

Unknown disease takes toll on *koi* farming in Muktagachha

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Fish farmers are incurring heavy losses due to epidemic deaths of climbing fish, locally known as *koi*, in Muktagachha upazila in the last two months.

The victims across the upazila blame adulterated fish feed for the endemic disease. The fisheries officials in the district head-quarter however said they are investigating the matter and trying to find out the real cause through laboratory tests.

The hybrid species of the climbing fish, also popularly known as Thai *koi*, is cultivated in at least 25 villages of Muktagachha, sources said.

Farming of the fish started in the country about a decade ago and today over 20,000 farmers are involved in the trade in Muktagachha alone. Every farmer in the area has been affected by the plague which is depleting the fish stocks in the ponds, victims said.

Muktagachha upazila is also famous for *shing* (catfish) and *pangas* (Vietnamese river cobbler) cultivation but the recent epidemic deaths of *koi* has shaken the farmers' confidence.

Farmers said that the epidemic, that broke out in August, had already caused them losses worth lakhs of taka and if a cure was not found immediately the whole trade would be in



PHOTO: STAR

Climbing fish, locally known as *koi*, meet an epidemic death in different ponds of Muktagachha upazila under Mymensingh district during the last two months, much to the worry of farmers in the area famous for cultivation of hybrid species of the popular fish.

danger.

Suruj Member of village Khilgati in the upazila said he cultivated *koi* in five ponds this year.

"All my stocks worth about Tk 5 lakh is dead," said Surju, adding that fearing loss, many farmers in the area sold off their whole lot of immature fish.

The affected farmers said they used fish feeds of different companies for *koi* cultivation.

"This year we found sand and rubber dust in the feeds of some compa-

nies and such adulterated feed is probably responsible for such deaths," alleged Humayun Kabir Mollah of Khilgati.

Shahjahan Siraj, another farmer, said they informed the fisheries department about the widespread deaths of fish. "We placed the matter before Muktagachha upazila fisheries officer several times but to no effect yet," he said.

The cost for production of one kilogram of *koi* stands at around Tk 160 inclusive of the price of fish feed.

"But we have sold one kilogram of fish at Tk 80 to Tk 100 only," said AZM Imam Uddin Mukta, another fish farmer.

Farmers, however, said that assistant upazila fisheries officer Ruhul Amin Faruq visited the spot and advised them to use lime and bleaching powder.

"We followed his advice but it did not work," said Mukta.

The farmers also alleged that there was no monitoring of the quality of the fish feed and so the

feed traders were doing business at their will.

Contacted, district fisheries officer Suresh Chandra Sarker, told this correspondent a week ago that he along with two scientists of Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute (BFRI), Mymensingh visited the spot on September 19 and collected samples of affected *koi* fish and water for tests.

Primarily it was found that water pollution due to indiscriminate use of feeds was the main reason behind such deaths. The farmers also cultivated fishes in their ponds often more than double their capacity, said the official.

"A farmer should cultivate 1000 to 1200 *koi* per decimal area of his pond but most farmers in Muktagachha cultivated 4,000 to 4,500 fishes per decimal," he said.

The leftover feeds got rotten and formed huge amount of ammonia gas in the ponds, resulting in epidemic deaths of the fish, the official said.

The fish sample is still being tested at BFRI laboratory and the report is yet to reach local office, added the official.

The allegation of adulterated fish feed would be probed and their samples have been collected for laboratory test, Suresh Chandra said.



PHOTO: STAR

Wholesale fish market in Port Road area of Barisal city gets busy yesterday as hilsa started arriving there following end of September 25-October 5 ban on its catching that was imposed to ensure safe spawning of the popular fish during its peak breeding period.

Trawlers return to Bay as ban on hilsa fishing goes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Several hundred trawlers with fishermen aboard sailed for the Bay yesterday morning to catch hilsa as an 11-day ban on netting the popular fish ended on Friday.

The government imposed the ban on catching hilsa from September 25 to October 5 to ensure safe spawning during the peak breeding period.

As many as 365 fishermen were jailed while 12.56 tonnes hilsa and 40 lakh metres net worth about Tk 18 crore were seized in three coastal districts -- Patuakhali, Bhola and Barguna during the ban period.

In Bhola, 315 fishermen were sent to jail for fishing in different rivers and in the Bay, defying the ban. Of them, 60 were jailed in Sadar upazila, 25 in Doulatkhan upazila, 27 in Tajumuddin upazila, 34 in Lalmohon upazila, 150 in Charfashion upazila and nine in Manpura upazila.

During the period, law enforcers seized nine tonnes of hilsa and over 20 lakh metres net worth about Tk 9 crore in the district. They

also seized 33 fishing trawlers from different points, Prithish Kumar Mollick, district fisheries officer (DFO), said.

In Patuakhali, 35 fishermen were sent to jail while 8.56 tonnes of hilsa and 12.64 lakh metres nets worth about Tk 5.62 crore seized in the district.

According to District Fisheries Office Iqbal Hossain, law enforcers filed 61 cases with different police stations and seized five fishing trawlers from Bay and different rivers in the district during the period.

In Barguna, 15 fishermen were sentenced to prison while 5 tonnes of hilsa and 6.29 lakh metres nets worth about Tk 3.25 crore seized in the district.

A total of 42 cases were filed with different police stations in the district during the period.

Our Barisal correspondent reported that 545 mobile courts conducted drives in fish landing stations and kitchen markets in six districts of Barisal division and seized 29,029-Kg hilsa, 68, 05135 metres net worth about Tk 29.96 crore, and fined 4,444 fisherman

for fishing in the Bay and different rivers during the ban period.

The courts also sent 526 fishermen to jail for catching mother hilsa, defying the embargo. The ban was imposed in 7,000 square kilometers hilsa breeding grounds at four points of seven coastal districts.

While visiting the wholesale market in port road area of Barisal city yesterday, fish traders told this correspondent that around 600 maunds hilsa arrived in the market in the morning.

BSS adds: Around 61.16 tonnes of hilsa were seized during the ban period across the country.

Nasiruddin, chief coordinator of central coordination cell of mother hilsa protection programme and director (marine) of the Department of Fisheries, told the news agency that the department with the help of law enforcers conducted 4,402 drives across the country during the period.

Moreover, the government lodged 559 cases against the fishermen who defied the ban and sentenced 850 others to jail, he added.

SNIPPETS

50 houses vandalised by rivals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj

At least five people were injured and 50 houses vandalised during an attack by a group of villagers on their rivals at Ichhamoti village in Sadar upazila yesterday. Locals said there was a longstanding conflict between one Abu Sayeed Khan and Asad Khan over establishing supremacy at the village. On Thursday night, a gang allegedly led by Sayeed felled over 2,000 trees of Asad and his associate Monju Khan. The following day, a case was filed with Sadar police station in this connection. After filing of the case, the supporters of Sayeed attacked the men of Asad, damaged their houses and looted over 20 cattle. On information, police rushed to the village and brought the situation under control, said Sohrab Ali, officer in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

Bus workers block highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Madaripur

Bus and minibus workers yesterday blocked Barisal-Dhaka highway in Rajoir upazila of the district demanding ban on tomtom, easy bike, mahindra and other illegal vehicles. The hour-long roadblock that started at 10:00am created a huge tailback on the highway. Later the workers removed barricade following the assurance from Rajoir police to resolve the issue, said Sub-Inspector (SI) Harunur Rashid. The officer in-charge (investigation) Md Emdadul Haque of Rajoir police station said the agitating workers again blocked the highway at Sanerpar bus stand in the afternoon after bus workers and mahindra drivers locked in an altercation. The barricade was removed at 4:00pm after both parties mutually resolved their dispute.

Human chain in Rangpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

A human chain was formed in the city yesterday demanding Rangpur division as especial economic zone. Rangpur Unnayan Somonnoy Parishad arranged the programme in Kachari Bazar area. The participants also demanded priority basis gas supply in the city and setting up of another science and technology University after the name of Dr Wazed. They also demanded that the government take up a project to upgrade Rangpur-Dinajpur highway into four lanes. Chowdhury Khalekuzzaman, member of the advisory committee of Bangladesh Awami League and convener of the parishad, conducted the programme.

Jamaat-backed councillor held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Jamaat-backed councillor of Birganj municipality and his hired goons vandalised the houses of two Hindu families on a land in the municipality area on Friday night, claiming the ownership of the land. Police arrested the ward councillor, Md Abdul Bariq, son of late Tamiz Uddin of College Para area, three hours into the incident. Police quoted locals as saying that about 20 people led by Bariq attack the houses of Dulal Charan Nandi and his brother Sankar Bikash Nandi at around 9.00pm. As locals rushed to the spot, Bariq and his men left the place. Sarkar Nandi said his wife Laxmi Rani was alone at their house during the attack. Being informed, police led by Assistant Superintendent of Police (Birganj Circle) ATM Shahin Ahmed, visited the houses. He ensured security of the two families.



PHOTO: STAR

Erosion by the river Padma continues at Mawa in Louhajong upazila of Munshiganj. About 50 feet area of Mawa parking yard and the pontoon of the launch terminal have already gone into the river.

JOURNO JAMAL MURDER CASE

Tota taken on 3-day remand

UNB, Benapole (Jessore)

Tota Mia, one of the accused in a case filed for killing journalist Jamal Uddin, was taken on a three-day police remand on Friday.

Judicial magistrate Nazmus Shahadat passed the order when Tota, son of late Shamser Malik of Kashipur village in Sharsha upazila, was produced before the court by police with a prayer for a five-day remand.

Rab arrested Tota from Goalunda Ghat in Rajbari district on Thursday.

Another accused Ukil Moral, Tota's brother, was arrested by Indian police from Bongaon in Paschim Banga on June 24 in connection with the killing. He is still in the custody of Indian police.

Police earlier arrested four other accused-

Raju, Milon, Delwar and Tota's wife Lata Begam-in connection with the killing.

Jamal Uddin, 32, Sharsha upazila correspondent of the daily Gramee Kagoj published from Jessore and son of Abdul Alim of Kashipur village in Sharsha upazila, was killed by criminals at Kashipur Bazar in the upazila on the night of June 15.

Police said a gang of criminals picked up Jamal from his house while he was talking with his friends at about 11pm.

They hit him with sharp weapons, leaving him seriously injured and fled the scene.

Jamal died on the way to Jessore Medical College Hospital.

The victim's father later filed a case against six identified and several other unidentified ones.



Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad accompanied by locals form human chains in Narsingdi and Thakurgaon towns yesterday demanding immediate arrest and punishment to the criminals who launched orchestrated attack on the Buddhists and destroyed their temples and homesteads in Ramu and Ukhia upazilas under Cox's Bazar district and Patiya upazila in Chittagong district last week. Similar programmes were held in several districts across the country.

15 back home from India on expiry of jail terms

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Fifteen Bangladeshis, five of them fishermen, yesterday returned home on expiry of their jail terms in India

Ten Bangladeshis, including a woman and a child, returned home through Burimari land port in Lalmonirhat yesterday, after languishing in an Indian jail for three years.

The Indian Immigration police handed them over to Burimari immigration police at Patgram upazila, reports our correspondent.

Later, they were handed over to their relatives in presence of police, Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) and local people.

Among the ten, eight were day labourers. They hailed from Lalmonirhat, Kurigram and Dinajpur districts.

Sources said they were held by Indian Border Security Force (BSF) from different border points of Cooachbehar district in Paschim Banga, India three years ago and later sent to jails.

Away in Jessore, five Bangladeshi fishermen returned home through the Benapole check-post yesterday morning after serving nine months in Alipur Central Jail in India, reports our Benapole correspondent.

The victims hailed from Barguna and Bagerhat districts.

BGB-26 Benapole check-post camp commander M Abdullah said the Indian coastguards arrested the fishermen in January, 2012. The fishermen entered the Indian water territory by mistake while they were fishing in the Bay of Bengal.



PHOTO: STAR