

Prices of 'dream fish' start easing



Don't get away! You too may afford these big four now.

CITY CORRESPONDENT

Although not that cheap, the Hilsa prices have come down within the reach of many. The low-income group can also now taste their 'dream fish' for once this season.

A big Hilsa is now available at Tk 250 or so at any kitchen market in the capital. A one-kg or a little bigger one was selling at Tk 200 at Karwan Bazar yesterday.

A mid-level private bank official, who bought a dozen Hilsa at a time, each weighing around 7-8 hundred grams for Tk 1200, said he did it for he could not believe the prices would be the same the next day.

Jasim Uddin Mollah, a school teacher, bought a Hilsa for Tk 220 at Kaptan Bazar. When asked about the price he replied with a smile of satisfaction. "You can easily guess it sir. Otherwise, how can people like us afford a Hilsa?" he posed.

A fish seller at Kaptan Bazar said, four big Hilsas, which were used to sell around Tk 1600 a week ago, now sell at Tk 900-1000 only.

Asked why, he attributed it to 'good supply for the last 2-3 weeks'. But another seller said, not just Hilsa, prices of all fishes have fallen due to Ramadan.

"In the Ramadan, devotees prefer meat to fish. Most of them go for beef, mutton or chicken, pulling down the fish prices", he said.

In fact, the prices marked significant fall at the wholesale fish markets in the last few days.

"This is for the first time in many years we see a steady supply of Hilsa. We cannot believe our eyes," said Abul Hossain at Karwan Bazar wholesale fish market.

"In the sixties I used to buy

two pairs of Hilsa for one taka. In the eighties I bought one for Tk 10," reminisced Amirul Islam, a retired government official.

"But today it sells at Tk 500 each," he lamented adding "because the Hilsa has forsaken the Padma."

In the last 4-5 years the crisis became acute with most fishermen returning home without any catches. Illegal hoarding and smuggling added to the situation.

The government in an inter-ministerial meeting on June 4 decided to ban export and hoarding of Hilsa for the next six months in a bid to increase supply in the local markets.

Steps have also been taken in the last few months to stop illegal fishing of 'jatka' or Hilsa fries. It dramatically increased the quantity of catches but failed to boost supply or pull down the prices because of smuggling and illegal hoarding.

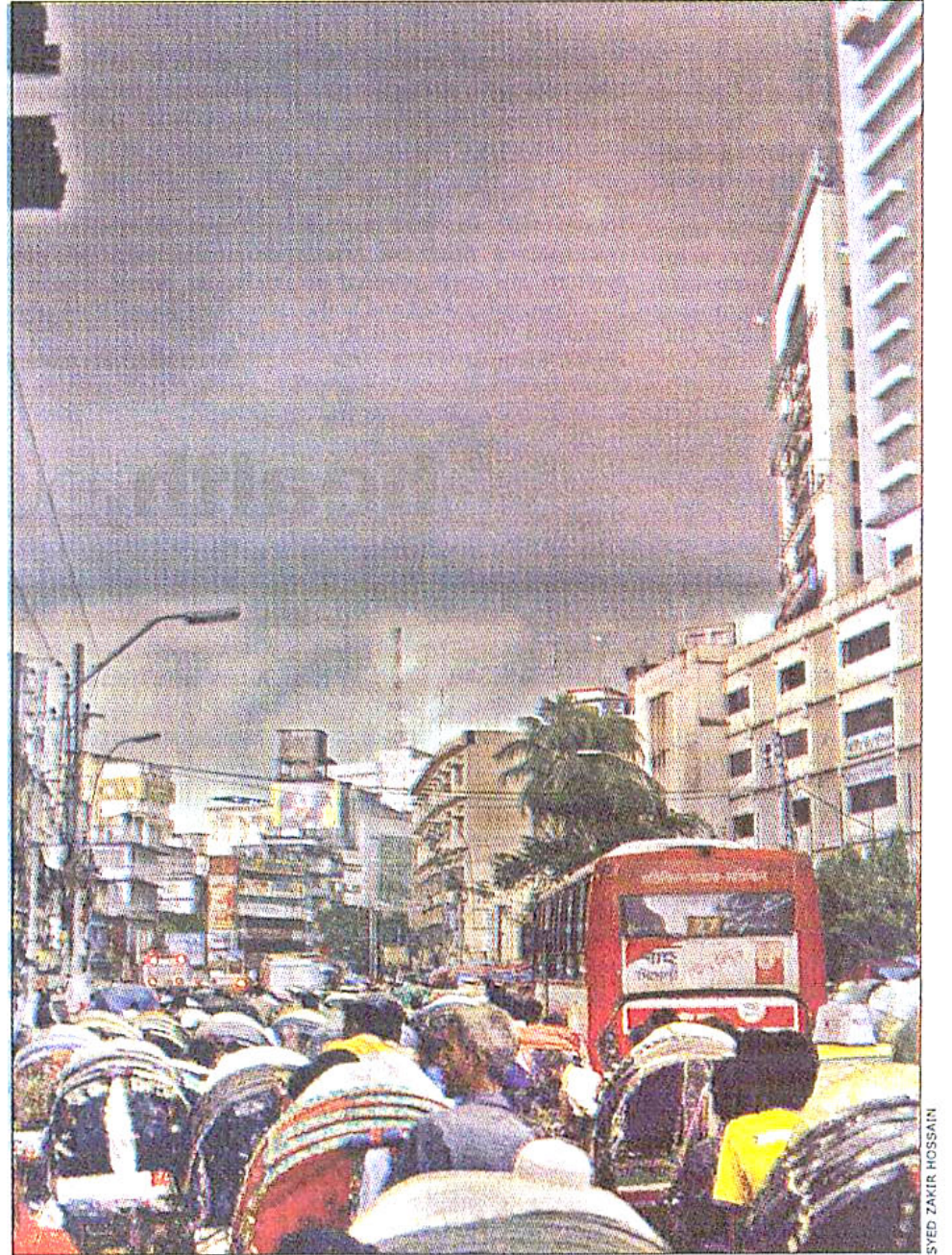
Following newspaper reports, the authorities recently launched crackdown on smuggling and raided the sheds of hoarders which helped ease the Hilsa prices.

But experts believe, some 'permanent' steps must be taken to ensure increased supply of Hilsa.

The fishermen must be freed from the clutches of mohajons (money lending agents of the hoarders and exporters), catching 'jatka' and fishing in breeding zone must be stopped for all while production and use of current net fully banned, they said. Side by side, the fisheries department must arrange and ensure loans for the genuine fishermen.

Besides, exports should be allowed only when production level permits and severe action must be taken against hoarders and smugglers, they observed.

MOMENTS BEFORE THE WELCOME SHOWER



It happened at last. Suddenly but most expectably, as most people were gasping for a little relief. For the last few days they experienced scorching heat due to a depression in the Bay of Bengal. Yesterday, around three in the afternoon the city wore the look of the evening with heavy clouds overhead. Cars were plying on the street with their headlights on. People were rushing to safety. And a welcome downpour followed.

BUILDERS IGNORE SAFETY MEASURES

Mind your head! A brick may fall from the blue

TAWFIQUE ALI

A large number of builders in the city ignore safety measures at the construction sites which sometimes cause serious accidents and death of workers or pedestrians passing by.

But the government seems indifferent to enforcement of the building code under which it is mandatory for builders to take all necessary safety measures during construction.

Selim Hossain Hridoy, a 22-year-old youth died on September 14 in Gopibagh after

bricks of a raw wall fell on him from the fourth floor of an under-construction building.

There were no safety precautions at the construction site, said the locals in the vicinity.

Two days after the incident, a pedestrian named Ashraf Ali died from similar accident when he was passing by an under-construction building in Lalbagh.

Earlier on August 8, absence of safety measures in demolition of the 22-storey Rangs building resulted in the death of a 20-year day-labourer Sohrab Hossain.

Sohrab while working without any safety gears fell off the 12th floor of the building.

Bangladesh National Building Code (BNBC) requires certain fundamental safety precautions both for construction and demolition of any buildings for public safety.

The building rules of 2006 refer to the BNBC for safe and viable constructions of buildings. But the government has so far taken no steps to enforce the code.

The BNBC (part-7 of construction practice and safety chapter) requires some rudimentary safety measures like safety belt of the labourers and canopy or protective scaffold (protection roof) around an under-construction building to avert public hazard.

Builders' defiance to the legally binding building rules and safety codes has made unnatural deaths a frequent phenomenon, said experts.

Mubasshar Hussain, president of the Institute of Architects Bangladesh (IAB), said that the government has to take measures to ensure the practice of BNBC.

According to the BNBC, all necessary precautions have to be taken at a construction site but its practice has been stagnant because of indecision at the government level.

"Protective scaffold is a must at any building construction site for safety of the pedestrians, passers-by and neighbourhood houses," said Hussain, who is also chairman-elect of Architects Regional Council Asia (Arch-Asia).

Despite widespread anomalies and aberrations in the construction sector in the capital and elsewhere in the country, the BNBC has been lying ineffective for long.

The death of Hridoy in Gopibagh has shattered the dream of his family.

Hridoy, a youth of RK Mission Road and a student at Borhan Uddin College, was going to his

Cops struggle to tackle rising heads of hydra

Thousands more patrol streets, malls and terminals in the capital as Eid nears

RIZANUZZAMAN LASKAR

Special measures taken by law enforcers to curb muggings and other crimes in the capital ahead of this Eid are working little against the criminals as fresh incidents are reported almost everyday.

Due to the surge in street crime, Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP), on Thursday decided to take some special security measures. Around six thousand law enforcers are being deployed to step up patrol ahead of Eid-ul-fitr and Durga Puja.

More plainclothes police and Rab (Rapid Action Battalion) personnel are now patrolling the streets as well as the shopping malls, bus and launch terminals to ensure security and safety for the citizens.

Regardless of the effort, reports of various street crime keep emerging from all corners of the city everyday, said a num-

ber of law enforcement officials.

"Although the DMP and Rab have deployed additional forces to ensure safety on the streets, fresh victims of muggings keep popping out here and there," said Inspector Mohsin of DMP.

In September, 19 cases of muggings had been reported in five police stations under Ramna division of DMP as opposed to 12 cases in August, said a source at Ramna division of DMP.

However bleak the picture might look with these crime statistics, the reality is even bleaker as the statistics contribute to only a small piece of the whole pie. Fact of the matter is, most crimes do not even make it to the statistics because most incidents go unreported, admitted a number of law enforcers.

Most residential areas in the city have witnessed a sudden rise in muggings while only a one third of the incidents have been reported to the authorities, said

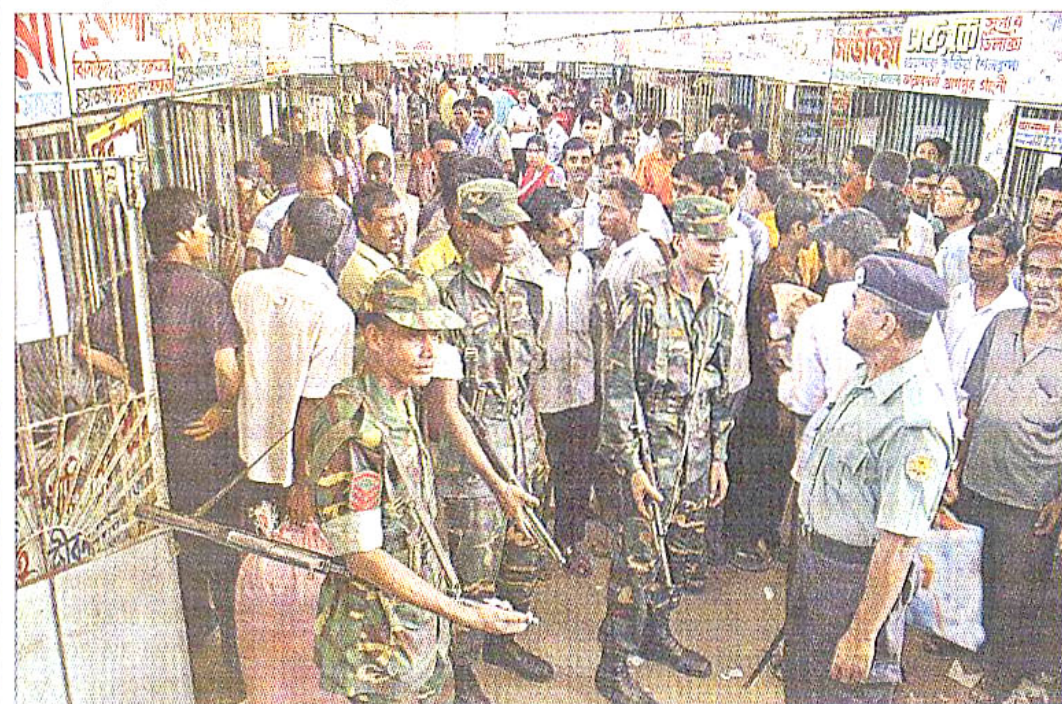
law enforcers.

Throughout the last decade, people of Dhaka have learnt to live with everyday crimes, but gone are the days of petty offences like pick pocketing, snatching jewelry or even threatening a passer-by with weapons, lamented city dwellers.

The stories that come to light nowadays are gruesome and make Dhaka residents think twice before stepping outdoors. Fear factor is at its peak these days as the muggers and other criminals often turn desperate ahead of festivals such as Eid and Puja.

The new breed of muggers who have been reigning over the streets of Dhaka recently are called the 'Agyan (dope) Party' and the 'Molom (balm) Party'. These deceitful muggers are out there to hunt for their prey inside public transportation or at crowded public places.

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Members of joint forces patrol around the ticket counters of Inter-District Bus Terminal in Gabtoli to ensure peaceful journey of homebound city dwellers.

city express

The latest crop of quotes from the city's press -- words worth repeating, we feel, for their humour, insight or sheer outrageousness. Star City does not necessarily support the opinions expressed in this column.

"The people will have to cooperate with us in preparing the voter list for holding election soon if they want the state of emergency lifted."

-- ATM Shamsul Huda
Chief Election Commissioner

Said at a view exchange meeting in Tangail before launching the work of preparing the voter list with photographs for Tangail municipality area, on Monday. Source: The Daily Star

"The country will face a big problem if the businessmen stop their businesses and the economy stops functioning. It is not possible to create businessmen overnight."

-- Mainul Hossain
Law Adviser

Told reporters, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

"They are incriminating militants in every case so that they don't have to do anything new."

-- Asma Kibria
Wife of slain Awami League leader Shah AMS Kibria
Told reporters, on Wednesday. Source: The Daily Star

"The truth commission should not be formed for special quarters under any circumstances. It will never be logical. Laws could never be formulated for special quarters."

-- Advocate Abdul Hamid
Awami League leader

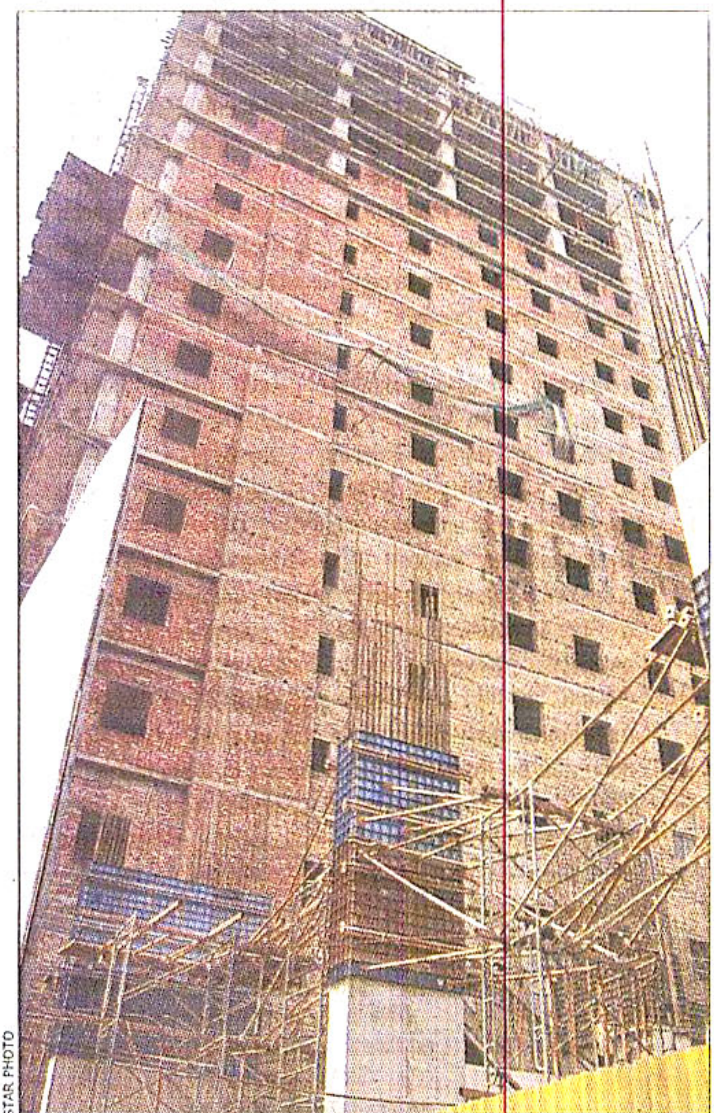
Said at BBC Bangladesh Sanglap, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

"Mannan Bhuiyan does not have any right to speak about unity or division in the party as he is no more a party member."

-- Khandaker Delwar Hossain
BNP Secretary General

Told reporters at his NAM flat, on Saturday. Source: The Daily Star

Compiled by Durdana Ghias



An under construction building without safety measures.

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