

Unsafe water transports ply 'danger zone' defying ban

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barisal

Unsafe water transports including passenger launches, trawlers and speedboats have continued plying the 'danger zone' of river estuaries in the southern region and coastal areas during the stormy season, defying seven months' ban from March 15 to October 15. Against the backdrop of several fatal launch and trawler accidents, the Directorate of Sea Transportation imposed the ban in 2000 on about 3000 kilometres long routes, said Maruf Hossain, inspector shipping directorate office in Barisal.

The ban, aimed at minimising loss of life in the region vulnerable to cyclone, nor-wester and tidal surges, became virtually ineffective as the authorities failed to arrange sufficient safe vessels like sea trucks or those having sea survey fitness certificate during the long ban period.

In absence of safe water transportation in this island areas, local people have to avail unsafe small motor launches, boats, trawlers and speedboats on Meghna, Ilsha, Kocha, Baleswar, Bishkhali, Tentulia river estuaries and coastal areas, said Dr Mizanur Rahman, member-secretary of Barisal Nagarik Parishad.

At least 29 unsafe motor



A trawler full of passengers crossing Tajumudding point of Meghna river in Bhola defying ban on plying 'danger zone' from March 15-October 15. The photo was taken a few days ago.

launches and vessels and a large number of unregistered trawlers and speedboats without any fitness certificate and route permit regularly ply the waters from Hizla, Mehendiganj of Barisal, Borhanuddin, Charfession, Daulatkhan, Tazumuddin, Monpura, Ilsha of Bhola, Moju Chowdhur Hut of Laxmipur district, even ignoring adverse weather signals, said passengers and locals.

"We have met with the local administration, police,

navy, coastguard and other law enforcement authorities and launch owners and operators and requested the authorities concerned to take legal action against the violators of the ban," said Md Masud Parvez, acting deputy director of marine safety and traffic management department of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) in Barisal.

Admitting the acute shortage of vessels approved for

plying the danger zone, Gopal Chandra Majumdar, assistant manager BIWTC Barisal station, said they placed three sea trucks on danger zone routes and another one will be added soon.

BIWTC arranged sea truck services only for six of the 26 major stations in the 'danger zone', sources said.

The people from remaining 20 stations and many other 'temporary' stations have to travel on unapproved small water transports like

trawlers and country boats, much to the risk of their life and goods, said locals.

Gola Mustafa Chowdhury, president of Barguna district trawler owners association, said, "The restriction was introduced 11 years ago and since then the directorate did not survey the routes for updating the list of areas under the danger zone and approval of vessels. The deep sea going fishing trawlers often ply the coastal danger zone areas safely."

PHOTO: STAR

WEDNESDAY'S DINAJPUR COURT INCIDENT

3 DB men suspended, probe ordered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Three Detective Branch (DB) personnel were yesterday suspended as they locked in a scuffle with two lawyers at the entrance to the district court complex on Wednesday.

The suspended DB men are Sub-Inspector Mizanur Rahman and constables

Ashrarul Alam and Jotish. ASP Faruk Hossain of Dinajpur sadar circle has

been assigned to investigate the incident.

The incident occurred at around 5:30pm as the plainclothes DB men tried to arrest 17 accused who appeared before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court earlier on the day and secured regular bail.

A case was filed with the court on April 9 this year, accusing the 17 of killing a man over land dispute at Baghdoor Khaliachhara

village in Hakimpur upazila of the district.

As the accused prayed for ad interim bail to the High Court, the court granted them bail for three months on April 26. The HC also asked the accused to appear before the trial court and seek regular bail before expiry of the bail period.

The accused along with their lawyers-- advocates Abdul Bashar Prince and Rabiul Islam--came out of

the Judicial Magistrate's Court at around 5:30pm, signing bail bonds.

When the DB men, who were waiting outside the court complex since the morning, tried to arrest the accused, their lawyers showed the plainclothes detectives copies of the bail bonds, which they ignored.

The DB personnel also locked in an altercation with the lawyers and scuffled with them. Hearing the

news, other lawyers rushed to the spot and confined the BD men to a room on the court premises.

At around 7:30pm, Police Superintendent Mostafizur Rahman arrived on the court premises and assured the lawyers that he would take necessary action against the persons involved in the incident after investigation. Initially, the SP closed the three to Dinajpur Police Lines at around 8:20pm.



Residents of Alatali Union under Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila demonstrate in front of the deputy commissioner's office yesterday demanding arrangement for election to the union parishad as per the existing schedule.

Procession, rally demanding UP election on schedule

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'nawabganj

People of Alatali Union in Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila yesterday submitted a memorandum to the deputy commissioner demanding election to Alatali union parishad as per schedule.

Prior to submitting the memo, they took out a procession in the town and held a rally in front of the deputy commissioner's office.

Sitting member Mostofa of Alatali Union Parishad filed a petition with the Election Commission (EC) on May 12, saying that the Padma has recently

devoured some wards of the union, leaving several hundred families homeless. Therefore, fresh voter list and area demarcation are needed before holding the election, Mostafa stated in the petition.

Following the petition, the Election Commission (EC) secretariat issued a letter on May 22, asking the returning officer to postpone the election, scheduled for June 9, until the area demarcation issue of union is settled.

Addressing the rally in front of the deputy commissioner's office, the speakers said no new area of the union

was devoured by the Padma after announcement of the election schedule.

They alleged that Mostafa gave false information to the Election Commission as per advice of incumbent chairman Joynal Abedin.

Terming the move of the UP member a conspiracy to stop election in the union, the speakers urged the Election Commission to hold the election to Alatali Union Parishad as per schedule.

After announcement of the election schedule, three candidates filed nomination papers for the chairman post while 55 candidates for member posts.

Robbery at UP chairman candidate's house : 7 hurt

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Seven people were injured during a robbery at the house of a union parishad (UP) chairman candidate in Companyganj upazila early yesterday.

Bullet-hit Jewel Karim was admitted to Noakhali Medical College and Hospital from where he was shifted to Dhaka as his condition deteriorated.

The others were admitted to the local upazila health complex.

Locals said, a gang of 15 to 20 robbers wearing masks entered the house of Nurul Huda, an Awami League backed chairman candidate of Charhazari union, by cutting window grills at about 2:30am.

Resisted by Nurul Huda's son Jewel, they first stabbed him in his head and then fired at him, leaving him critically injured.

The robbers also stabbed Nurul Huda, 55, and his wife Kohinoor Begum, 45, when they tried to save their son.

Four other family members Saiful Islam Babu, 17, Nurunnabi Pavel, 20, Shuvo, 23, and Fakir Ahmed, 55, -- were also beaten up by the bandits.

The robbers looted Tk 10.55 lakh and left the scene.

Nurul Huda, however, told journalists that the robbery was committed as per instruction of one of his rival candidates.

Nor'wester adds to sufferings of Aila-hit people

One killed, 500 houses damaged in Dakope

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Nor'wester lashed entire Dakope upazila on Wednesday night killing one person, damaging over 500 houses and uprooting a large number of trees.

A fisherman was killed by lightning. He was identified as Shajahan Ali of Keorhakali village of Sutarkhali union.

According to UNO Daulatuzzaman, over 500 houses, besides shops, schools and madrasas in several villages of all nine unions under the upazila, were badly damaged by the nor'wester that lashed from 7:00 pm till 9:00 pm.

The storm also caused extensive damage to standing crops and added to the sufferings of hundreds of homeless Aila-hit people

staying in makeshift camps, said upazila chairman Sheikh Abul Hossain.

The super cyclone left a trail of devastation in the area just two years ago.

The two-hour long nor'wester coupled with incessant rain and lightning on Wednesday caused huge water-logging in different places of the upazila disrupting normal life.

Many makeshift camps were blown away forcing many homeless people to move to safer places, officials said.

Meanwhile, leaders of 'Aila Durgato Shanghati Mancha' have demanded formation of a strong monitoring cell to look into the work for implementation of the proposed projects worth Tk 100 crore in the Aila-hit area.

They made this demand

issuing a press release on Wednesday night.

The Mancha was formed last year to stand by the distressed people who were rendered homeless by Aila at Dakope and Koira upazilas of Khulna district, Shyamnagar and Ashashuni upazilas of Satkhira district on May 25 in 2009.

Leaders of this newly formed platform have further demanded adequate allocation of fund in the next national budget for implementation of different ongoing and upcoming projects undertaken for infrastructural development of Aila affected places.

They also demanded exemplary punishment to those responsible for corruption and nepotism in the affairs of project work.



Ishwardi orchards full of mouth-watering litchis

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Growers are expecting a bumper production of litchi, a juicy summer fruit, in Ishwardi upazila of the district, because of good weather condition this year.

During a recent visit to the area this correspondent saw hundreds of trees bent with the delicious fruit in the orchards in Salimpur, Shahapur, Maniknagar, Joynagar and many other villages.

Agriculture department and litchi producers claimed that the fruit was grown on at least 1.30 lakh trees in Ishwardi upazila compared to 1.25 lakh trees last year. They expect over 15 thousand metric tonnes of litchi worth Tk110 crore this year in the upazila alone.

"At least two thousand 50 hectares of the upazila were brought under litchi cultivation this year. There are over 1.30 lakh trees and we are expecting a bumper production because of a favourable weather condition," agriculturist Md Habibur Rahman at upazila office said.

"We hope to get Tk105-110 crore alone from Ishwardi upazila, one of the leading litchi producing zones in the country," Habib said, adding that litchi is the main cash crop of the farmers of the upazila.

"With the growing demand, litchi cultivation is also growing every year here and in the adjoining areas," he added.

Sources said, at least 20 to 30 villages in Salimpur and Shahapur unions of Ishwardi upazila are prominent for litchi cultivation. During the visit to Pakshey, Shahapur, Salimpur, Joynagar, Maniknagar, Rooppur, Awtapara and other villages of the upazila, this correspondent talked to the farmers who expected a bumper production as well as handsome price this season.

"There are 300 litchi trees in my orchard. Each small tree is likely to produce Tk 1500 to 2000 litchi this year although the production rate was very poor last year. I am expecting to earn Tk5 lakh from this orchard alone," Md Jalal Uddin of Rooppur village said.

Youth Jalal claimed that he was unemployed but now he is a prominent businessman by cultivating litchi in the last five years.

"I have started litchi cultivation on my family's land 6 to 7 years ago. Last year I incurred huge loss due to the natural calamity. But I did not give up hope. This year I am expecting to make a handsome profit," Jalal said.

Farmers told this correspondent that the early variety of litchi has already gone to the market but the expensive 'Bombai variety' is expecting to hit market in a week or two.

'Bombai Litchi' of Ishwardi is very popular across the country, they said.

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