

Alarming decline in fish fry production

Country's lone natural fish spawning and breeding centre in the river Halda is at stake

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

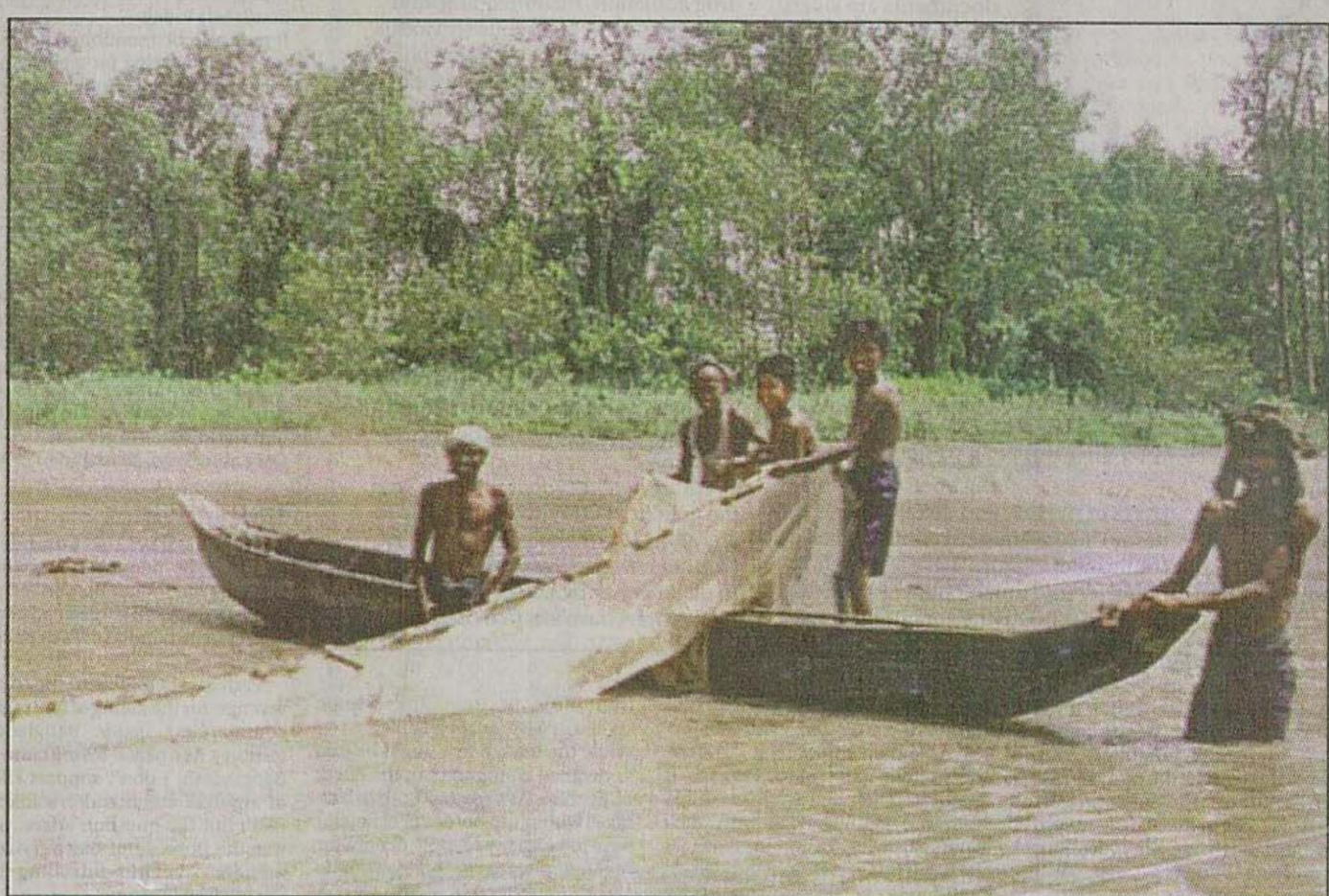
Collection of fertilised eggs and production of fries have declined at an alarming rate following the illegal netting of broad fishes (mother fishes) and conventional hatching of spawn in the river Halda, sources said.

The country's lone natural spawning and breeding centre of fishes in the river bordering Hathazari and Raozan upazilas is at stake.

Checking netting of broad fishes and proper care can enable the spawning and breeding centre to earn several crore taka only from the sale of fries, experts said. At the same time with a 90 per cent survivability rate and proper growth of the fries, the Halda can earn over Tk 3000 crore every year, they added.

During Baishakh and Jaishtha (April and May) every year different species of giant fishes like Ruhi, Katla, Mirgel and Kaliboush start migration from the river Karnaphuli, the Matamuhuri and the Sangu to the spawning centre at Halda.

At a suitable juncture of dark fortnight or full moon and in congenial weather, particularly at the first shower of the monsoon, they start releasing fertilised eggs



Local people collect fertilised eggs of major carps with porous clothe at the Halda river, the country's lone fish spawning and breeding centre.

(locally known as Swarna Renu - gold sperm) at a 10-km stretch from Sartterghat to Madunaghat of Raozan upazila.

The spawns are released in two to three phases. Each phase continues for around 12 hours when the spawning centre takes a festive look with hundreds of local people in small boats collecting the eggs.

The fertilised eggs are preserved in small holes dug at the homesteads to hatch out within four days. The four-day fries are sold at Tk 12,000 to 14,000 per kg to farmers coming from different parts of the country. After some 15 days one kg of four-day fries produces over 2 lakh finger-sized fries to earn at least Tk 2 lakh, sources said.

Prof Mohammad Ali Azadi, a teacher of zoology department of Chittagong University, said that a middle sized major carp of 15kg releases over 30 lakh fertilized eggs. With even 30 per cent survival rate at each level, these eggs can produce one kg of four-day fries and bring forth 2 lakh finger-sized fries to earn at least Tk 2 lakh.

Prof Azadi, who has studied on spawning and breeding of mild water fishes at the Halda for the last two decades, said that spawn collection from the Halda began

in 1945. At that time around 65,000 kgs of spawns were collected on an average every year.

Prof Azadi said the highest quantity of 1.23 lakh kgs of fertilised eggs were collected from Halda in 1946. It produced 4,111 kgs of four-day fries. At the present rate of Tk 14,000, 4,111 kgs of fries alone could have earned Tk 6 crore.

Sources in the District Fisheries Office (DFO) said in the fifties Halda provided around 70 per cent fries of major carps. The Padma, Jamuna and Brahmaputra provided the remaining 30 per cent.

The fertilized eggs collected from the Halda were as follows: 33,750 kgs in 1997, 14,547 kgs in 1998, 65,820 kgs in 1999, 75,000 kgs in 2000 and 22,922 kgs in 2001, official statistics says.

Over 3,000 people in 700 small boats collected 25,835 kgs of fertilised spawns and had 598.68 kgs of four-day fries in 2002.

In 2003, only 217 kg spawns were collected while the major carps released unfertilised eggs (sample eggs) in two phases to produce only 4 kgs of spawns (four-day fries).

This year, however, the collection marked a bit rise when major carps released eggs in two phases on April 13 and May 22.

But only some 40 per cent of the eggs weighing some 7,000 kgs (including water) could be collected as the first phase of release (April 13) took place unusually earlier.

These spawns were likely to bring forth a few more than 100 kgs of four-day fries, sources said.

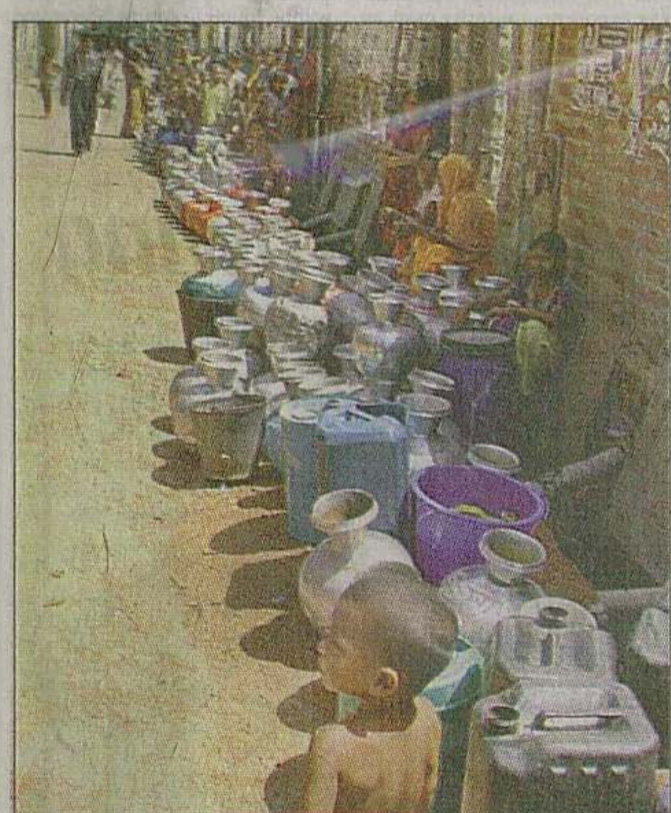
Experts said conventional hatching of spawns produces only one bucket of four-day fries from 15 buckets of spawns while their survivability rate is below 50 per cent.

Hatching of the spawns in clear water of plastic or tiled tanks raises the rates of hatching and survivability to 90 per cent and proper preservation and management of this natural spawning and breeding centre alone can flood the country with fishes, they said.

Prof Azadi said declaring the 10km of the Halda from Sartterghat to Madunaghat as a fish sanctuary was a must for increasing release and collection of spawns.

Besides, there should be a ban on fishing in the Halda as well as in the other related rivers -- the Karnaphuli, the Sangu and the Matamuhuri -- from where the broad fishes migrate before breeding (late March to early July), he said.

Cry for water goes unheeded



Women wait in a long queue for water, defying scorching sun and the stinky smell from adjoining latrines for hours at Enayet Bazar area.

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

The Goalpara residents in the port city seem to be the most unfortunate as far as supply of drinking water from Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) is concerned. Their sufferings know no bound because the locality is mainly dependent on two private pumps instead of a Wasa line for drinking water.

About 60,000 people live in Enayet Bazar ward under the Chittagong City Corporation (CCC). Of them, 15,000 live at Goalpara, including 8,000 dwellers in Malipara and Tulatali slums. Most of them belong to poor, lower middle and middle classes. Some railway staff quarters are also located there.

MA Malek, the three-time elected commissioner of the ward, installed two pumps in 1996 on Millat Club premises and Kedarnath Colony in a bid to reduce the acute water crisis at the area.

People are seen each day standing in long queues at seven points to collect their water supplied from the two pumps. They retrieve water twice for two hours in the morning and in the evening free of cost.

Unbelievably, the Goalpara residents had no source of water supply at their doorsteps before the ward commissioner's initiative! They had to buy water from railway quarters, which has limited supply lines from railway authorities for its staffs.

The two pumps were not enough to meet their daily demand and they were badly looking for a permanent solution in this regard. But the Wasa remained unmoved to all their appeals.

Finally, Chittagong Wasa responded positively in 1997 and installed a big pump near the ward commissioner's office.

The residents, however, alleged that the water supply from the Wasa pump is erratic and insufficient.

"I can not remember the last date when I got properly the Wasa water," said garments worker Rehana Begum, a resident of Kedarnath Colony.

She said we need permanent solution, not a temporary one like the installation of pumps. "Connection in each and every residence is the only answer to our sufferings," she added.

Ward commissioner Malek said, "I had to make repeated appeals to the Wasa on behalf of Goalpara people and spent lot of money for connection. But they installed only a big pump which is not sufficient for the area."

He said a process is underway to install three water tanks, each with capacity of 500 gallons, at slum areas under the auspices of Chittagong City Corporation (CCC).

"Hopefully, the installation will be completed within two or three days and the Goalpara people will find another source of water," Malek said. He thanked Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury for the water tanks.

The drinking water crisis in the country's second largest city has also been acute for years. And the demand for it is fast increasing with the growth of population. The authorities were found as complete failure to meet even the 50 per cent of the total demand yet.

The city, with around 40 lakh population, requires over 10 crore gallons of water daily. But Chittagong Wasa can only supply a meagre 3.5 crore gallons.

Stop pollution at Foy's Lake

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Janudyog and Save Chittagong staged a demonstration on the Chittagong Press Club premises on Monday demanding that the authorities stop the pollution of Foy's Lake and take measures against those responsible for it.

Earlier, the environmental organisations formed a human chain.

The human chain was followed by a civic rally. The speakers blamed Concord Group for causing massive water and noise pollution at Foy's lake in the name of developing a tourist spot there.

The polluted lake water, which is being supplied to the railway quarters, is causing diarrhoea to many people, they said. Besides, the live concert at Foy's Lake hampered normal life of the animals in the adjoining Chittagong zoo, they added.

Professor Md. Idris Ali of Chittagong College, Md. Ferdous Ahmad of the Institute of Environment and Development, Professor Nazim Murad of the Bangladesh College University Teachers' Association, Chittagong district, Tusher Kanti Basak, Journalist Hasan Ferdous and Morshed Alam spoke at the rally. Jano Udyog Principal Coordinator Sharif Chouhan presided.



Save Chittagong and Janudyog forms a human chain in front of the Chittagong Press Club, protesting pollution at Foy's Lake.

theweekthatwas

Mass awareness a must to check HIV/Aids

Speakers at a 'sensitisation meeting on HIV/Aids with media people' said Bangladesh is now in a very vulnerable state in terms of rise of the fatal disease.

"The disease will erupt like a volcano if mass awareness and proper steps are not taken immediately in this regard," they said at the meeting on Thursday at Chittagong Press Club (CPC).

Ashar Alo Society (AAS) organised the meeting in collaboration with UNDP Regional HIV Development Programme, South and North-East Asia. AAS Executive Director Habiba Akhtar presided.

Chittagong Divisional Director (Health) Dr Nurul Alam was present as chief guest. Aids expert and noted physician Dr ADM Sirajul Islam, CPC President Abu Sufian and CPC General Secretary Kalim Sarwar were special guests. AAS project coordinators Touhidul Islam, Nazma Begum and counsellor Muna Chowdhury also spoke. Seventeen journalists participated in the meeting.

Dr Nurul Alam said Bangladesh currently has 465 Aids patients while 44 died so far. "Besides, around 20,000 people are found with HIV positives," he said, quoting a study of World Health Organisation (WHO).

The speakers said Sylhet is the most risk-prone district followed by Chittagong, Rajshahi, Dhaka and other border areas.

Eleven Brothers' Club new building

The new building of Eleven Brothers' Club, a non-political and socio-cultural organisation at Chandanpara, was inaugurated here on Friday.

On the occasion a discussion was held on the club premises at Chawk Bazar.

Speakers at the inaugural ceremony highly praised Eleven Brothers' Club for its social and development activities in the locality since its establishment in 1981.

Chittagong city Jatiya Party leader Md Soleiman Alam Sheikh was the chief guest while Professor Abul Kashem, Rahmat Ali, sports organiser Md Rezaul Arwar Sinto were special guests at the ceremony with Md Jamal Uddin in the chair.

The association leaders called on Mohiuddin Chowdhury at his city residence at Chashma Hill and presented him with a bouquet.

Mohiuddin Chowdhury sought the cooperation of journalists to implement his 40-point electoral pledges for the development of the city.

He told the photojournalists that he had already sought the cooperation of Japan for construction of a hanging bridge over the river Karnaphuli.

The association leaders assured him of their support in the development work.

Association President Monzurul Alam Monzu, General Secretary Didarul Alam, executive committee members All Abbas, Kutubuddin Chowdhury, Subhash Karan, Rashed Mahmud, Md. Faruq and Zobaer Hossain Sikder were present.

age, 30 pregnant women meet a tragic end due to lack of awareness about the five dangers of the pregnancy period.

Talif Chief Executive Noor Nabi Dulal and General Secretary Khondoker Enamul Haq attended the meeting as guests with Md. Hafizur Rahman in the chair.

Safe Maternity Day observed

Theatre & Arts for Less Fortunate (Talf) called for creating massive awareness among the pregnant mothers to reduce death during delivery.

Talf, a non-government development organisation, on Saturday organised a discussion at Agrabad Bastuhara Colony, on the occasion of Safe Maternity Day.

The speakers at the discussion said that in Bangladesh everyday, on an average, 30 pregnant women meet a tragic end due to lack of awareness about the five dangers of the pregnancy period.

Talif Chief Executive Noor Nabi Dulal and General Secretary Khondoker Enamul Haq attended the meeting as guests with Md. Hafizur Rahman in the chair.

Unilever senior staffs honoured

Unilever Bangladesh Limited on Sunday honoured its senior employees with "Good Service Awards" and "Long Service Awards" on its Kalurghat factory premises.

The staff and employees holding jobs at the company for 25 years and 15 years received the award from Unilever Chairman Sanjib Mehta.

Unilever directors Kamran Bakr, Waker Ahmed Quazi, Reazul Haq Chowdhury, Nawshad Karim Chowdhury and Dines Bidappa, General Factory Manager Hasan Zafor Chowdhury and Personnel Services Manager Md Shahabuddin were present.

Twenty-three officials and employees got the Good and Long Service Award while 15 received Good Service Awards at the ceremony.



Professor Dr Muhammad Yunus, sitting third from left, poses for photograph with the members of the newly formed Chittagong chapter of Bangladesh Economic Samity at Theatre Institute on Monday.



Chittagong Photojournalist Association leaders presented ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury with bouquet when they called on him at his city residence at Chashma Hill on Sunday.



Local artistes dance at a function to celebrate the birth anniversary of National poet Kazi Nazrul Islam. Sammita Nazrul Jayanti Udjapan Parishad organised the function at Nazrul Square (DC Hill Park) on Saturday.