



Winter is not the season of hilsa. Even then there has been a glut of the delicious fish in the markets of Chandpur situated on the confluence of the rivers Padma and Meghna, surprising the fish traders. Hilsa price has unexpectedly declined across the district However, the size of the fish is small and the weight varies from 500 to 1,200 grams. ---Star photo by AKM Mohsin

# Dacoities in Sundarbans increase alarmingly

SATKHIRA, Jan 19: Dacoities in the Sundarbans area have increased alarmingly in recent times, reports BSS.

About 25 armed groups of dacoits who control the entire Satkhira forest range of the Sundarbans making over thousands fishermen and bawallies hostage. These small and big groups were collecting extortion and also looting fish, fishing nets and other goods from the fishermen and bawallies using several kinds of fire arms including country made light gun. Of the total groups at least 10 groups were come from Indian side, according to local people.

These armed dacoit groups have tightened their grip and exaggerated their torture to the fishermen and bawallies in different parts of the Sundarbans area to leave their ancestral profession. There are also allegations that Indian fishermen intrude into Bangladesh waters crossing the border river Kalindi everyday and catch fishes indiscriminately driving out the local fishermen.

A large number of fishermen and bawallies from the entire Satkhira forest range of the Sundarbans were coming back to their own villages for fear of the dacoits torture. Of them Daud Molla, Arsad Gazi, Ismail Morol of village Bichat under Assassuni upazila, Sawkat Gazi, Moniruddin of Patuakhali village, Tazul Islam and Mizanur of Katulia village under Shymnagar upazila returned from the Sundarbans recently. They informed that several groups of armed dacoits were usually torturing the fishermen and bawallies and collecting extortion at the rate of Taka 100 to 500 per boat.

The Indian dacoits often abduct Bangladeshi fishermen for ransom and release them after payment at an amount of Taka 5,000-10,000. As a result, local fishermen are gradually losing their interest in fishing and some of them have already switched over to other profession.

According to the fishermen and bawallies, there are over 25 groups of armed dacoits who were controlling the entire Satkhira forest range in the Sundarbans. The dacoit groups were known to the fishermen and bawallies as Mujib Bahini, Aziz Bahini, Mozam Bahini, Sawkat Bahini, Shounnashi Bahini, Mejho Bahni Party and Lathamara party of Bangladeshi groups and Mohon Bahini, Tetul Bahini, Giren Bahini, Boro Bhai Party, Mama Bhagne Party and Kala Party of Indian groups. The dacoit groups were known according to the name of their gang leader.

Most of the Indian dacoits were inhabitants of villages Shomshernagar and Kumirmari under Goshaba thana of South 24 Pargana district, West Bengal. Bangladeshi dacoits were inhabitants of several villages under Shymnagar upazila of Satkhira district, Koyra, Paikgachha upazila under Khuina district, Rampal,

Fakirhat and Mongla of Bagerhat district and Mothabari upazila of Pirojpur district with some other upazilas.

Local fishermen said, the dacoit groups possessed of country made gun, cut rifle, short gun with other modern arms and ammunition. The small groups are committing dacoity with sticks and torch light, so that they are called Lathamara Party. The fishermen, who entered into the Sundarbans for catching fish and fish fry take weekly pass from the Forest Range Office. They were forced to give Taka 100 per boat to the dacoits. The fishermen give extortion to more than 3 to 4 groups per week. If any fisherman failed to pay the extortion the dacoits became angry and abducted them and released after taking 5 to 10 thousands taka as ransom.

Police sources said the policemen of Satkhira were engaged in several gunfights with the dacoits in the Sundarbans area during the last two years. Police arrested

about 50 dacoits and also recovered about 20 firearms from their possession.

Last year, the Indian dacoits killed three fishermen and a fish trader on revenue for arrest of Tetul dacoit. They were identified as Abdul Aziz, 35, of village Shora, Sukur Ali, 40, of village Taranipur, Nesab Ali, 35, of village Patuakhali under Shymnagar upazila and Mokul, 25, of village Bichat under Assassuni upazila of Satkhira district.

While contacted with Police Suber Aminul Islam informed that the police personnel of the district are patrolling every day in different areas of the Sundarbans in Satkhira range to arrest the dacoits and resist all kinds of terrorist activities in the Sundarbans.

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY, 19 Jan: Residents students of the university are forced to take unhygienic and substandard food due to massive irregularities in dining halls of their dormitories.

Many students of ten male and four female dormitories have been suffering from intestinal diseases like chronic dysentery and diarrhoea.

Besides, the students have no other options. There is no hygienic canteen or restaurant in and around the dormitories.

The students can have two meals a day from the dining halls, run by the dining workers who are appointed by the hall authorities on contract basis.

Students have to pay Tk 8.5 in cash per meal at the dining halls. Any non-resident student or outsider can also avail the chance of taking meal.

The rice served in the dining halls is the lowest in quality, students said. "Almost every day, we get pieces of stone and brick in the rice as the workers do not clean and wash the rice before cooking. And we have to swallow the rice", said Akhter Hossain, a resident student of Suhrawardy Hall.

Fishes the authorities serve are very small in size and immature. Beef and mutton are also of low quality. "I cannot take fish-curry, because the fishes are not properly washed. If you attempt

to take fish, your appetite will be vanished", said Sarwar Zahan of Syed Amir Ali Hall.

"If you take gura (small) fish bowl, it will be a horrible experience, I never dare to take the fish since I found several times small snails and boiled insects mixed with it", said a student of Marketing Department.

"I do believe what they said beef is actually meat of buffaloes", he added.

Seldom they serve mutton or chicken. But taking mutton is considered risky. Seven dining workers of Madar Bux Hall were sacked after they were found guilty of serving jackal's meat in the name of mutton in the dining hall on September 27 last year.

Punishments were awarded to two more dining workers of Shahid Habibur Rahman Hall in October last year after a leech was found in cooked vegetable.

During a recent visit by this correspondent to Shahid Habibur Rahman Hall he found the sliced vegetables were literally littered on the muddy floors of two kitchens and flies and other insects were roaming. When asked, one of the dining workers Nuru said, "We will wash later".

The drinking water is not safe. Running water is served from the dirty overhead-tanks, which are seldom washed. There are a good number of tube-wells at every hall, but the workers do

# RU resident students take substandard food

From RU Correspondent

not cater it to the students.

The plastic glasses and porcelain plates have turned reddish-yellow, as they are not washed properly.

Some students, who are also armed cadres of some student organisations, are too contributing a lot to the dismal situation in dining halls. The cadres seldom pay. In return, they back the dining workers who are engaged in massive irregularities.

The dining workers often dare to call strike. During strikes, the students have to cook foods in their respective rooms.

Resident students allege the teachers who are also house tutors do not pay attention to the problem.

When contacted, Prof Abul Kashem, provost of Habibur Rahman Hall, denied the allegation and said the house tutors regularly monitor the situation in the dining.

When contacted, Vice Chancellor Prof Sayeedur Rahman Khan said, "We know the problem and we are trying to work out a solution. I have already talked to provosts, student leaders and workers".

But all-out co-operation from all concerned is needed to solve the problem, he added.

# Collection, transportation of sand

A photo feature by Kamran Reza Chowdhury



Sand is an essential ingredient for construction works. It is usually collected from the shoal areas of rivers. Thousands of workers are involved in this work. Pictures on top show (L-R) (1) a boat has been carrying sand from a shoal in the River Padma near Rajshahi. (2) some labourers have been unloading sand from a boat to pile up the same along the river bank, (3) sand has been piled up by the workers in Talaimari area in Rajshahi, (4) some day labourers are seen loading a truck of sand before going to the destination from the ghat (terminal) area.

# News snaps

## Attack slated From Our Correspondent

MAGURA, Jan 19: The lawyers here brought out a procession on Wednesday in the town, protesting the recent around attack on Advocate Hasan Seraj (Sujal), general-secretary of Magura district unit of Jatiya Party (JP).

The lawyers headed by advocate Shafiqul Islam (Mohon) and Advocate Abdur Razzak, respectively the president and general-secretary of the local Bar Association, also submitted two different memorandums to the Deputy Commissioner (DC) and Superintendent of Police (SP) demanding exemplary punishment to the culprits. Later on a rally was organised by the District Bar Association which was addressed, among others, by Advocate Rafiqul Akbar, Advocate Abdul Majid, Advocate Abdur Razzak, Advocate Eskender Azam Bablu, and Advocate Ratan Kumar Mitro. Advocate Hasan Seraj was seriously injured on Jan 15 by the armed activists of the local Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal. Now he is undergoing treatment at Chamarita Hospital in Dhaka.

## Freedom fighter laid to rest

COMILLA, Jan 19: Habibullah Bhuyan, a freedom fighter of Sadar Upazila was laid to rest on Monday with state honour, reports BSS.

Habibullah Bhuyan died of heart attack in his residence. He left behind three sons and four daughters. A number of freedom fighters attended his funeral and expressed their deep shock to the bereaved family.

## Housing problem in Madaripur

MADARIPUR, Jan 19: The town-dwellers here have been facing an acute housing problem since long, reports BSS.

Taking advantage of the situation landlords are realising high rent from tenants, it is alleged. The total population of the town is about one and a half lakh, but construction of new houses and residential quarters has not been taken up to cope with the demand of increasing population due to high prices of lands and other construction materials. Most colleges, high schools and other educational institutions of the town have no hostels for the students. The educational institutions which have hostels for the students have no accommodation facilities for the teachers and other staff. As a result teachers and staff of those institutions have to reside in rental houses.

## Tk 15.57 cr projects implemented

JHALAKATI, Jan 19: Facilities Department implemented 97 projects in the district at a cost of 15.57 crore in last four years, reports UNB.

The projects included construction and expansion of college and school buildings and reconstruction of old educational institutions. According to officials, 54 educational institutions were constructed in sadar upazila at a cost of Tk 8.49 crore, 22 in Nalchiti at a cost of Tk 3.22 crore, 11 in Rajapur costing over Tk 1 crore and 10 in Kanthalia at a cost of 2.19 crore.

## Valuables gutted

SHERPUR, Jan 19: Valuables worth about Tk 15 lakh were gutted in a fire in the town on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said two offices, one of an NGO and another of a rice agency and the house of Janakantha district correspondent were gutted in the fire originated from an electronic short circuit. Another report from Jamalpur adds: A poultry farm was gutted in a fire at Gopalpur in Sadar upazila on January 8, burning down valuables worth Tk 1 lakh.

## WB aided projects launched

PATUAKHALI, Jan 19: A World Bankaided Municipal Service Project (MSP) was kicked off here on Wednesday, reports UNB.

State Minister for Textiles AKM Jahangir Hossain launched the project unveiling a plaque in front of Sonali Bank regional office in the town. Under the first and second phases of the project, development works costing Tk 22 crore will be carried out here under the supervision of Local Government Engineering Department. A bridge, 17 kms of road, a sluice gate, 905 meters of drain, one bazaar and a bus terminal will be constructed in the first phase of the project. In the second phase which involves Tk 14 crore, an auditorium and a children's park will be constructed apart from development of slums and waste disposal management.

## Youth commits suicide

BAGERHAT, Jan 19: A young boy allegedly killed himself at Mushidpur village in Sadar upazila, on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Ibrahim Mollah 24, said to be a drug addict, hanged himself when his demand to his mother for some money went unheeded. A UD case was filed.

## Three 'kidnappers' arrested

MANIKGANJ, Jan 19: Police in a predawn raid on Purba Sahili village in Shiblalaya thana arrested three people on Wednesday in connection with the kidnapping of a schoolgirl, reports UNB.

But they could not rescue the girl, Ratna Akhter, 15, a class nine student of Borongail High School. She was kidnapped on December 5 at gunpoint. The arrested Selim Miah, 27, Nazrul Miah, 28, and Arshed Ali, 40, were produced before the court later on the day.

## Man gets 10-yr RI

TANGAIL, Jan 19: A court here has sentenced a man to 10 years Rigorous Imprisonment (RI) in an arms case, reports UNB.

The convict was identified as Joyenuddin alias Junu of Gozian village in Trishal upazila in Mymensingh district. According to the prosecution, Joyenuddin and Habil alias Habibul were caught along with arms and ammunition by local while fleeing after committing a dacoity in the house of Abdul Khalek of Telia village in Mirzapur upazila on March 3, 1998. Joyenuddin was handed over to police, but his associate Habibul died in a mass beating. After examining the witnesses and records, the Judge handed down the judgement on January 10.

## Smugglings on rise

KUSHTIA, Jan 19: Smuggling of different brands of Indian motorcycles has become rampant in the frontier areas of greater Kushtia district, reports UNB.

Hero Honda, Yamaha, Vespa Bajaj and other bikes, coming illegally through the borders, are being sold here at Tk 30,000 to 35,000 each. Many of these Indian motorcycles are being driven in the rural areas of Kushtia, Chuadanga and Meherpur districts without any valid documents. In some cases, the organised gang of smugglers is providing forged documents to the customers in exchange of Tk 5,000. But the law enforcers kept silence on the issue.

## Seven BCL activists sued

HABIGANJ, Jan 19: Seven activists of ruling party's student front Chhatra League have been sued for allegedly manhandling the Bahubol Upazila Nirbahi Officer, reports UNB.

According to the case filed on Wednesday, a group of Chhatra League activists attacked UNO Muhammad Abdur Rouf while he was playing badminton on a ground near the upazila council on Tuesday. The BCL workers, who were holding a meeting at the upazila council, attacked the UNO as their request to stop the play went unheeded.

## 10 injured in clash

CHAPAINAWABGANJ, Jan 19: A drive by the municipality authorities to demolish unauthorised shops in the town led to a violent clash that left 10 pourasava (municipality) employees wounded on Wednesday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the angry shop owners attacked the municipality employees and ransacked a pourasava truck when they tried to evict them. Police picked up two people Hossain Ali, 50, and Babu, 20, from the scene.

## Workshop on farming

SHARIATPUR, Jan 19: A day-long workshop on farming, organized by Agriculture Extension Department, was held here on Monday, reports BSS.

A total of 25 officials including agriculture and subject matter officers and block supervisors participated in the workshop. Discussions on pest attack, harvesting, seed-bed development and seed preservation were held. Some recommendations were adopted in the workshop.

## Development schemes undertaken

BOGRA, Jan 19: Local Government Engineering Department will implement 17 development projects in the town at a cost of Tk 24.16 lakh, reports UNB.

The projects include road carpeting and construction of box culverts, gates and road dividers.