

Intruders swoop on fishing trawlers near Sundarbans

One Bangladeshi fisherman shot dead, 50 injured: Fishing stops as Mandarbaria waters under trespassers' control

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

One Bangladeshi fisherman was shot dead and at least 50 others were injured when armed intruders on foreign trawlers attacked their trawlers in Mandarbaria area in the Sundarbans coast in Bangladeshi territorial waters on Sunday, according to fishermen who returned to Patharghata on Monday.

One trawler—FB Kalam—sank and over 30 others were damaged and ransacked in the attack. The swoop continued for several hours, some of the injured fishermen told newsmen at Patharghata Upazila Health Complex in Barguna district.

Following the incident, fishing in Patharghata, Sundarbans and Bublarchar coasts is stopped since Monday.

Amir Hossain, 55, of Kalmegeha village in Patharghata, a cook at Bangladeshi trawler FB Alauddin, was shot dead in the attack. Amir

Hossain's body was brought to Patharghata on the same day.

Seven of the 50 fishermen were admitted to Patharghata Health Complex with serious injuries from indiscriminate beating and hacking by the attackers. The rest were given first aid.

Retreating Bangladeshi trawlers have took refuge in safe areas in Dublarchar, Patharghata and Parerhat coasts. Golam Mustafa Chowdhury, president of Barguna District Trawler Owners Association and injured fisherman Nasir Majhi told newsmen at Patharghata health complex.

They said fishermen on board 20-25 big trawlers all of a sudden swooped on about 20 Bangladeshi trawlers at about 12:30 pm.

They also identified some of the Indian trawlers as FB Ma, FB Ganga, FB Sabita, FB Mayer Anchol, FB Vagaboti. The ransacked trawlers included FB Aziz, FB Malik, FB Surma, FB

Khalek, FB Madhu and FB Jahangir.

The injured fishermen at the health complex they said they fled away as the attackers fired shots indiscriminately from bigger and well equipped trawlers.

They claimed an Indian coast guard vessel was seen waiting at a distance during the attack. Fishermen on some of the attacking trawlers had also wireless sets, they claimed.

Nasir Majhi has lodged a case with Patharghata police station.

Police from Patharghata thana visited the damaged and ransacked trawlers anchored in the port.

The fishermen claimed that Bangladeshi territorial waters in Mandarbaria near Sundarban coast is virtually under the control of armed trespassers and Bangladeshis can not enter that fishing zone.

FILLING UP OF BANARIPARA POND

Civic bodies condemn BNP men's attack on environmentalists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The attack allegedly by ruling BNP cadres on the environmentalists protesting filling up of a 200 year-old pond in Banaripara town on Monday evoked a sharp reaction from different organisations and civil society members.

At least seven organisations in separate statements criticised the attack in which five activists of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association (BELA) in Barisal were injured.

Injured BELA activists Suvash Chandra Das alias Netai, Sajal, Zahid Hossain and Imran were admitted to Barisal Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital.

The pond in Dakbangle Sharak area in Banaripara town was being filled up by BNP Whip Shahidul Huq Jamal reportedly for construction of a house. Reports and photos on the earth-filling was earlier published in national dailies.

The organisations which protested the attack include Barisal Nagrik Parishad, Barisal Cultural Bodies Coordination Council, Barisal Environmental Journalists Forum, Youth Human Rights Forum, Barisal Lawyers Association and Shabdaboli Theatre.

At least 20 prominent citizens of Barisal and Jhalakathi in a joint statement also protested the attack

on environmentalists. The protesters said filling up of any water body is illegal now. Permission from the environment ministry is needed for that.

They condemned the attack by ruling party activists and demanded punishment to them.

Sources in BELA in Barisal said they are awaiting guidelines from its head office in Dhaka to launch a protest programme in the divisional city and in Banaripara.

When contacted over cell phone, Whip Shahidul Huq Jamal denied involvement of his party activists in attack on environmentalists and said he knew nothing about the incident.

Jamal claimed that he purchased the 54 decimal pond at Tk 17 lakh from Anup, Pallab Guha Biswas and Tarikul Islam about four month ago.

He said the pond was abandoned and unused. So his attorneys advised him that environment ministry permission was not needed to fill it up.

On other hand, local people claimed that the old pond was being used by local people and that the municipal authorities constructed stairs for this.



PHOTO: STAR

The Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) brought out a procession in Gaibandha town yesterday demanding diesel, fertiliser and smooth power supply for farmers. IRRI-Boro cultivation is being affected in different areas of the district due to inadequate supply of the inputs.

BSD long march reaches Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

The long march organised by Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (BSD) to protest India's river inter-linking project reached Rangpur yesterday on its way to Kurigram.

The march started on February 25 from Muktangan in Dhaka.

The marchers yesterday held a rally at Rangpur Public Library Ground with BSD Rangpur Co-ordinator Abdul Quddus in the chair.

Speakers at the rally said all the rivers in Bangladesh will dry up and the ecology will be destroyed if India implements its project.

This will also start a desertification process in the country, he said.

The long march will leave Rangpur this morning for Kurigram, where it will terminate with holding of a grand rally.

Rape victim's bid for self-immolation

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

A 15-year-old girl is now fighting for life at Gaibandha Sadar Hospital due to severe burn injuries as she attempted to torch herself out of shame after being gangraped.

Her mother Hasina told this correspondent that she was grazing goats in a field near their Pacher Kura village home on February 25. Three youths of the village dragged her to a wheat field and violated her. She named the alleged rapists as Pandit, 14, Ratan, 15, and Anisur.

Her parents sought justice from village elders, who advised them to wait for some days.

Out of shame and disgrace, the dejected girl went to a nearby bam-

boo cluster Monday morning, poured kerosene and torched herself to end her life. Her screams drew nearby people, who took her to the Sadar Hospital in a critical condition.

Gaibandha Sadar police yesterday said they have filed a rape case and arrested one of the rapists, Anisur. The two others are absconding, police said.

Hasina also alleged that some village elders are now persuading her to settle the matter in exchange of money.

At the hospital, Dr. Shakhawat Hossain said her condition was critical as her chest, back and face have been severely burnt.



PHOTO: STAR

The salvaged trawler that sank in the Kirtonkhola at Charmonai in Barisal (left) and anxious relatives crowd the river bank in search of near and dear ones who are still missing.

Trawler salvaged, owner yet to be arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

The trawler that capsized at Charmonai Ghat Monday morning was salvaged yesterday by BIWTA salvage vessel Hamza.

No dead body was found in the trawler. One body was recovered after the incident on Monday and 11 others are still missing, police said.

The trawler—M L Munir was plying without any route permit and registration, police said. But its owner, Shahjahan, could not be arrested, they said.

The trawler was salvaged from under about 50 feet water. 60 feet from the accident.

Shajal Haq, Senior Deputy Director of BIWTA, who conducted the salvage operation said some bodies might have been carried away downstream by strong current of water at the bottom of the Kirtonkhola river.

Sheikh Zillur Rahman, Officer-in-Charge of Barisal Kotwali police station said they are searching for Shahjahan.

SMUGGLING Urea seized in St Martin's

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Cost Guard personnel on Monday seized a fishing boat with 150 bags of urea fertiliser while being smuggled to Myanmar through the coast near St Martin's island in Cox's Bazar.

Five alleged smugglers were arrested. They are Ismail, Mohammed Alam, Abdul Alim, Mominal Hoque and Abul Kashem, hailing from Ukhia and Teknaf areas.

Cost Guard official Tazul Islam

lodged a case with Teknaf police.

Urea and diesel are smuggled to Myanmar through Ukhia and Teknaf, which has created a scarcity and high price of the items in Cox's Bazar, sources said.

A 50 kg bag of urea is now sold at Tk 650 to Tk 700 against the government fixed price of Tk 285 in different markets in Cox's Bazar, traders and farmers said.