

Onslaught on mud crabs threatens Sundarbans ecosystem

UNB, Dhaka

Though the mud crab is considered as one of the nature's "ecosystem engineers" for its ability to facilitate habitats and nutrients to other species, a significant proportion of its population is being wiped out every year due to its indiscriminate collection along the coastal belt, particularly in the Sundarbans.

The export of this crab has sharply increased over the last decade, leading to the intensification of the onslaught on the wild species, which is also known as mangrove crab, green crab, shila kakra, or by the scientific name of *Scylla Serrata*.

Environmentalists warn that a depletion of mud crab population will lead to a severe degradation of soil, water, plants and animals in the mangrove and recommend government's steps to restrict the crab hunting.

Dr Monirul H Khan, a zoology professor at Jahangirnagar University, told the news agency, "The boost in crab export, particularly after the introduction of crab fattening, is taking its toll on the mud crabs of the Sundarbans."

According to Export Promotion Bureau, Bangladesh exported 3,550 tonnes of crabs in 2011-12, earning Tk 59.24 crore. The export of crabs and eels has increased 30 times from 2000 to 2011, show records at the Department of Fisheries.

The depletion of mud crab population will, first and foremost, lead to pollution of mangrove water bodies, Prof Monirul said. "As detritivores (eaters of dead things), mud crabs clean and destroy stuffs that can pollute the water."

He said if the government wanted to promote the export of mud crabs it should introduce hatcheries and nurseries like India, Myanmar and Thailand for cultivation of farm varieties rather than allowing its collection from the wild.

"To be more precise, mud crab hunting during its breeding period should be banned. The forest department this year banned the collection of mud crabs from the Sundarbans during the breeding period from January to February, but it failed to curb the crab hunting due to a lack of enforcement," he said.

Krishnendu Shaha, chief fisheries extension officer at the Department of Fisheries, said 6.3 lakh hectares of land adjacent to the 710km-long coastline in the country was identified as extensive mud crab collection zone.

The commerce on crabs depends largely on natural sources, as Bangladesh is yet to adopt farm-breeding of crabs like other crab exporting countries, he said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina exchanges greetings with colleagues and top armed forces officials at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital on her arrival from London yesterday. The premier was on a five-day visit to London to attend the opening ceremony of London Olympic Games 2012 among other programmes.

PHOTO: BSS

Fish traders clash with mobile court officials

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Seven persons including four policemen were injured in a clash between fish traders and officials of a mobile court of Barisal City Corporation (BCC) during a drive carried out to detect formalin in Notun Bazar area yesterday.

When carrying out the drive at a fish market in Notun Bazar, the mobile court led by Israil Hossain, executive magistrate of Barisal City Corporation, seized fishes from a trader alleging that the fishes contain formalin, witnesses said.

However, the traders protested against the claims of the officials, which led to an altercation, they said.

The clash began when one of the law enforcers accompanying the court attacked

fish trader Sohag, said Bishnu Dey, a fish trader.

The situation calmed after police reinforcement rushed to the spot. They rescued the executive magistrate, who had taken shelter in a shop, said locals.

Shankar Das, president of the Notun Bazar Businessmen Welfare Association, said fishermen and traders became agitated because the mobile court tried to seize the fishes without any test and charged baton on the traders.

Shaheduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said a BCC official filed a case against some fish traders including Sohag for obstructing public officers from discharging their duty and attacking policemen.

7 Hizb-ut Tawhid men held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police arrested seven young alleged members of militant outfit, Hizb-ut Tawhid, and seized a huge number of jihadi books from their possession after they were given a mass beating at Nandangachhi Railway Station in Charghat upazila yesterday.

The arrested are Abdul Zabbar, Yusuf Ali, Moaz-bin Kashim and Mohammad Tapan of Gangni upazila in Meherpur; and Mosharrif Hossain, Shahabul Hossain, and Golam Nabi of Charghat upazila in Rajshahi.

They were admitted to Charghat Upazila Health Complex under police custody, said Abdur Razzak Khan, officer-in-charge (OC) of Charghat Police Station.

Witnesses and police said the militants asked a newspaper hawker, Yusuf Hossain, to sell books of the militant outfit while he was travelling on Uttara Express train. As Yusuf refused to do so they beat him up.

Following the happening, the people at the railway station became angry and beat the militants up.

"We found the Hizbut men were lying almost unconscious on the railway platform," said the OC.

ANNUAL AUDIT Most parties fail to turn in report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Only 10 out of 38 political parties have submitted their annual audit reports to the Election Commission (EC) until yesterday as the deadline for submission ends today.

The remaining parties including the Awami League, BNP and Jatiya Party should be submitting their audit reports today to meet the deadline, EC officials said.

According to Political Parties Registration Rules, 2008, a party has to have its financial transactions of a calendar year audited by a chartered accountant firm. It should then submit a copy of the firm's report to the EC by July 31 of the following year.

The EC will write to the parties, which would fail to submit the report by today, asking to submit the audit reports as soon as possible.

"We will not provide any timeframe,

though" Election Commissioner Shah Nawaz told reporters at his office yesterday.

Regarding disclosing the audit reports, the election commissioner said the law does not have any provision, which compels the EC to reveal the contents of those reports.

"We won't disclose the reports. The political parties can disclose their audit reports, if they want," he said.

Parties that have submitted their audit reports include Jamaat-e-Islami, Workers' Party, The Communist Party of Bangladesh, Jatiya Party (JP-Manju), Bangladesh Khelafat Majlish, Krishak Sramik Janata League, Gono Forum, Islami Oikya Jote, Tarikat Federation and Zaker Party.

Prior to the ninth parliamentary elections, registration of political parties with the EC was made mandatory and the rule for submitting audit reports was framed to ensure transparency in the financial transactions of political parties.



A team of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Commerce Ministry inspects Karwan Bazar kitchen market in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Shameem Ahsan new envoy to Brazil

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to appoint M Shameem Ahsan, currently serving as the Bangladesh high commissioner to Brunei Darussalam, as the new ambassador of Bangladesh to Brazil.

A career diplomat, Ahsan undertook ambassadorial assignments in the Islamic Republic of Iran and Brunei Darussalam. He also served the Bangladesh High Commission in New Delhi and Bangladesh Permanent Missions to UN in Geneva and New York.

He obtained an MBBS degree from Rajshahi Medical College and is a BCS Cadre, said a foreign ministry press release.

He completed a French language course from Centre Audio Visuel de Langues Modernes, Vichy and diplomatic training from Institut International d'Administration Publique, Paris, France.

He obtained 'Diplome de l'Institut' and 'Diplôme d'études Supérieures Spécialisées' in Diplomacy and Administration of International Organisations from University of Paris XI.

Status of police officers upgraded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government yesterday officially upgraded the status of the posts of inspectors and sub-inspectors of Bangladesh Police to first and second class respectively.

The new status came into effect after the Ministry of Home Affairs issued separate notifications in this regard yesterday.

Previously, the status of the posts of inspectors and sub-inspector were of second and third class respectively.

Status of the officers-in-charge of all police stations will also be upgraded to the first class, the notifications mentioned.

Talking to The Daily Star, Inspector General of Police Hassan Mahmood Khandker appreciated the government's initiative and said the upgrading of the ranks was demanded by the police department for a long time.

He hoped that the officers of lower ranks than inspectors will overcome their inferiority complex after the upgrade.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, earlier on Tuesday, approved the status upgrade proposals at a meeting of the National Economic Council at the Planning Commission.

Currently, Bangladesh Police has a total of 2,300 inspectors and 1,25,000 sub-inspectors.

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Left-leaning alliance vows countrywide movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A section of left-leaning political parties will wage a countrywide movement to change the country's existing political culture that has been regulated by the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP for many years.

They made the decision at a views exchange meeting organised by Gonotantrik Bam Morcha (Democratic Left Alliance) at its office in the capital yesterday.

Addressing the programme, most of the speakers said the 14-party grand alliance government has failed to run the state, as it is yet to fulfil the electoral pledges.

They also expressed resentment over the "absurd remarks" on different issues made by some ministers, which are not compatible with the prime minister's remarks.

Biplobi Workers Party General Secretary Saiful Haque said the BNP-Jamaat alliance government and Fakhruddin-led caretaker government also failed to run the state appropriately.

He announced a daylong programme on August 4 in the capital with participation of grassroots leaders and activists of the left-leaning alliance.

Zonayed Saki, coordinator of the alliance, presided over the programme while Gonotantrik Biplobi Party leader Moshrefa Mishu, Biplobi Chhatra Moitri President Bappadiya Basu addressed the event, among others.

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