

Hilsa catching, drives to enforce ban go together

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

A section of fishermen have continued catching hilsa at different points of the Bay and coastal rivers, despite drives by authorities to enforce the September 25 to October 5 ban on catching the popular fish during the peak breeding period.

During the first six days of the ban till September 30, fisheries officials with the help of police and coast-guard seized over 4.16 tonnes of hilsa and 4.30 lakh metres of nets from different places in Patuakhali district, said Iqbal Hossain, Patuakhali district fisheries officer (DFO).

In last six days 13 hilsa catchers were jailed and 14 others were fined Tk 61,000, he said, adding that now 61 mobile courts and more 20 mobile teams are working in eight upazilas under the district to strictly enforce the ban.

Teams of the coastguard, police, fisheries departments and mobile courts arrested 89 fishermen from Meghna and Tentulia rivers in Bhola Sadar, Tajumuddin, Charfashion and Lalmohon areas of Bhola district on Sunday, said sources of fisheries department and police.

The teams also seized about seven lakh metres of net and seven fishing trawlers with five maunds of hilsa.

The arrestees were sent to jail to serve terms awarded by mobile courts, said source of Bhola district

fisheries office.

During a visit on Saturday morning, this correspondent saw over 20 trawlers engaged in hilsa catching in Rangabali, Koralia, Chalitabunia, Dakkhin Panpatti, Barobaishdia, Chotobaishdia and Char Montaz points of Kazal River in Galachipa upazila under Patuakhali district.

Often they are able to hide before arrival of mobile courts as the news somehow

reaches the fishermen, sources said.

In absence of any financial assistance from the government authorities, hard-pressed fishermen tend to defy the short term ban on catching hilsa.

"I have heard about the ban on hilsa catching. But I am landless and have no alternative source of earning although I have to maintain a family of seven members," said Abdul Motin of Koralia

village in Chotobaishdia of Galachipa upazila.

Nur Alam Khan of Neta village under Rangabali upazila, said, "Fishing is the only source of income for my eight-member family. The government should provide financial or food assistance to poor fishermen during the ban period."

Md Dadon Mia, a mohajon (money-lender) of Dhulashar village under Kalapara upazila told jour-

nalists at Kalapara press club that most fishing trawlers, which are owned by influential people, earlier went to the deep sea to catch hilsa. After end of the ban period they will come loaded with the fish to sell it in the market. Drives by police and coastguard seem futile."

On Wednesday night, coastguard seized 48 maunds of hilsa from the house of Abul Hossain, owner of a trawler. After catching hilsa at night he kept it in his house to sell after end of the ban period, locals said.

During fisheries and livestock secretary's visit to coastal areas in Patuakhali, Bhola, Barguna on September 27, local public representatives suggested providing financial assistance to poor fishermen during the ban period to strictly follow the order.

DFO Iqbal Hossain said, "Despite shortage of manpower, vehicles and boats we are trying our best to protect hilsa in the large areas during the peak reproduction season. We are also conducting awareness campaign in this regard."

When contacted, Md Monirul Islam, commander for Kalapara camp of the navy, said, "Many teams of navy men are patrolling in the coastal areas from Chittagong to the Sundarbans. Now no trawler can go to the Bay for fishing. Those who went to the deep sea earlier cannot come to the shore due to our patrol."



PHOTO: STAR
Fishermen catch hilsa from Ramnabad River in Galachipa upazila under Patuakhali district, ignoring the ongoing ban on netting the popular fish during the peak breeding period. Inset, a catch of the fish netted from Tentulia River at Char Wadel in Baufal upazila under the same district.

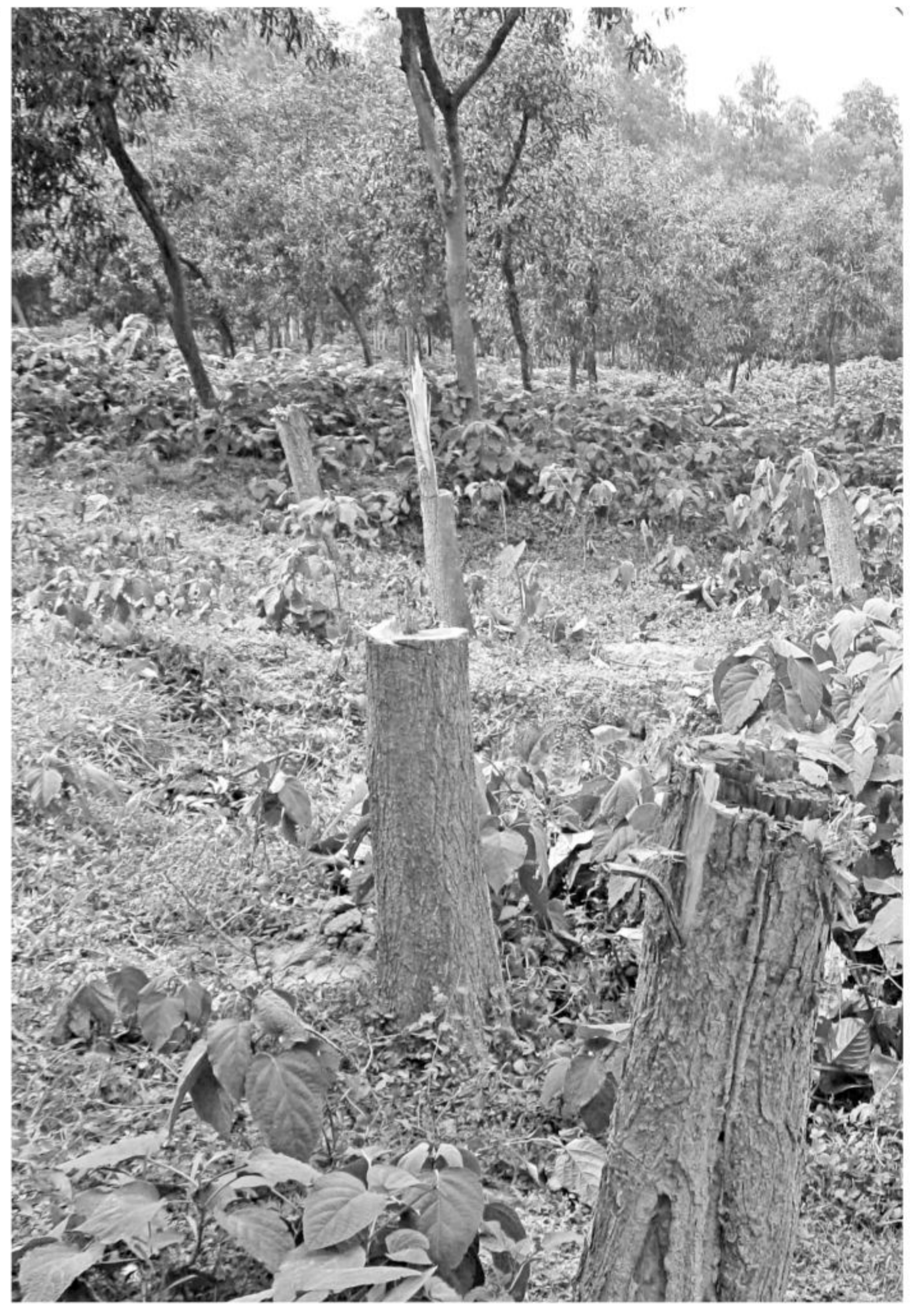


PHOTO: STAR
Part of the forest under Dharmajan beat in Biral upazila of Dinajpur district gives a pitiable look as criminals allegedly belonging to the ruling party felled over 2,600 acacia and eucalyptus trees in the area during the last three days, allegedly as part of their plan to grab the land.

Dharmajan tree felling 'fest' continues

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Criminals allegedly belonging to the ruling party felled 2,500 more acacia and eucalyptus trees of Dharmajan forest beat under Biral upazila on Saturday and Sunday nights.

With these, as many as 2600 trees on 11 acres of forest land were chopped down on the three consecutive nights---Friday to Sunday, according to forest officials.

On Friday night, around 150 people led by Md Alamgir Hossain, general secretary of Dharmapur union Jubo League, felled 110 trees of the forest beat.

Being informed by locals, forest official Md Sadequr Rahman along with a police team of Jagatpur police camp reached there at around 11:30pm. Sensing the arrival of the law enforc-

ers, Alamgir and his men fled the scene.

The forest official filed a case with Biral Police Station on Sunday, accusing 167 people. Of the accused, 17, including Alamgir, are identified, while the rest unidentified, said Md Abdul Kader Zilani, officer-in-Charge (OC) of Biral Police Station.

After filing of the case, police arrested three people from Bongaon village under the upazila. The arrestees are Ishat Ali, 45, son of late Syed Ali, Janab Ali, 44, son of Moazzem Ali, and Abdus Sobhan, 46, son of Mamtaz Ali.

Forest officials quoted locals as saying that around 200 people led by Jubo League leader Alamgir Hossain, cut down the trees on Saturday and Sunday nights.

Alamgir, brother of Dharmapur Union Parishad Chairman Nur Islam, carried

out this criminal act in a bid to grab the forest land, forest officials alleged.

Forest officials yesterday visited the spot and took the felled trees to Dharmapur forest office. Jubo League leader Alamgir Hossain could not be contacted despite repeated attempts as his cellphone remained off.

Contacted, Officer-in-Charge Md Abdul Kader Zilani of Biral Police Station said the identified accused, including Alamgir Hossain, had gone into hiding. "We are raiding different areas to arrest them," he added.

Md Anwar Hossain, former UP member and president of 101-member forest protection committee, alleged that police arrested three innocent villagers instead of the real culprits. He demanded immediate arrest of the main accused and his accomplices.

Top outlaw held in Kushtia, 7 arms seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Police arrested a 'regional leader' of outlawed Gono Bahini along with firearms and ammunition in Mirpur upazila of the district early yesterday.

The arrestee is Amirul Islam alias Amir Ali, 48, chief of the outlawed party unit in Mirpur upazila. According to Kushtia district Special Branch of Police, Amir is also a listed criminal.

Acting on a tip-off, police raided a house at Ambari village in the upazila at around 5:00am and arrested Amir.

Following an interrogation, law enforcers led by Kushtia Police Superintendent Mofiz Uddin Ahmed went to Amir's house at the village and recovered one light machine gun, two DBBL rifles, one SBBL rifle, three

.22 bore rifles and 32 bullets from underneath the ground.

Police said the outlaw was involved in criminal activities in Mirpur area and wanted in cases for murder, extortion and abduction filed with Mirpur and Daulatpur police stations in Kushtia, Mohsepur Police Station in Jhnedah and Alamdanga Police Station in Chuadanga.

In the afternoon, police produced Amir in the Judicial Magistrate's Court that sent him to jail.

Meanwhile, members of the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested a criminal with a pistol at Allar Darga village in Daulatur upazila yesterday morning.

The arrestee is Ashraf Hoossain, 42. A team of Rab-12, raided Ashraf's house at around 5:30am and arrested him with the gun.

Six girls allegedly take their lives in three districts

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Six girls have allegedly committed suicide in Sunamganj, Pabna and Jessore districts.

Two girls allegedly took their lives in Jagannathpur upazila of Sunamganj district early yesterday, reports our staff correspondent in Sylhet.

Police recovered the bodies of Shefa Begum, 19, daughter of late Abdul Towahed, and Rita Rani Das, 20, daughter of Ramdhan Das at Goragaon village, four kilometres off the upazila town.

Locals said, family members of Shefa and Rita, who were close friends, found them hanging from a tree branch on the bank of a river near their houses at about 8:30am.

On information, police recovered the bodies at about 9am and sent those to Sunamganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy.

The reason behind the suicide could not be known immediately. Police quoting

family members said that hours before the incident both the girls were seen in gaily and cheerful mood and singing together.

But in the early morning both went out of their houses and committed suicide together.

In Pabna, three girls allegedly committed suicide in Atghoria and Chatmohar upazilas on Saturday and Sunday, reports our correspondent.

The deceased are Nazma Khatun, 25, daughter of Nazrul Islam of village Kalamnagar in Atghoria upazila, also a student of Honours third year at Pabna Edward College, Jannatul Fardous Shima, 17, daughter of Hassan Ali of village Miahpara in Atghoria upazila also HSC student and Rashida Khatun, 12, daughter of Saran Ali of village Haripur Dharoil in Chatmohar upazila.

Officer in-charge of Atghoria police station Md. Monirul Islam said Nazma

took poison on Sunday at her residence while Shima hanged herself in her room on Saturday night. They committed suicide due to family feuds, the OC said.

Officer in-charge of Chatmohar police station Md. Habibul Islam said, Rashida committed suicide by hanging herself in her room on Saturday night after an altercation with her mother in the evening.

In Jessore, a schoolgirl allegedly committed suicide by taking poison at Burulia village in Keshabpur upazila of the district on Sunday night.

The deceased was identified as Sonia Khatun, 10, a Class IV student of Burulia Government Primary School and daughter of Matiar Rahman Sheikh of the village.

Locals said Sonia took poison at about 11:30 pm in a huff after neighbour Chhabi Begum accused her of stealing a hook.

She was rushed to a local clinic where attending doctor declared her dead.



PHOTO: STAR
Mass hysteria affected girls take treatment at Rajapur upazila health complex in Jhalakathi district as 22 female students of Uttar Uttampur High School in the upazila and four women guardians of students fell sick with convulsion and vomiting during the school hours yesterday.

Two picked up by armed criminals in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

Two villagers were allegedly picked up by armed criminals at Laxmichhari upazila of Khagrachhari district on Sunday night.

The victims are Rashik Kumar Chakma, 40, son of Bazaar Chakma of Laxmichhari and Gulchoga Chakma, 35, son of Mohon Chakma of Bandarkaba in the upazila.

However, United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) blamed the armed cadres of Shantu Larma led Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) for the abduction.

Organiser of UPDF Khagrachhari district unit

Prodip Chakma alleged through a press release that cadres of PCJSS picked up Rashik and Gulchoga at gunpoint from Laxmichhari Bazaar area around 11:00pm of Sunday while they were returning home.

Contacted, the officer in-charge of Laxmichhari police station Mohammad Kamrul Islam said none made any complaint till 05:30pm Sunday with the police station in this regard.

Meanwhile, Press and Information Secretary of PCJSS Sajib Chakma refuted the allegation and said his party had been working for full implementation of CHT accord to establish permanent peace in CHT.

ATTACK BY EXTORTIONISTS

Injured Meherpur AL leader dies at Dhaka hospital

UNB, Meherpur

An Awami League (AL) leader of the district died at a hospital in Dhaka city yesterday, six days after he was injured by extortionists in Gangni town.

The dead is Akmal Hossain, 42, owner of a brick field in Gangni upazila and president of Ward No. 5 unit AL of Gangni town.

Gangni municipality mayor Ahmad Ali, a friend of Akmal, said that a gang of local extortionists had been demanding a big amount of money from him as illegal toll for the last several years which he refused.

Angered at the refusal, they also threatened him with life recently, he said.

At the night of

September 25, the extortionists, equipped with lethal weapons, stormed into his brick field and demanded the toll from him over his mobile phone as he was staying at his residence at Malsadaha in the town that time.

The criminals asked him to come to his brick field immediately failing which they would beat up the staff of the brick kiln.

As he arrived at his brick kiln, the gang hacked him with sharp weapons, leaving him critically injured at 8:30pm.

He was admitted to Gangni hospital and later shifted to Apollo Hospitals in the capital where he succumbed to his injuries yesterday morning.