

## FISH SANCTUARY AT HALDA RIVER

## No policy guideline to rehabilitate fishermen

BSS, Chittagong

Rehabilitation programme for the poor fishermen in the Halda river areas has been stalled for the last two years in absence of a comprehensive policy guideline on modus operandi of utilising the money sanctioned for it, said District Fisheries Officer Serajuddin yesterday.

Serajuddin, also director of the project titled 'Restoration of the natural fish breeding habitats of the river Halda', was speaking at a meeting of District Fisheries Resources Preservation and Development Committee at the local circuit house conference room with committee head and Chittagong Deputy Commissioner Farid Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury in the chair.

Rehabilitation of the poor fishermen of the area aiming at refraining them from fishing during February-July period, when migrated mother fishes spawn eggs in the river, is one of the main components of the Tk 13.84 crore project.

Serajuddin told the meeting that rehabilitation of marginal fishermen is likely to start after approval of the draft policy they submitted earlier to the ministry concerned.

The core aim of the five-year project that began in fiscal 2006-2007 is to turn some specific areas of the river into 'fish sanctuary' and to preserve bio-diversity of the Halda river through preserving some indigenous fish species particularly the brood fishes (mother fish).

The Fisheries Department also imposed a cap on utilising the money amounting to Tk 6.15 crore sanctioned for river dredging and Tk one crore for repairing some existing sluice gates evaluating possible grievous impact on the river instead of benefiting it. Officials said process is on to divert the money for river dredging and sluice gate repair to other heads within the project.

Local upazila administration officials alleged that indiscriminate extraction of sands from river bed on many points, unabated catching of mother fishes ignoring ban and reckless plying of engine boats have emerged as a serious threat to the river as fish sanctuary.

The meeting also recommended taking necessary steps for non-renewal of sand quarry lease agreement after expiry of their dates, imposing restriction on plying of mechan-

ised boats during a particular period and legal action for defiance through conducting mobile courts frequently throughout the year.

It also asked the project officials to put on display boards at all important places on both the banks of the river inscribed with importance of the river, different aspects of the project and government's ban on fishing mentioning time and areas.

The meeting decided to appoint skilled manpower for maintaining the already built modern hatcheries adjacent to the river banks so that it could be utilised for providing better service to the egg-processors.

Deputy Commissioner Farid Uddin Ahmed Chowdhury told the meeting that the committee would sit in the first quarter of every month for timely execution of the Halda River project.

In 2005, the government declared some areas of the river stretching about 40 km from Nazirhat Bridge to Kalurghat Bridge on the mouth of the river Karnaphuli and about 20 km areas in north to south from Satterghat Bridge to Madunaghata Bridge as 'fish sanctuary'.

Through a notification on July 2 in 2007, the government prohibited fishing in the men-

tioned areas during peak season.

The river is the country's lone source of inbreeding-free fish fry as brood fishes of indigenous species like Rui, Katla, Mrigal and Kaliboush migrate to Halda from different rivers and release eggs during March-June cycle every year.

According to experts, different man-made and natural disasters like destruction of spawning ground by loop cutting, massive quarry of sands from river bed illegally by a section of unscrupulous traders, pollution of the river by industrial waste, unplanned construction of a good number of sluice gates by the locals for irrigation purpose, indiscriminate catching and killing of fish-fries particularly the mother fishes and geographical change in the river due to unchecked erosion for years have posed a serious threat to the bio-diversity of the Halda.

Due to these risk factors, the river that was once a haven for brood fishes for releasing their eggs has now turned into a quite dangerous one resulting in drastic fall in availability of eggs and fish-fries of natural species as lesser number of mother fishes have come here for releasing eggs in the recent years.



PHOTO: STAR

Garment Sramik Oikya Parishad forms a human chain in front of the National Press Club in the city yesterday demanding payment of salary arrears and Eid bonuses to garment workers before September 15.



Sensory presence of the mobile court, cars that were haphazardly parked on Mirpur Road in the city's New Market area leave the place, easing vehicular movement. The picture was taken yesterday.

## Unite to establish rights

Monnajan Sufian urges women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Labour and Employment Begum Monnajan Sufian yesterday urged women from all strata of life to organise themselves in order to establish their rights in the society.

"All women will have to be united and alert about their rights to end all sorts of discriminations against them," she said.

The state minister was speaking as chief guest at the launching ceremony of an organisation titled 'Alliance for Women Workers Rights (AWWR)' at the National Press Club in the city.

"The government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is very much sincere to empower women socially and economically and she has already directed all organisations to

include women in every committee to move them forward," she said.

Munnajan said as per labour law both men and women should get equal wages but in many cases women are less paid because of their ignorance.

She also stressed the need for ensuring accountability of the government, employers and workers.

Speaking as guest of honour Dr Jyoti Tuladhar, a senior gender specialist of the Bureau for Gender Equality at the Geneva-based ILO, said women need special attention to move forward as they have no strong representation in executive and technical jobs.

"This is very sad to see women as subordinate to men in every sphere of life. We shall have to work wholeheartedly to establish women at the decision level position for their real

empowerment," she said, hoping that the Alliance would be one of the big platforms to establish the rights of women workers.

While speaking as special guest Panudda Boonpala, director of ILO in Dhaka Office, stressed the need for cohesion among the government, employers and workers to ensure decent environment in workplace.

"ILO is working to promote decent working environment all over the world for women both at home and workplace," Boonpala added.

With AWWR Chairperson Prof Ihsrat Shamim in the chair, the function was also

addressed by Parveen S Huda, vice chairperson of AWWR and executive director of Nari Unnayan Shakti, and Shirin Akhter, president of Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik Jote.

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Domestic help commits suicide in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A domestic help committed suicide by hanging herself from a ceiling fan at a house in Chashma Hill area in the port city of Chittagong yesterday.

The deceased identified as Taslima Begum, 18, hanged from Chunati under Lohagara upazila in the district.

Sources said the victim had been working at the house of expatriate Ziaul Haque on the second floor of a building in the residential area under Panchlaish Police Station for the last eight years.

Sources said Ziaul's wife Halima went out of her residence for shopping at around 11.00am and returned around 1:30pm.

But having no response and finding the door locked from inside, Halima opened the door with the alternative keys and found Taslima hanging from the ceiling with a scurf.

Halima then informed police of the matter.

The body bore no mark of injury and was sent to Chittagong Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy, said Sub-Inspector Mostafa of Panchlaish Police Station.

Filling of an unnatural death (UD) case was under process in this connection and investigation will start after the autopsy report is made, he added.

Man crushed under wheels of train

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A hearing-impaired person was crushed under the wheels of a train near Rajshahi Railway Station yesterday.

The victim identified as Gini, 60, of Serail Colony area was hit by a commuter train from Iswardi while he was walking towards his home along the railway track.

Sources said Gini was rushed to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital, but the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

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## Road accidents kill 5

METRO DESK

Five people were killed in separate road accidents in Munshiganj, Barisal and Comilla yesterday.

Our correspondent in Munshiganj reports: Two people were killed and five others injured in a road accident on Dhaka-Tongi Bari road at Atpara in Munshiganj yesterday.

The dead were identified as Tuli, 6, and Lulu Kha, 70.

Locals said the accident occurred when a passenger bus carrying around 30 passengers fell into a ditch losing its control.

The injured were admitted to Tongi Bari Hospital.

Our correspondent in Barisal adds: One person was killed in a road accident at Mokamia under Betagi upazila in Barguna yesterday.

The victim was identified as Abdur Rob Mridha, 55, secretary of Kazirabad union AL.

under of the upazila.

Police said the accident occurred when a truck dashed his motorbike at around 4:30pm yesterday, leaving him dead on the spot.

Police arrested the truck driver.

A correspondent in Comilla adds: Two people were killed in separate road accidents in Comilla yesterday.

Narayan Debnath, 30, a goldsmith, was killed in a road accident at Raypur on Dhaka-Chittagong road under Daudkandi upazila in Comilla yesterday.

Police said the accident occurred at around 1:00pm when a Dhaka-bound overtaking hit him while he was crossing the road.

Police recovered the body and sent it to mortuary for autopsy.

In another accident, an unidentified passenger was killed in a road accident at Hasanspur on Dhaka-Chittagong road under Daudkandi.

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STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

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