

Hilsa prices remain high as smuggling goes on

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Smuggling of hilsa to India has continued, both through land and waterways, amid ban on export of the popular fish.

Different points of about 200-kilometre-long border of south-western region from Satkhira to Jibonnagar of Jhenidah and the waterways of Satkhira along the Sundarbans are used for the purpose, foiling the government initiative to increase supply of the popular fish in local markets and check the high price by banning its export.

"After the Eid-ul-Fitr, price of per kg hilsa for around one-kg sized ones dropped from earlier Tk 1 thousand to Tk 850 following its good catches in recent time. The price of the fish would have decreased further and reached the purchasing capacity of common people if its smuggling could be prevented," said Mithu, owner of Lipi Fish, a fish wholesaler at Jessore Boro Bazar.

Sources seeking anonymity said trucks loaded with huge amount of hilsa from Barisal go to Satkhira, Jessore, Jhenidah and Magura to offload the fish at the wholesale markets. Then it is transported to the bordering areas including Bhomra of Satkhira, Satai of Baganchhara and Benapole under Sharsha upazila in Jessore and Jibonnagar and Moshipur in Jhenidah and many other points of those



districts. From there day labourers, mostly women, carry the fish in sacks to India, walking five to six kilometres.

The Border Security Force of India prevents illegal entrance to India from Bangladesh but they welcome the hilsa smugglers who sell the fish to the Indian parties, often fixed earlier. The smugglers get about 700 to 800 rupee (equivalent to about Tk 1200 to 1400) per kg of hilsa for the fish sized between 800 gram and 1 kg.

The river routes in Satkhira along the Sundarbans are used for

hilsa smuggling to India as a number of trawlers, engaged in fishing in rivers in Barisal, Barguna, Bhola, Patuakhali and other regions and offshore areas of Bangladesh, are used for the purpose, said sources in Shyamnagar upazila of Satkhira district.

The boats go to India through waterways in the Sundarbans in Satkhira. The boats use Bangladeshi flag in Bangladesh territory and replace it with Indian flags while entering Indian waters. They sell the hilsa to trawlers and the nearest

river ports in India, sources said.

"Huge amount of hilsa is being smuggled to India through the long border area while the government is being deprived of a good amount of foreign currency due to the ban on its export," said Mahbubur Rahman, fisheries officer of Sharsha, also the in-charge of Benapole Quality Control Department.

Border Guard Bangladesh seized 800 kg of hilsa from Jessore and 200 kg of the fish from Satkhira, which were being smuggled to India in August and September. But the amount is too

Bridge incomplete for years, thousands suffer

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

People of ten villages in Mogholhat and Kulaghat unions under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila are suffering as a bridge over the Rotnai River at Saprikhana village under the upazila has remained incomplete for years.

Over 15 thousand people of the ten villages -- Bongram, Shiberkuti, Saprikhana, Etapota, Boalmari, Char Kulaghat, Saheghat, Badherpar, Daserkuti and Mondolpara have to cross the Rotnai River by boat to communicate with the district headquarters.

The work for construction of 92-metre-long and 7.6-metre-wide bridge over the Rotnai River at Saprikhana village in Sadar upazila started in January 2003 with an estimated cost of Tk 3 crore and 60 lakh. Lalmonirhat Roads and Highways Department (RHD) gave work order to construction firm Smrity Enterprise in Bogra to complete the bridge in two years.

But after constructing six pillars of the bridge during the stipulated period, the firm left the work and did not respond even after the RHD served ten letters to the firm on different occasions, RHD officials said.

Finally the contractor expressed their inability to complete the work and 'surrendered' it to the RHD in December 2008.

The RHD in December 2009 gave a Tk 2 crore and 44

lakh work order to Dhaka-based construction firm Islam Brothers to complete the bridge by April 2011.

But the firm missed three deadlines, lastly in June this year, and then stopped the work due to fund constraints.

Class Ten student Harunur Rashid, 15, of Saprikhana village, said, "I and over a hundred other students of the area read at different schools and colleges in the town. We have to cross the Rotnai River by boat daily to go there, as the bridge has remained incomplete for

years. Our sufferings mount during the rainy season."

The bridge is very much needed for several thousand people of ten villages in Mogholhat and Kulaghat unions, as it is their only way to communicate with Lalmonirhat district headquarters, said Habibur Rahman Habib, chairman of Mogholhat union parishad.

Nazim Uddin, managing director of the construction firm, said, "My firm has already completed 70 percent of the work but I am having fund problem as the authorities concerned have

paid only 22 lakh taka. I will complete the bridge by December this year if they clear dues against the completed work."

Admitting that the construction firm has got only a small portion of the bill against their 70 percent work, Lalmonirhat RHI Executive Engineer Suruz Miah said, "I sent forwarding letters to the authority concerned of Incomplete Bridge Project under the communications ministry in May and June this year seeking payment of due bills to the construction firm but I am yet to get any response."



Locals wait for boat to cross the Rotnai River in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila while the nearby under construction bridge, lying incomplete for years, remains a mockery for thousands of people of 10 villages in the area.

PHOTO: STAR

Gaibandha Krishak League leader held for illegal tree felling

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Police on Friday night arrested district Krishak League leader Abdul Hannan from his home at Ujir Dharani village in Gaibandha Sadar upazila on charge of felling roadside trees.

Hannan, fish and livestock affairs secretary of Gaibandha district Krishak League, felled six large trees beside Gaibandha-Laxmipur-Sundarganj road and chopped off branches of eight more trees under Gaibandha zila parishad on August 2, goes statement of a case filed with Gaibandha Sadar police station.

The cost of the cut down trees will be approximately Tk five lakh.

Hannan allegedly prepared a false auction paper for cutting down nine branches of eight roadside trees at Laxmipur on Gaibandha Sundarganj road.

Abdul Karim, chairman of Lakkhipur union parishad, however denied holding any



Remains of a trunk and logs from six trees, illegally felled allegedly by a district Krishak League leader beside Gaibandha-Lakkhipur-Sundarganj road on August 2.

action in this regard.

"I never signed any such auction paper. Earlier, sensing a conspiracy to cut down roadside trees, I filed complaints to the chief executive officer of Gaibandha Zila Parishad. But on August 2, a section of people felled six large rain trees and chopped off nine big branches of eight other rain trees at night, beyond

my knowledge," he said in a written statement.

Later on August 6, former member of Lakkhipur union parishad Sohrab Hossain and local social worker Rafiqul Islam filed allegation against unauthorised felling of roadside trees and the zila parishad authority formed a two-member committee with parishad Secretary ATM Abdullahel Baki and

Assistant Engineer Solaiman Ali to investigate the matter.

On investigation, the team confirmed felling of six large rain trees and cutting of nine branches of eight other trees. The team identified roots of two cut down trees while four other trees were uprooted. The team also traced out a few logs of the felled trees.

On August 14, the zila parishad authority filed a

case against Abdul Hannan with Gaibandha Sadar police station.

Asked about the matter, Hannan said, "I cut off nine branches of eight trees as per valid auction order, but I am ignorant about the felling of six other trees."

Legal step is being taken against the tree fellers as per rules, said Kallol Kumar Chakravarti, chief executive



PHOTO: STAR

RANGAMATI VIOLENCE 2 probe bodies formed, docs go on strike

STAR REPORT

Two committees were formed yesterday to investigate Saturday's clash between indigenous people and Bangalee settlers over a trivial matter in Rangamati town, which left at least 20 people injured.

Meanwhile, government doctors in the district declared abstention from work at the outdoor sections of state-run hospitals, protesting an attack on a doctor from the indigenous community during the clash.

Mostafa Kamal, deputy commissioner of Rangamati, will lead a three-member investigation panel formed as per the directives of State Minister for CHT (Chittagong Hill Tracts) Affairs Dipankar Talukder. The committee has to submit its report in seven days.

At an emergency meeting, Dipankar asked the district administration to form a committee. The meeting also decided to keep law enforcers deployed there until the situation calms down.

The Rangamati Government College authorities formed a five-member enquiry committee, led by Vice-Principal Mofiz Ahmed. It was asked to submit its report in 15 days.

A huge contingent of police, army and Border Guard Bangladesh personnel were seen on the almost empty thoroughfares and in the closed markets of the town. A ban on public gatherings has been in place since Saturday.

Despite the presence of so many law enforcers, indigenous youth Dinesh Tanchangya, 22, was attacked in front of Rangamati Sadar Hospital yesterday.

He had to be hospitalised. Meanwhile, protesting the attack on the doctor during Saturday's clash, Rangamati district unit of the Bangladesh Medical Association yesterday morning declared an indefinite abstention from work at the outdoor sections of government hospitals. Shushovon Dewan, a medical officer at Rangamati Sadar Upazila Hospital, sustained serious injuries in his head and hands when criminals attacked him twice during the clash.

Doctors will not see patients at the outdoor sections of all government hospitals in Rangamati but they will be available in the hospitals and in the emergency sections.

At least 20 people, including a union parishad chairman and a sub-inspector, were injured in the clash that erupted around 10:00am on Saturday on the Rangamati Government College campus. Later, the college was declared shut.

Local people said the clash had its origin on Wednesday when two students -- an indigenous and a Bangalee settler -- went into an argument over sitting space in a college bus.

The situation had deteriorated as the clash spread outside the college periphery into nearby Banarupa, Kanthaltoli and Rajbari areas of the town.

DEMAND FOR MINIMUM WAGES

Jute, textile mill workers agitate in Khulna

A CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Privately owned jute, cotton, and textile mills workers yesterday observed rail-road blockade programme in Khulna to press their 10-point demand, including implementation of minimum wages.

Workers from several industrial units took out processions during the two-hour-long

programme from 9:00am to 11:00am.

Privately owned Jute, Cotton, and Textile Mills Sangram Parishad called the programme to press the demands.

Addressing a rally at Phulbarigate area, leaders of the parishad urged the authorities concerned to meet their demand

immediately. Otherwise, they threatened to launch a tougher agitation programme.

Sangram Parishad leaders Md Tayebur Rahman, Nazrul Islam and Saiful Islam, Molla Omor Fauque addressed the rally.

The workers also attack a goods train on its arrival from Dhaka.

Driver of the train received injuries during the attack.

When the agitated workers tried to set fire to the train, police swung into action, dispersed the workers and arrested four people on the spot.

The arrestees are Saddam Hossain, Imran, Rubel and James Hawlader.



EU FUNDED



Agriculture and Nutrition Extension Project

Expression of Interest (Eoi)

For Conducting a Baseline Study for the Agriculture & Nutrition Extension Project (ANEP) iDE is an international not-for-profit organization that believes market principles and entrepreneurship could be harnessed to benefit the rural poor in developing countries. iDE employs business principles, appropriate technologies, and agriculture science to facilitate market systems in which the rural poor can participate effectively. iDE currently operates eleven country programs in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

iDE Bangladesh, established in 1984, is looking for individual Consultant(s)/Firm to conduct a baseline study for the aforementioned project.

The consultant must demonstrate expertise in

- qualitative and quantitative research using different social research tools
- conducting baseline studies in rural areas

Please refer to the detailed TOR in web site <http://hotjobs.bdjobs.com/jobs/ide/ane17.htm> for this assignment and submit your Eoi (containing both technical and financial sections) within a maximum of 7 pages

Submissions should be emailed to "info@ide-bangladesh.org" with the subject reading "Eoi for conducting Baseline Study". The deadline for the submission is by 5 pm (local time), 2nd October, 2012.

iDE reserves the right to accept or reject any submission without any explanation

