

It's how fishes disappearing

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

Indiscriminate catching of fish fries goes on unabated in Kuakata coastal areas of Patuakhali, putting the fish stocks of the Bay of Bengal in jeopardy.

A section of unscrupulous fishermen set up jorajal, a specially-weaved net for catching fries, just near the shore. During high tide, different species of fries come to the shore, and get trapped in the nets when tidal water recedes.

Some of the fishermen said one round of the catch amounts to at least 50 maunds of fries.

The price of the small fishes ranges between Tk 40 and Tk 50 a kg in the local markets. Many fishermen also dry these to make fish feed, local sources said.

This correspondent on Thursday morning spotted a band of fishermen catching fries with the specially designed nets at Gongamoti, some 7km east of Kuakata zero point.

They also loaded the fries into two wooden boats to carry them to somewhere else for selling. As a police team reached the

spot, the fishermen fled leaving behind the fries.

Police arrested two boatmen named Iqbal Hossain, 30, and Monir Hossain, 35, of Kalapara upazila. They were produced before a mobile court, and the court fined them Tk 10,000 each.

However, locals consider the punishment as an exceptional case. They said the mindless catching of fries had been going on rampantly defying the ongoing ban on netting hilsha. Fisheries department earlier imposed a seven-month ban on catching hilsha fries from November 1 to May 30.

Abul Hossain, a villager, said fishermen who cannot go to the sea due to the ban are involved in the illegal practice.

If it continues, the Bay would run out of fishes, he added.

Iqbal Hossain, divisional fisheries officer in Patuakhali, termed the practice alarming.

He said they would take legal action against the people involved in the unlawful business.



Catching of very young fish goes unabated on Kuakata coast in Patuakhali. Inset, a specially-weaved net is set up by unscrupulous fishermen to trapped fry of various species. The photos were taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: STAR

An arrogant Jinnah

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more agitated than they were before. For perhaps the very first time in his long political career, Jinnah came face to face with a situation where he was not exactly looked upon as a revered individual. He, like so many other Pakistani rulers after him, smelled a conspiracy in the demand for Bangla as a state language. Worse, his meeting with a group of student leaders in Dhaka exposed his rather poor knowledge of Bengali culture. He demanded to know from the students --- and this was on the very day when he delivered his infamous Urdu advocacy speech at the Curzon Hall of Dhaka University --- if Bengalis could boast of any great men of letters in their history. The well-prepared and understanding irreverent students' team reminded him of Tagore, Nazrul, Bankim, Mir Mosharrar and a host of others. It is said that Jinnah made no response. But he did warn the students against a deep-rooted conspiracy against Pakistan by communists and fifth columnists. The students clearly did not agree with him.

At the Race Course public rally on

March 21, Jinnah first mentioned the imaginary conspiracy by communists and fifth columnists to undo Pakistan. He warned that no mercy would be shown to quislings, though he did not mention who the quislings were. It was a line of thinking that would be adopted by all Pakistani rulers and other West Pakistani politicians every time legitimate demands for social and political justice were made by Bengalis. Even at the public rally, voices of protest at Jinnah's advocacy of Urdu were heard.

Jinnah's abrasive remarks were severely condemned by Prof. Abul Kashem who, on the same day, came down hard on the governor general's attempt to paint the advocates of Bangla as fifth columnists and communists and as enemies of Pakistan. On March 23, 1948, Shere Bangla A.K. Fazlul Huq denied that there were any quislings, fifth columnists or enemies of Pakistan. He made it clear that Jinnah's language had not been polite and that his insistence on Urdu being the state language of Pakistan had been wrong.

Wasa eyes two rivers

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rivers about 22 to 33 kilometres from the capital, as all four rivers -- the Buriganga, Shitalakkhya, Balu and Turag -- around the city are heavily polluted.

It would have been possible to cut down the project costs by at least 15 percent if water of the four rivers could be used for these plants, said the official.

Construction of Jasaldi water treatment plant is likely to begin in April, and Gandhabpur plant in September this year, and Sayedabad phase-III plant in June next year.

The Wasa now has five plants -- two in Narayanganj and three in the capital -- that treat surface water mainly from the Shitalakkhya.

Of the total demand of 225 crore litres of water a day, around 45 crore litres are supplied in Dhaka and Narayanganj cities from these plants while the rest is met with groundwater.

Once the three new plants go into operation, the use of surface water

would go up by almost 70 percent by 2021 as those will treat 140 crore litres of water a day, said Taqsem A Khan, managing director of Dhaka Wasa.

Each year, groundwater level in the capital's central area drops by 1 to 3 metres for excessive extraction of groundwater, said Taqsem.

According to statistics of Bangladesh Water Development Board, the groundwater level in Mirpur dropped 53.75 metres between 1991 and 2008, while the fall was 18.59 metres in Mohammadpur, 37.4 metres in Sabujbagh, 8.22 metres in Sutrapur, and 14.14 metres in Dhaka Cantonment area during the same period.

It means Dhaka is not only losing groundwater fast, but also subsiding gradually since the vacuum created by its extraction doesn't get adequate recharge. As a result, the city might face disastrous consequences in case of a major earthquake.

All four rivers around the capital are

so polluted that the Wasa has no choice but to go for the rivers away from the capital, said Taqsem.

Of the four, water of the Shitalakkhya is already being used while that of the Buriganga is too polluted to be treated.

The Balu and Turag rivers are heavily polluted and have shrunk so much for rampant encroachments that their flow remains too low during the dry season.

JASALDI PLANT Bangladesh and China have already inked a credit agreement of \$290 million for the Jasaldi plant in Rugganj, said the Wasa MD.

Bangladesh government will fund the rest \$100 million for the project.

Land acquisition for the project is underway and likely to be completed within six months, according to Taqsem.

GANDHABPUR PLANT Negotiations are on to form a consortium of the Asian Development Bank, French Development Agency,

European Investment Bank and Bangladesh government to finance the \$700 million project.

The Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) has already approved the project. The Wasa has 73 acres of land at Gandhabpur for the plant and is acquiring more for laying pipelines, said Taqsem.

SAYEDABAD PHASE III Fifty percent of the project's feasibility study, which began around eight months back, has already been completed and the rest is expected to be finished by March. Once the study is completed, the Wasa will start looking for financiers for the \$500 million project, according to Taqsem.

Danish International Development Agency (Danida) in 2012 had showed interest in providing \$130 million for the project. And the French Development Agency has given assurance that it will provide another \$130 million, said the Wasa high-up.



A child goes through a book at a stall in Amar Ekushey Boi Mela on Bangla Academy premises giving it a good thought whether she should get the book. Yesterday was dedicated to children's books.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Govt illegal, insists Fakhrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming the current government illegal, BNP leader Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday said that this government would not be able to sustain for long.

"A government, which could not earn people's support, cannot stay in power for long," the BNP acting secretary general told reporters after paying tribute at BNP founder Ziaur Rahman's grave at Sher-e-Bangla Nagar in the capital.

The BNP leader went to Zia's grave following the release of Khandaker Mahbub Hossain, an adviser to BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, from jail last week.

Talking to reporters, Fakhrul said the ruling Awami League aimed to establish one-party rule by eliminating the opposition.

"The Awami League does not believe in democracy," he claimed adding that the party had installed one-party rule known as BAKSAL in the country in 1975 and now it again "destroyed" democracy by holding the January 5 elections.

History shows that no autocratic government could cling to power for long and this "dictatorial"

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Parties upsetting

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Association auditorium in Dhaka.

On the January 5 national polls, he said, "I do not think this is an election since many political parties refused to take part and more than half of the MPs were elected uncontested."

He criticised the political parties for not complying with the Representation of the People Order (RPO) and nurturing the culture of bootlicking student politics.

"During our stint, all the political parties pledged to sever links with student politics. But none has kept the promise," he said.

Democracy within the political parties is also absent, he said, adding that the parties do not give priority to the opinions of the grassroots leaders and activists. Rather, they impose decision on them.

Many political parties have not held councils in years, he viewed.

Communist Party of Bangladesh President Mujahidul Islam Selim said it was very urgent to form a greater political platform as an alternative to Awami League and the BNP.

Nagorik Oikko Convener Mahmudur Rahman Manna said people have no trust in the government formed after the January 5 polls as a greater section of the people rejected the elections.

Sushasoner Jonno Nagorik (Sujan) President M Hafizuddin Khan, representatives of different political and social organisations, academics, among others attended the programme.



ATM Shamsul Huda

Death of a language

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Native American dialects, more recently made a concerted effort to rescue Klallam from extinction. The language comes from the Salish family of Native American languages, which are spoken in the US Pacific Northwest and in neighbouring south-west Canada. It is spoken by four of the region's tribes: the Beecher Bay Klallam in Canada and, in the US, the Jamestown S'Klallam, the Port Gamble S'Klallam and the Lower Elwha Klallam, the group to which Ms Sampson belonged.

The three US Klallam tribes originate from Washington state's Olympic Peninsula, the most north-western point of the contiguous US, and are now thought to number about 1,700 members in total. Most do not speak Klallam, even as a second language, though today it is taught at several of the peninsula's schools.

Ms Sampson was born in

Jamestown, 60 miles from Seattle, on 26 May 1910, the grand-daughter of Lord James Balch, who founded the settlement and gave it its name. She was reportedly married to Edward C Sampson before he died in 1995. The couple are survived by as many as five generations of children and grandchildren.

Although she was designated a member of the Lower Elwha later in life, Ms Sampson never recognised the official divisions of her tribe. Ron Allen, the chairman of the Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, told Reuters: "We became three tribes over the years but that didn't matter to her. She was a citizen of the S'Klallam people."

Of Ms Sampson's death, Allen added: "It is the final chapter of one of our tribal citizens who grew up in the culture before we were exposed extensively to the non-Indian culture and language... We lost an elder who kept the culture and language of the

S'Klallam people fresh in the younger generation."

Beginning in the 19th century, the US government attempted to extinguish the Klallam and other existing American languages by forcing Native American children to study and speak English. Today, it is estimated that at least 100 such dialects from the US and Canada are already extinct. About 200 Native American languages are still spoken in North America, though in most cases by only small numbers of people.

In 1990, the passing of the Native American Languages Act introduced federal funding for the preservation of Klallam and a number of other languages. As part of the effort to save Klallam from extinction, Timothy Montler, a linguistics professor from the University of North Texas, teamed with Jamie Valadez, who teaches the Klallam language and culture at Port Angeles High School, to compile a Klallam dictionary.

Power tariff to go up

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The tariff might be raised on the basis of proposals from the distributors to the energy regulator in December 2012. The utility companies have proposed a hike between 9 and 12 percent.

The issue of power tariff hike surfaced again after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Thursday endorsed the power ministry's plea to adjust the power and gas tariffs.

The PM has given her nod for rationalisation of power and gas tariffs, prime minister's energy adviser Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury told reporters.

She, however, directed the officials concerned to keep consumers' affordability under consideration while hiking the price.

Proposals from different distribution companies have been pending with the BERC, mentioned the adviser.

"It's up to the commission whether the tariff will be increased or not. It's not the government to dictate what to do," Tawfiq told The Daily Star on Friday.

In September 2012, the BERC last increased the retail power tariff -- the rate the distributors charge end-users -- by 15 percent to Tk5.75 per unit amid opposition from consumers and rights groups.

This was the fifth increase in retail power tariff since the last Awami League government assumed office in 2009. Since February 2011, the commission has increased retail tariff by 43.75 percent (from Tk4 a unit to Tk5.75 a unit).

However, the last hike was much lower than the distributors' proposal.

Sources said following proposals from distributors in December 2012, the BERC had taken preparation to

increase the tariff by about 5 percent. But the plan had to be postponed following intervention by the prime minister, who was opposed to raising of tariff in an election year.

BERC member Salim Mahmud yesterday said, "We've not adjusted the tariff for a long time. I think it should be adjusted."

"But as in the past, we will take into consideration the interests of all groups," he added.

PDB Chairman Abduhu Ruhullah said the tariff should be hiked as the distributors are incurring huge losses stemming from subsidies.

The government had to spend nearly Tk6,000 crore in power subsidies last year. The figure might remain the same this year, he mentioned.

Former caretaker government adviser Akbar Ali Khan said consumer will see what logic the BERC puts forward for increasing the power tariff.