

Hilsa still too dear to commoners

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Despite a ban on exports to bring down the soaring price of hilsa, it still remains out of reach of the common people.

Yesterday at Karwan Bazar kitchen market, a piece of 1kg hilsa was sold at Tk. 500 to 600. The price of a Hilsa weighing 2kg could reach as much as Tk. 1,500 or more. Fish traders say the price is the same as the day before.

In the city's kitchen markets customers usually surround the hilsa traders mostly out of curiosity just to witness how this traditional fish changes hands in exchange for hefty sums, out of reach to the commoners.

Rasheda Akter, a customer in Karwan Bazar said yesterday, "It is the season of hilsa but we are unable to buy one."

Akter, a resident of Maghbazar admitted that she had to buy Jatka twice from the market just to keep her family members happy.

Mustafizur Rahman another customer from Tejgaon said, "A full grown hilsa full of eggs is the most delicious food for me but I cannot think of buying it because of the huge price."

"Customers cannot even bargain with the vendors. They

Most of these fishes get caught at the mouth of the Bay of Bengal. The mouth of Bay of Bengal is so heavily silted that less and less Hilsas are able to enter the rivers of Bangladesh for spawning, causing less production. There are also reports that hilsa schools rushing towards rivers are also diverting their routes towards Myanmar due to silted seabed at the mouth of the bay

are rude and not a bit sympathetic towards us", he added.

During June and September full-grown hilsa comes from the sea and enters the riverine system of Bangladesh for spawning in the sweet water. During this period they are even tastier.

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Over 90 per cent hilsa arriving in the capital, is caught in the Bay of Bengal away from the rivers.

June and September used to be the festive season of the fishermen as well. Babul Chukdar, a wholesale fish trader from Chandpur, Maachghat said yesterday, "Wholesale price is almost the same as yesterday. 38kgs (A maund) of hilsa cost about Tk. 14,000 to 15,000"

Chukdar added that the river

Padma can no longer provide any satisfactory catch. Fishermen have to travel all the way to Bay of Bengal to catch fish and this increases the expenditure of the fishermen with the soaring price of diesel, he said.

"For one trip to the bay a boat has to spend about Tk. 3000 worth of diesel. Around 15 fishermen go together in a single trip, which adds the cost of food for all," Chukdar said.

Most fishermen do not have their own boat and net. Mahajons supply the boat and net in exchange for certain percentage of the catch. This also causes extra expenditure. All this is adding to the soaring market price of hilsa, he said.

The government on July 3 enforced a ban on exports and preservation for hoarding of Hilsa for the next six months.

According to a study of the central bank, some unscrupulous traders have been exporting Hilsa to India at prices much lower than in domestic markets.

Bangladesh exports about 5 billion taka (\$70 million) of hilsa annually, mostly to India, officials said.

In 2006, the total hilsa catch was 280,000 tonnes against 276,000 tonnes in the previous year.



Too precious: two hilsa sellers from Karwan Bazar

STAR PHOTO



DCC workers yesterday ripped open the manhole near the entrance of Karwan Bazar in front of the hotel Sonargaon. The workers said that the same manhole has been repaired 25 times over the course of last 3 years, costing the DCC lakhs of taka, without permanently solving the problem.

STAR PHOTO

Illegal parking

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again do the illegal acts at the cost of public sufferings, she said.

Big commercial establishments in the city have all along been defiant in mess up residential areas with illegal car parking on the main avenue and the alleys.

A number of Gulshan residents alleged that the lanes get so congested with traffic snarl-up caused by illegal car parking that it becomes almost impossible for them to move.

Vehicles even remain parked in front of the residential houses and along the sidewalk and the houses' boundary walls for hours.

Locals also said that the commercial establishments, without car parking space of their own, also started parking their vehicles inside the South Park.

Despite a complaint by Gulshan Society with the Dhaka City Corporation, the invasion of unauthorised parking situation has turned worse.

Where have

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She expressed her anger over the state of children's corner saying, "The city managers have utterly failed to provide the children with playing facilities. It is just a farce to develop a meagre facility in the name of children but not to maintain it."

Member secretary, parks and grounds programme committee of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolok (Bapa) Sharif Jamil said that huge amount of public money is wasted in the name of installing children's playing equipment in the parks and playgrounds with the instruments rusting away or destroyed in absence of maintenance.

For elderly mosque-goers like him, a rickshaw trip is equally fraught with hazard, since the jarring ride causes their bones and joints to ache.

According to medical professionals, frequent and sustained jerking from bumpy vehicle rides can indeed cause back and neck pains in those who are weak or elderly, and aggravate them in people with existing problems.

In the face of the people's per-

Potholed roads

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isting plights, the Lalmatia Cooperative Housing Society has tried to lobby the municipal authorities to repair roads, but to little avail. Md. Tofail Ahmed Manik, member of the Housing Society and a local resident, said, "We have submitted applications to the mayor's office, but they have totally ignored our requests for road repair."

Abul Hasnat, Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) executive engineer for Zone-6, who is temporarily in charge of the Lalmatia zone, acknowledged that many such applications had been overlooked, but cited budget constraints. "We get only Tk. 66 lakh per ward, so we cannot fix all the roads in one year, but we are expecting to start work on some of the roads in E-block in 1 or 2 months," he said.

Some Lalmatia residents, preferring anonymity, alleged that their ward commissioner, Atikul Islam Matin, who is now in jail under corruption charges, was a political appointee who diverted funds designated for mending streets to his personal profit.

Kazi Nasima Mannan, commissioner of ward nos. 45, 47 and 49, acknowledged the pathetic state of Lalmatia roads, and said she submitted an estimate for repair works to the DCC about 5 months ago. "The other commissioner bore greater responsibility for road conditions, and he did not do a good job, but my repair proposal should be executed in another 5 months, and you will see the works will be better under me," she promised.

In the meantime, the roads of Lalmatia continue to be riddled with potholes and ravaged by rain, and it is the local people who are suffering the most.

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