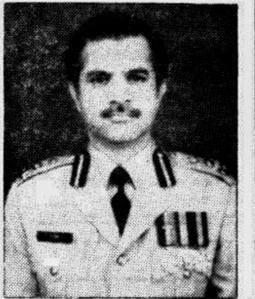
Seven people were killed in one night by Sarbahara men in Chuadanga district while many more are said to be on their hit list. Jessore district fares no better. It witnessed several killings, both political and non-political.

Highway robbery in the region saw an alarming increase during the past ten months. Passengers travelling by night coaches on the Dhaka-Khulna routes are frequently robbed. Effective police vigilance could make all the difference but nothing of the kind is in sight. The police seem to be happy leaving the passengers to God's mercy.

Robberies in houses have also increased greatly. In Satkhira district robberies were committed in the houses of Niranjana, Suren, Kartik and Monoranjan Mondal in the first week of January this year. Kaliganj thana police are yet to arrest any one. In mid-January, more than two lakh taka was looted from the house of Bimal Mitra in Assasuni thana. No one was arrested. Six houses were looted in late January in village Hijal Danga in Debhata thana.

Villagers say they can in no way put up any resistance to the heavily armed criminals. There were open allegations that frequent police refusal to record cases led to the suspicion of unholy links between the criminals and the police.

Explaining the police force's role in his area, the Deputy Inspector General of Police of Khulna Range, Ashraf Huda, told The Daily Star that according to statistics



DIG, Arshraf Huda

the incidence of crime in his zone is on the decline. "The activities of the outlawed parties in Jhenidah, Magura and Chuadanga districts have greatly decreased. Most of the members of these parties have fled the areas in the wake of massive raids conducted by us to catch them. Quite a few have surrendered and handed over their arms to us. I myself took part in an ambush in 1994 in which two Sarbahara activists were killed in an exchange of fire. We were actually looking for Moazzem, a Sarbahara leader, who was later arrested." The DIG, of course, was speaking on the basis of only those cases the police condescended or were induced to record.

Special police forces were formed to curb crime in border areas of Jessore, Satkhira, Jhenidah, Kushtia and in some places of Magura and Khulna districts. Following this step, huge quantities of smuggled goods worth lakhs of taka were seized.

"Where the crime rate has gone down it is the people who deserve the credit, where the rate has risen it is the police who are responsible", the DIG said adding, "a society will be free from criminal activities when the members of the community help police in curbing crime."

"If you ask any one about security in Khulna city he or she will confidently tell you that it has improved a lot. I have introduced special police squads to patrol the city areas on motorbikes until 10:00 pm everyday. Common crimes like snatching, theft and teasing have almost stopped", he claimed.

Referring to the modest size of his force, the DIG said, "To further reduce the crime rate in the area we need modern weapons, communications equipment, more vehicles and, above all, efficient personnel".

Viral fever, jaundice spreading alarmingly

PATUAKHALI, Nov 1: Viral fever and jaundice have been spreading alarmingly in the different parts of the greater Patuakhali region, particularly in the rural areas, reports UNB.

The physicians said the worst affected areas are Gaichipa, Dashmina, Kalapara, Amtali, Bauphal, Mirganj and Patuakhali Sadar thana.

According to the local physicians the symptoms of the virus fever are high temperature, spasmodic pain and headache. They said, women and children are the worst victims of the viral fever. Scarcity of medicine has been hampering the treatment of the patients, they added.

Meanwhile, the other water-borne disease, jaundice has also been spreading alarmingly in all the 12 thanas of the greater Patuakhali region.

The symptoms of jaundice — yellowish urine, eyes whole body and vomiting tendency.

According to the physicians there is no need for any medicine for the treatment of this disease. Only complete rest and normal diet can cure the disease.

It was reported that the jaundice patients are going to the rural quacks and 'kabiraj'

Tk 3.78cr sanctioned as against loss of Tk 2,500 cr for agri rehabilitation in N-dists

From Our Correspondent

RAJSHAHI, Nov 1: The high time for cultivation of winter crops will end on November 20 but the agriculture rehabilitation programme undertaken by the government to recover the damage of crops including transplanted aman paddy caused by the recent devastating floods, is yet to start.

As a result, the flood-stricken people cannot cultivate their lands and the agriculture labourers and other day labourers numbering to about 15 lakhs are spending days idle, either without food or half-fed.

On the other hand, the aims of the agriculture rehabilitation programme seems will not be successful.

The floods in the northern 16 districts fourth time this year, have caused a loss of crops worth about Taka two and a half thousand crore. They government has allocated only Taka 3.78 crore

under the post-flood agriculture rehabilitation programme which is too little to

meet the demand. Whatever it may be this small amount of allocation is yet to be dis-

tributed, though the peak season is passing away.

According to the concerned sources they have fallen in embarrassing position to distribute the small amount of allocation. They cannot decide whom they will give the assistance to as the number of recipients is very big.

It is learnt that about 7.5 lakh hectares of land of crops like aman paddy, sugarcane, banana, maskal, betel leaf, cotton seed etc have been completely or partially damaged by the recent devastating floods in 16 districts of Rajshahi Division, and the loss has been estimated to about Taka 2,500 crore. To recover the loss by producing increased amount of winter crops like BIRRI-Boro paddy, vegetables, wheat, potato and other crops during the ongoing season, the government has allocated Taka 3.78 crore under post-flood rehabilitation programme.

Out of the total amount, Taka 15.88 lakh has been al-

located for the district of Rajshahi against the damage of crops worth about Taka 66.65 crore.

In Naogaon, the worst affected district, a total of Taka 15.48 lakh has been allocated though the loss of crops has been estimated to about Taka 332.27 crore in the district. Natore district has got an allocation of Taka 50.80 lakh against the damage of crops of Taka 10,512.00 crore. In Chapainawabganj damage of crops worth about Taka 79.14 lakh but the rehabilitation grant allocated for the district is Taka 15.05 lakh.

Another district badly damaged by the recent floods is Bogra. This district has got Taka 29.44 lakh under post-flood agriculture rehabilitation programme against the damage of crops worth about Taka 253.49 crore. In Joypurhat district, crops worth about Taka 300 crore have

been damaged against which Taka 18.07 lakh has been allocated as agriculture rehabilitation assistance.

Pabna district have been partly affected by the recent floods and the loss has been estimated to Taka 32.50 crore. Taka 20.84 lakh has been allocated for the district. In Sirajganj, Taka 30.78 lakh has been allocated to overcome the damage of crops worth about Taka 336 crore.

Dinajpur has received only Taka 4.13 lakh against the loss of Taka 220 crore, where Panchagarh has received an allocation of Taka 10.34 lakh against its loss of crops worth about Taka 1.54 crore. In Thakurgaon crops worth about Taka 91 crore have been damaged but no money has been allocated for the district yet. Nilphamari district has received Taka 83.70 thousand against estimated loss of Taka 10 crore.

In Rangpur, the recent floods damaged crops worth about Taka 82 crore against which Taka 10.31 lakh has been allocated as rehabilitation assistance. Crops worth about Taka 328 crore have been damaged in Gaibandha district where it has received only Taka 47.30 thousand for rehabilitation programme. In Kurigram district, Taka 60.70 thousand has been allocated against the damage of crops worth about Taka 37.50 crore. Crops worth about 36 crore have been damaged in the district of Lalmonirhat where it has received an allocation of Taka 33.80 thousand under the rehabilitation programme.

The allocation of money under the post-flood agriculture rehabilitation programme will be distributed among the selected flood-hit farmers in form of money, seed and fertilizers.



RAJSHAHI: A part of a radish field in a village of Mohanpur thana of Rajshahi (L) and a part of turmeric field near Manda Ferry ghat of Naogaon are seen submerged in the recent flood water. Huge quantities of such crops were damaged by flood in the northern districts worth crores of taka. — Star photo