

# Crabs in danger

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Indiscriminate hunting of mother crabs in the coastal areas of Patuakhali and Barguna districts during the breeding season is posing a serious threat to the endangered species.

Environmental specialists say the number of crabs is declining day by day due to random entanglement in fishing nets, hampering the ecological balance in the region.

In the breeding season, foresters said, crabs from rivers and canals come to coastal forest areas to lay eggs in tree cavities or ground holes on a large scale. January to March is the reproduction season of crabs.

Mehir Kanti Do, divisional forest officer in Patuakhali, said catching crabs is strictly prohibited in reserve forests during breeding season, but a section of people netted a huge quantity of crabs in the forest.

The government has imposed a ban on catching jatka (hilsa fry less than nine inches in length) for eight months from November to June.

During the time, fishermen get involved in catching and sale of crabs in the vast coastal areas.

Poachers catch crabs by current nets and other traps. One can catch 3/4 kilogram of crabs a day.

A kilogram of crab is being sold at Tk 500 to Tk 700.

Abdus Sobahan, an inhabitant of Baherchar village under Rangabali upazila, said at least 500 poachers are involved in netting crabs in different areas here. They sell crabs in the market, locally called arat.

Many poachers even do not know that crab hunting is harmful to the environment, he observed.

Didarul Ahmed, a crab wholesaler of Kalapara upazila headquarters, said they buy crabs from local poachers when crabs are available in the areas.

"We send crabs to Dhaka as the creatures with hard shells are exported to different foreign countries," he mentioned.

Sultan Mahmud, dean of Fisheries Science Faculty of Patuakhali Science and Technology University, said mother crab netting will hamper the reproduction of crabs.

If the random hunting of crabs continues, the ecological balance will be greatly affected, he added.



Crabs at a wholesale market in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali.

PHOTO: STAR

## Bangladesh does better

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The evaluation was done based on the performance of these countries over the past one year.

The Social Progress Index, a multi-country analysis report, was released on Thursday.

It is prepared considering a coun-

STRENGTHS OF BANGLADESH
Reduced child mortality rate
Reduced deaths from infectious diseases
Greater gender parity in secondary enrollment
Reduced human trafficking and child marriage
Increased demand for contraception
Women treated with respect

And while Bangladesh fared well in improving sanitation facilities, India lagged behind on that category.

Similarly, the situation of slavery, underage marriage and human trafficking was deemed a weak point for India, whereas Bangladesh showed a lesser prevalence of that.

WEAKNESSES OF BANGLADESH
More discrimination and violence against minorities
More religious intolerance
Less community safety nets
Higher levels of violent crimes
Less press freedom
Less freedom of religion
Higher stillbirth rate
Less private property rights

try's ability to provide its citizens with basic needs and scopes to improve their lives, and whether or not the government can help people develop themselves to full potential.

And to accurately pinpoint a country's strong and weak points, it is compared with countries with a similar GDP.

Some of Bangladesh's worst sides are limited freedom of religion, a restricted press and discrimination towards minorities, said the study.

To assess the religious scenario of a country, the study evaluated whether individuals are harassed over their attire or abused showing religious reasons, as well as the prevalence of sectarian violence in the country.

According to the index, Bangladesh's relative strength lay in bringing down child mortality, achieving gender parity in secondary school enrollment, improving life expectancy, showing respect to women, and its increased demand for contraception.

Bangladesh did better in this category compared to Pakistan as well.

Pakistan's situation of gender discrimination in secondary education was pointed out as a relative weakness.

The assessors were able to do a direct evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses between Bangladesh and Nepal as the two countries belong to the same GDP per capita bracket.

Bangladesh fared better than Nepal in providing electricity and ensuring more freedom of assembly.

The study showed that women in Nepal suffer more than their counterparts in Bangladesh.

The people of Bangladesh also spend more years in colleges or universities than those of Nepal, it said.

However, the study pointed out that Nepal has a greater tolerance for homosexuality than Bangladesh. Similarly, Bangladesh hosts a more

## Govt asked to ensure fair trial

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Aminul Islam on 4 April 2012 in the strongest terms and have repeatedly called on your government to undertake a thorough investigation into his murder," read the letter.

The Daily Star has obtained a copy of the letter. It said strong evidence indicates that Aminul was targeted for his indefatigable work as a labour organiser and human rights advocate and that the perpetrators of this crime include members of the government security apparatus.

"We are extremely disappointed that, two years later, so little progress has been made and no one has yet been held accountable. We therefore call on the government of Bangladesh to reopen the investigation to ensure that all of the perpetrators are identified, charged and brought to justice,"

said the labour groups.

They also pointed out that the Bangladesh government would do well to address these concerns at a time when it is seeking to regain its duty-free access to the US market for non-RMG exports, while maintaining the duty-free status with the European Union.

The letter urged the government to demonstrate its commitment to basic human rights and a socially-responsible garment industry by ensuring that Aminul's murder is fully investigated and his killers prosecuted.

The three organisations pledged their commitment to contribute to the development of a safe and sustainable textile and garment industry, which plays a major role in Bangladesh's economy.

But for this, it requires full respect for international core labour standards, including the right to freedom of association and to bargain collectively, continued revisions of minimum wages to reach living wages, and the success of the Accord on Fire and Building Safety, whose implementation is well underway, noted the letter.

Arresting the killers of Aminul is one of the 16 conditions set by the US government for reinstatement of the GSP in the US market that was scrapped on June 27 last year, citing serious shortcomings in labour rights and working conditions.

The government is scheduled to send the progress report on meeting the conditions to the United States trade representative on April 15.

## Death penalty for 3 repeat offenders

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to amend the law last year and allow for harsher punishments for rapists, including the death penalty for repeat offenders.

The three who were sentenced yesterday had been found guilty of two attacks in July and August last year at the same abandoned mill compound in Mumbai, including an attack on a photographer that made global headlines.

Mohammed Salim Ansari, 28, Vijay Mohan Jadhav, 19, and Mohammed Kasim Hafeez Shaikh, 21, were convicted last month after a fast-track trial.

They were subsequently handed life sentences for one of those assaults, the gang-rape of an 18-year-old phone operator.

But they were also convicted this week under a new section of the law for being repeat rape offenders, which carries the death penalty.

"There needs to be zero tolerance

for such incidents," Judge Shalini Phansalkar Joshi said as she announced the sentences.

"A loud and clear message needs to be sent to society."

Special public prosecutor Ujjwal Nikam confirmed to AFP that this was the first conviction for repeat rape under the modified law.

The 22-year-old photographer was gang-raped while on assignment with a male colleague in the overgrown mill compound, close to an upscale neighbourhood as well as slums from which most of the rapists hailed.

The phone operator, attacked in the same place, came forward after reading about the photographer's ordeal.

Two other men have been jailed for life over the attacks: Mohammed Ashwaq Sheikh in the telephone operator case and Siraj Rehmat Khan in the case of the photographer.

A juvenile is being separately

tried over the attack on the photographer, which sparked widespread anger in Mumbai, a city usually considered safer than the capital New Delhi.

Police described the photographer's attackers as unemployed school drop-outs, while neighbours say they were a gang of youths known for petty theft and drinking in the area.

India's legal system is notoriously slow, but its rape laws were toughened after the fatal gang-rape of a student in New Delhi in December 2012 sparked nationwide protests over the lack of safety for women.

Four men were sentenced to death in September over the Delhi case after they were convicted for murder, gang-rape, theft, conspiracy and "unnatural acts".

India only allows for the death sentence in the "rarest of rare" cases. All executions are carried out by hanging.

## Campaign

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Rahul Gandhi.

"Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are equally responsible for all the ills of India along with (prime minister) Manmohan Singh because they wanted to exercise authority without accountability," party leader Ravi Shankar Prasad said after releasing the chargesheet.

While its manifesto will come only tomorrow, the first day of polling, the party said reminding the voters about the history is as important as the poll promises.

"It is important to remind people of the history of the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government," Prasad said.

The BJP also downplayed the delay in releasing its manifesto, calling it an issue of logistics. "It is a logistics issue. Our party leaders are busy in campaigns," Prasad said.

He used the opportunity to take a dig at the Congress without naming the party. "Those who are going to get the farewell have hurried up with their manifesto."

Meanwhile, in one of her strongest attacks on BJP's prime ministerial nominee Narendra Modi, Congress president Sonia Gandhi yesterday asked the people not to elect "a big liar" as the country's next prime minister.

Without taking Modi's name, Sonia told an election rally in Jharkhand that some opposition leaders were selling dreams, as if "they will change everything in one day with a magic wand".

"Will the country choose a person who is a big liar as a prime minister?" she said at Ramgarh in Hazaribagh district.

"In a democracy, just anyone should not be allowed to grab power."

And in an appeal to coal workers, she also said that it was former prime minister Indira Gandhi who nationalised the coal mines in order to improve the lot of the labourers. She detailed the achievements of the Congress-led UPA government in the last 10 years.

## Family, labour leaders

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of Bangladesh Garments and Industrial Workers' Federation (BGIWF), went missing after he was taken away from his Ashulia office by Mustafizur on April 4, 2012.

His body was found at Ghatail in Tangail a day later with several torture marks. The autopsy report stated that Aminul was murdered.

Aminul's family and colleagues believe that intelligence agencies had a hand in the murder as the labour activist had earlier escaped after having been allegedly abducted by the NSI in 2010.

Hosne Ara Fahima, Aminul's wife, said that intelligence agency personnel always kept her husband under surveillance. She also alleged that they came to their residence in search of Aminul and threatened him a number of times.

In June 2010, Aminul had informed his family members and his colleagues at BCWS about his abduction by the NSI.

Aminul also had given the names of the abductors, who wanted him to stop labour organising activities at Ashulia and Savar and forced him to give statements saying that the BCWS was engaged in illegal and anti-state activities, said both Fahima and Kalpana Akter, executive director of the BCWS.

Kalpana said that they had sent a letter to the NSI, demanding explanation for the abduction and torture of Aminul.

In response, an additional director of

the NSI had denied torturing Aminul, Kalpana said.

Following the alleged abduction, she said, an intelligence agency gave a report to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) accusing the BCWS of anti-state activities and inciting violence in garment factories. On the basis of the report, the government cancelled the registrations of the NGO. However, the registrations were reinstated later.

"The torture marks on Aminul's body were similar to those he sustained during his abduction in 2010," alleged Kalpana, adding that the CID had intentionally left out the names of NSI officials.

"We will submit a no-confidence plea against the charge sheet," she said.

Their claim is supported by the fact that the Detective Branch (DB) of Police, which investigated the case initially, also found Mustafizur's link with intelligence agencies.

A source in the DB told this correspondent that by scrutinising Mustafizur's phone call records, they found he had talked with at least two officials of the NSI and a security official of Bangladesh Export Processing Zones Authority (BEPZA) on the day of Aminul's disappearance and also a couple of days before and after that.

However, the DB was not given the permission to take actions against those officials, said the source.

Rather, the case was transferred to the CID mid-November in 2012, said

Humayun Kabir Akhand, the first investigation officer (IO) of the case.

However, current IO of the case Fazlul Kabir, assistant superintendent of police of the CID, had a different explanation. "It is true NSI officials talked with Mustafizur. But they did so because he was their source. That does not mean they were involved."

The CID interrogated the intelligence officers in question but did not find anything that proves their involvement in the murder, he told The Daily Star.

According to a DB source, suspect Mustafizur was a labour leader at Queens South Textiles Ltd at the Dhaka EPZ but was sacked in 2009. After that, he started working as a source of the NSI, the BEPZA and the industrial police.

Though he never attended office, Mustafizur regularly drew salary as a worker under the muster roll of the BEPZA's medical centre, the DB source said.

The salary was deposited to his account in the Dhaka EPZ branch of a private bank till August, 2012 but no withdrawal was made after Aminul's murder, the source added.

However, the CID has no clue about Mustafizur's whereabouts since then.

"We do not know whether he is dead or alive or whether he is in the country or abroad," Fazlul Kabir said.

Aminul's wife Fahima said, "It has been two years but not even a single person has been arrested. I do not know if I would ever get justice".

## Indo-Lankan final as SA dispatched

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by putting on 39 in 3.5 overs.

Catches are said to win matches, but at times that does not hold true. AB de Villiers took a stunning catch at a crucial time as Yuvraj Singh could not get the elevation to go over long-off and de Villiers ran in and clasped it with a dive, leaving India to score 40 from the last four overs.

In the following over, new batsman Suresh Raina punished all bad balls from left-arm pacer Wayne Parnell with one six and two boundaries to collect 17 runs to dismiss South Africa's chances. South Africa's bowling was not good enough to defend a competitive total, and if hopes were pinned on Dale Steyn it seemed a mission too difficult even for the great fast bowler.

Earlier, it was the story of one good over seizing the momentum before

more good overs conceded to the opponents surrendered it. Ashwin gave his team the momentum in the sixth over after South Africa were well-placed with 43 runs on the board from five, but South Africa seized back the initiative courtesy of brilliant batting from captain Faf du Plessis (58 off 41 balls) and JP Duminy (45 not out off 40 balls) to put up a fighting total of 172 for four.

Hashim Amla and du Plessis paced the innings nicely after Quinton de Kock's early wicket as both batsmen tried to rotate the strike with quick singles before going for the big shots. Ashwin however got rid of Amla off his very first delivery with a beautiful carom that pegged back the off stump. He conceded only one run in that over.

Ashwin was replaced by Raina who gave just six runs in his first over. South Africa reached only 66 after 10 overs

with the form bowler of the tournament still to come. Amit Mishra was given the ball in the 11th over but South Africans were ready for him, taking eight off his first before dismantling him for 36 from three.

Raina gave away 17 runs in the 12th over and Mishra 17 in the next over which saw a fantastic slog sweep from Duminy for six. But Ashwin returned and picked up the wicket of du Plessis who hit five fours and two sixes in his innings.

AB de Villiers might have been held back to play a destructive innings in the final overs but it was again Ashwin who foiled the play having him caught at square leg in the 16th over with South Africa reaching 129 for four.

David Miller hit an unbeaten 12-ball 23 but fielders like Kohli, Yuvraj and Raina also leaked some runs to set up India's highest chase against the Proteas.

## Saturn moon hides great lake of water

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spacecraft, which has spent 10 years studying Saturn and its moons.

In 2005, Cassini sent back astounding images of water vapour jetting from the surface of Enceladus.

The jets were spouting from fractures in the frozen surface of the 300-mile wide moon known as "tiger stripes".

Experts theorised that a large reservoir of underground water could be

fuelling the plumes.

The new findings, reported in the journal Science, confirm that a large water ocean about six miles deep really does lie beneath the moon's southern polar region.

"This water ocean ... may extend halfway or more towards the equator in every direction," said co-author Prof David Stevenson, from the California Institute of Technology (Caltech).

"This means that it is as large - or larger - than Lake Superior."

Jupiter's much bigger moon Europa is also known to have liquid water under its surface. Both could be possible habitats for extraterrestrial microbes, scientists believe.

The water is kept from freezing by warming tidal forces generated by the gravity of the giant gas planets the moons orbit.