

ACUTE CRISIS OF MOTHER SHRIMPS IN BAY

35 out of 53 hatcheries closed in Cox's Bazar

MUAZZEM HOSSAIN SHAKIL,
Cox's Bazar

At least 35 out of 53 shrimp hatcheries are closed in Cox's Bazar due to acute crisis of mother shrimps following their indiscriminate netting in the Bay of Bengal.

Cultivation of shrimp, one of the major export earners, will suffer a serious setback for want of fries due to crisis of mother shrimps,



Two mother shrimps procured at exorbitant prices by a hatchery owner in Cox's Bazar.

Yunus Chwdhury, vice-chairmen of Cox's Bazar Shrimp Hatchery Owners Association, told this correspondent yesterday.

But the authorities concerned are yet to take any effective step in this regard, he alleged.

Mother shrimps have virtually depleted in the costal areas in last two years because of indiscriminate netting in absence of any government policy and supervision, he said.

Rais Uddin, owner of Marigold Shrimp Hatchery, said he invested

period. Otherwise, the export earning sector will be ruined, they added.

They said 53 hatcheries were set up along the coast by spending crores of taka in last several years as shrimp cultivation and export became a booming business.

The hatcheries in Cox's Bazar supplied fries to shrimp farms covering about one and a half lakh hectares in Cox's Bazar, Khulna and Satkhira regions.

But many hatchery owners are now thinking to wind up business.

territorial waters illegally, they claimed.

"Hatchery owners are now in a miserable condition", said Yunus Chowdhury.

Fish resources will deplete in the Bay in two-three years if indiscriminate netting by local and foreign trawlers is not stopped, Yunus said.

Even two years ago, a mother shrimp was available at between Tk 600 and 700, but now its price is not less than Tk 7,000.

On average 4,000 tonnes of

mother shrimps are caught annually from four fishing regions in the Bay, said Swapon Chandra Pal, an official of Cox's Bazar Sea Survey, Management and Development Project.

Alive mother shrimps are sold to hatcheries at higher prices and the dead ones are frozen and smuggled out, he said.

Cox's Bazar Shrimp Fry Traders' Cooperative Association President Noor Mohammad said a mature mother shrimp releases at least one crore eggs after every eight months.

But young mother shrimps of 4 to 5 months are caught and sold to hatcheries, which do not release over 50,000 eggs, Swapan said.

District Fishery Officer M Kabir Ahmed also admitted that the ban on netting shrimp and other fishes in the coastal waters during breeding period is not enforced.

Even two years ago, a trawler could net 250 mother shrimps in a trip, which has come down to 20-25 now, he said.

Because of netting 'weak' mother shrimps, fries produced by them in hatcheries also die as they are very much prone to virus attack, he added.

Cox's Bazar Deputy Commissioner (DC) Mohammed Aminul Islam, held a meeting recently with hatchery owners and officials to find ways to overcome the crisis. At the meeting, hatchery owners pleaded for import of mother shrimps and arrangements for trawling in the deep sea, meeting sources said.

Over 50,000 people earn their livelihood by working in shrimp hatcheries in Cox's Bazar, said Nazibul Islam, owner of Balaka Hatchery.

Border guards trade shots after BSF kills one

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Kushthia*

Bangladesh Rifles and Indian BSF traded shots on Dhopakhal border in Chuadanga in the early hours of yesterday after the Indian border guards shot dead a Bangladeshi cow trader there earlier.

The victim was identified as Moina Mia, 35, of Madhabkhali village in Jibonnagar upazila in Chuadanga.

Quoting victim's family, BDR sources said BSF personnel from Matari camp in Krishnagar thana in Nadia district fired on Moina when he was walking inside Bangladesh territory near border pillar no-71 at around 11.00 pm Saturday. Moina died on the spot. BSF took the body.

After the killing, BSF fired at Dholakhali BDR border observation post (BOP) at about 3.15 am yesterday.

BDR replied with shots.

Lt. Col. Mir Motahar Hossain, Commanding Officer of 35 Rifle Battalion, said BSF fired at least 20 shots. He also admitted the killing of the Bangladeshi by BSF.

BDR yesterday gave BSF a letter for returning the body and holding a flag meeting, he said.

BSF killed 11 Bangladeshis on the southwestern border since January 1, sources said.

Gaibandha BNP president Chhana held in Dhaka

Six cases filed alleging extortion, other crimes

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Gaibandha

Gaibandha district BNP president Hamidul Huq Chhana was arrested from Kakrail mosque in Dhaka Saturday evening, police said here yesterday.

A joint police team of Ramna in Dhaka and Gaibandha Sadar arrested him.

Chhana was wanted by police since declaration of emergency.

Plainclothes law enforcers had kept an eye on the mosque and six other spots in Dhaka city for several days. Confirming his presence at the mosque, the joint team cordoned the mosque and arrested him under Section 16/2 of Emergency Powers Act.

Police said they sought permission from a court here yesterday to bring Chhana to Gaibandha.

He may be brought here in a couple of days, Gaibandha Police Superintendent Saleh Md Tanvir told this correspondent.

Sadar police sources said six cases were filed against Chhana yesterday for alleged extortion, sheltering criminals and other crimes.



Hamidul Huq Chhana

After state emergency, Chhana, an alleged godfather of extortionists and musclemen, went into hiding, police said. Chhana enjoyed the blessings of Hawa Bhavan, they claimed.

Police said they are also hunting for Sumon Dev, a close aide to Chhana.

After voluntary retirement from police service, Chhana joined BNP and became its Gaibandha district president.

Musclemen under his protection collected illegal toll from government development projects, captured tenders and also realised

money in the name of promotion and transfer of officials and giving jobs, sources claimed.

Chhana became a powerful member of primary school teacher recruitment committee by driving out an honest member Ramjiz Ali and realised Tk one lakh from each job seeker, the sources said.

The tenders captured by Chhana included those for construction of Gaibandha stadium and Gaibandha-Sadullapur, Gaibandha-Nakaihat, Gobindagnaj-Gaibandha-Shaghata and Gaibandha-Balashi roads, Kamarjani river port, Fulchhari embankment protection work and Brahmaputra bank protection embankment from Gideri to Sayedpur.

An Executive Engineer at Gaibandha Water Development Board (WDB) was allegedly beaten by Chhana's men for resisting capture of tender and he was subsequently transferred, sources said.

They said Sumon Dev controlled phensidyl trade in Gaibandha district but police could not take action against him due to Chhana.

SIRAJGANJ BSCIC ESTATE

Toxic waste poses health hazard to villagers

GOLAM MOSTAFA JIBON, *Sirajganj*

Toxic water released from mills in Sirajganj BSCIC estate is polluting the environment of adjacent areas, causing sufferings to people and posing health hazard.

The atmosphere in and around the industrial estate has become dirty and unhygienic as mills and factories alack necessary treatment. The coloured water remains stagnant in absence of proper drainage system, official of the BSCIC (Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation) said.

The toxic water is mostly released from yarn dyeing and processing units, cement and salt mills.

The pollution is posing health hazard in the area, locals said while talking to this correspondent.

They said they urged the BSCIC authorities and even held demonstrations to stop the pollution but to no effect.

The toxic water falls into a pond in the area. A slight rain swells it and the polluted water overflows the Sirajganj-Bogra highway. The situation will be precarious during monsoon, locals said.

The industrial estate was set up in 1985 on 10 acres of lands about three kilometers off Sirajganj town. There are 10 industrial units in the estate now and five more are coming up soon. But the infrastructure has not been developed to suit the needs because of lack of funds, BSCIC officials told this correspon-

dent. The drainage system also remained unchanged, they said.

This correspondent during a recent visit found a cement mill operating without dust collector. Installation of dust collector was one of the conditions but it is yet to be added to the mill, BSCIC sources said.

When contacted yesterday, Abdul Latif, Assistance General Manager (AGM) of the estate, said four industrial units were given letters a year ago for installation of treatment plants. They include two dyeing mills, a soap factory and a salt factory.

The AGM said they have a plan to construct a drain up to Kalinga river to remove the stagnant water. But this can not be done due to fund shortage, he added.



Highly toxic water stagnant in a pond in Sirajganj BSCIC industrial estate.

2 SIs closed in Dinajpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Two sub-Inspectors (SIs) of police were closed in police line here due to alleged negligence of duties on Sunday, police official sources said.

SI Abdur Khaleque of Nawabganj Police Station and SI Shawkot Ali of Birampur Police Station were closed for watching the World Cup cricket match neglecting their highway patrol duties at Pior village in Nawabganj upazila Thursday night, police said.

When contacted with Police Dinajpur superintendent of police (SP), he confirmed the incident saying further action will be taken against them after an investigation.

TEACHER SHORTAGE

Patuakhali Polytechnic Instt students boycott class

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

All 230 students of Patuakhali Polytechnic Institute Computer Technology Department are boycotting their classes since Wednesday demanding fulfillment their five-point demand including solving the problem of teachers' shortage in the institute.

The demands include solution to the problem of shortage of teachers, setting up of canteen and gymnasium on the campus and permission to run the activities of Bangladesh Karigari Chhatra Parishad.

Students held a street corner meeting in front of the academic building of the institute On Sunday. Various student leaders addressed the meeting.

At present, two out of seven posts of teachers are working in the department. They are Golam Raihan and Mojibur Rahman.

Students became angry as soon as the transfer order of Golam Raihan reached the campus on Wednesday. The higher authorities transferred him to Barguna Polytechnic Institute. He was asked to join his new work place by April 25.

When contacted, acting principal of the institute Bellal Hossain, also chief Instructor of Civil Engineering Department said to this correspondent, "We have sent several letters to the higher authorities to fill up the vacant posts of teachers, but in vain.

However, a new teacher is likely to join here on April 25. We hope the students would cancel their programme considering our limitations, the principal said.



Illegal structures built on the bank of Lauhajang river in Tangail, which have choked its flow, creating pollution.

No step yet to free Louhajang, Bairan rivers from grabbers

Tangail AC Land says list of encroachers being prepared

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Louhajang and Bairan rivers in Tangail Sadar and Gopalpur upazilas are dying due to encroachment.

Originating from Dhaleshari, a tributary of Jamuna, Louhajang river flows through Tangail town and falls into Banshai. The river earlier served as an outlet to clear effluent. As it is clogged, the natural drainage system of the town has also been affected.

Only three decades ago, launches and big boats carrying merchandise used to anchor at the town. A road at College Para in the town was named 'Amghat' as mangoes from Rajshahi were unloaded there, an elderly citizen said while talking to this correspondent.

Besides, the river linked shoals in the western part with rest of the district.

The river started dying after the

Water Development Board (WDB) constructed a sluice gate near the confluence of Louhajang and Dhaleshari rivers in 1992 under its Flood Action Plan (FAP)-20. Boat stopped plying the route since then as the river lost navigability.

In the following years, encroachment of its banks and shore areas increased.

This correspondent while visiting 10 kilometers of the river banks from Baimile in Dainna union in Tangail Sadar upazila to Kagmari area in Tangail town saw villagers occupying the river on both sides. They built houses, raised banana orchards and vegetable gardens on encroached banks.

Illegal concrete structures have been built in many areas including Kagmara, Dhulerchar, Stadium, West Akur Takur Para, Beradoma and Kagmari in the town.

Sewage and garbage released

from homesteads in the town are polluting the river.

Earlier, Tangail municipality chairman Jamilur Rahman Miron (now in jail), said that he raised the issue at several law and order committee meetings but to no result due to influence by vested quarters having political clout.

A member of district law and order committee seeking anonymity said the Assistant Commissioner of Land in Tangail Sadar upazila has been directed to identify the land grabbers.

The grabbed lands along the river will be recovered after the AC (Land) gives a report, he said.

When contacted, Assistant Commissioner (Land) Syed Aminur Rahman said, "We are preparing a list of land grabbers, which will be submitted to the law and order committee as soon as possible".

The Bairan, a Jamuna tributary,

originates from Dubail in Sarishabari upazila in Jamalpur district, flows through Gopalpur municipal area and Bhupur and falls into the Louhajang river.

As the river is dying due to encroachment, Gopalpur upazila headquarters, once a flourishing trade center, is also losing its importance, local people and traders said.

Influential people, most of whom big traders, are building houses and business offices by grabbing lands on both sides of the river. Garbage dumped by people is also siltng it up.

Somnath Lahiri, an official of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA) in Tangail, said land grabbers are also defying the River Reservation Act.

When contacted, Tangail Deputy Commissioner Akhtar Ali Sarkar said steps will be taken soon to recover the grabbed lands of Louhajang and Bairan rivers.

Uneasy calm at Khalishpur

70 jute workers held during protests sent to jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

An uneasy calm is prevailing in Khalishpur industrial belt which has worn a deserted look following police action against workers of four laid-off state-owned jute mills.

The workers were agitating since Tuesday last for their arrear wages and saalries.

Security forces who are now in full control of the industrial belt during raids Saturday night allegedly forced workers out of labour colonies of the laid-off mills. They took control of the labour colonies after driving out workers, sources in the area said.

There were clashed between workers and law enforcers on

Thursday, Friday and Saturday last.

When asked, KMP Commissioner Nazmul Haque however denied allegations of raids Saturday night. Some miscreants hiding in the labour colonies were picked up, he said.

He said the situation is normal. "We have warned people of Khalishpur industrial belt through loud speakers not to resort to vandalism and take law in their hands", the KMP commissioner said.

He also denied report on any death in police action.

Seventy out of 100 persons picked up by police during pitched battles on Saturday were sent to jail yesterday. They were shown arrested in the two separate cases

filed earlier with Khalishpur and Daulatpur police stations on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The arrested persons sent to jail include school and college students, jute mill workers, and rickshaw and van drivers.

According to eye witnesses, police charged batons when a group of students tried to bring out a procession at 9 am yesterday at Khalishpur. They were dispersed.

All shops in the area remained closed and few transports were seen on roads.

There has so far been no indication of allocation of fund required for payment of arrear wages and salaries of workers and employees of the four laid-off jute mills.

New VC of Hajee Danesh university

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Dinajpur*

Professor Md. Ruhul Amin has been appointed yesterday as short-term Vice Chancellor (VC) of Hajee Danesh Science and Technology University (HSTU).

HSTU sources said the post of Vice Chancellor was vacant following the resignation of former VC Dr. Mohammad Motahar Hossain Mondol on April 8. He resigned from the post protesting the alleged corruption and nepotism of his predecessor.

According to HSTU official the university is passing through a crisis due to alleged corruption by some officials during the past government.