

Oil spill takes toll on fish

SHAHADAT HOSSAIN, Cig

Fish are rising to the surface of the water to breathe in the canal of Tulatoli area at Sitakunda as the oil spill from a derailed train Wednesday contaminated the water.

Md Abdul Motaleb, a school goer, was seen standing beside the canal with a handful of fish yesterday morning. He told The Daily Star that he scooped up about two kilogrammes of fish from the canal in the morning.

Many locals were seen catching fish like Tangra and small shrimps with their bare hands or using small nets.

The spilling of furnace oil in the canal might have caused the fishes to move to the surface of the water, said locals.

Abu Taher, a middle-aged farmer, told The Daily Star that he had never seen such a thing before. He also picked up around one and a half kilogrammes of fish from the canal.

Some fish were dying, he added.

The Daily Star correspondent saw a thin layer of oil floating in the canal between Faujdarhat Railway Station and Tulatoli area.

Mohananda, a fisherman of Jelepura, said he saw a small oil slick at the confluence of the canal and

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A child catches fish floating up to the surface of a canal in Faujdarhat, Sitakunda, following an oil spill from a derailed train. Inset, a girl collects oil spilling out of the train. The photos were taken yesterday, a day after the derailment. PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS

Mobile courts to cover more areas of crime

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said the powers of the mobile court would be increased in order to try and punish people for some offences, including drug-related crimes and gambling.

The government will amend the relevant laws for this purpose if the home ministry takes the initiative, he said.

The minister was talking to reporters after attending a session of deputy commissioners' conference at the secretariat.

Replying to a query, Anisul Huq said there was no scope for providing judicial power to executive magistrates as per the relevant laws.

The government will not do anything that damages the independence of the judiciary, he mentioned.

In response to another question, Anisul Huq said the government would take necessary measures if any untoward incident happens over the trial of crimes against humanity during the Liberation War in 1971.

No decision to hold public exams without gap

Says Nahid

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has not taken any decision to hold public examinations like SSC and HSC without any gap, said Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid yesterday.

"Examination routines will be prepared considering students' interest," he said at a meeting with the teachers at the National Academy for Educational Management in the capital.

The minister urged the students not to get confused by any misleading news being propagated by a vested quarter.

The announcement came following demonstrations by some students in some parts of the country

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BNP critical of govt handling

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said, "Bangladesh has been deprived of its just rights of the sea boundary as skilled and experienced persons were not included in the legal team. We could've done better if we had appointed jurists like Dr Kamal Hossain."

He added: "The 25,000 sq km maritime boundary is not a disputed area. Rather, it is Bangladesh's area. But Bangladesh has been affected by losing its rights over 6,000 sq km area to India."

India, said Hafizuddin, appointed its judge P S Rao to the tribunal while Bangladesh picked a Ghanaian judge. "The Indian judge gave some note of dissents in the tribunal whereas the lawyer representing Bangladesh didn't give any to uphold country's interest," he noted.

He also pointed out that the Indian attorney general took part in the case proceedings but the Bangladesh attorney general did not.

The international arbitral tribunal in a landmark judgment on July 8 upheld Bangladesh's claim of 200 nautical miles exclusive economic zone and its territorial rights in the Bay of Bengal.

The court awarded Bangladesh 19,467 sq km area out of the disputed 25,602 sq km.

Hafizuddin claimed South Talpatti is part and parcel of Bangladesh and it was a big defeat for Bangladesh to lose its rights on the strategic area.

On the government's claim that there is no existence of the island, the BNP leader questioned why warships of the two countries had face-offs if it did not exist at all. "The Talpatti Island had been there. If the island is submerged now, it might arise again."

According to the Bangladesh foreign ministry, the island did not exist anymore and that it went under water after the cyclone at Urir Char in

1985. Besides, as per the Radcliffe boundary delimitation and all the maps published by Bangladesh till 1980, South Talpatti was never a part of Bangladesh.

Pointing to the "loss" of Talpatti Island, the former minister said Bangladesh has moved back nearly 4.5 kilometre east from its last south-west boundary.

He demanded the foreign ministry explain why no Bangladeshi judge was appointed to the international tribunal and why no note of dissent was given at the court by Bangladesh.

The government is giving political colour to the verdict in a bid to score political mileage, he complained.

BNP chairperson's foreign affairs advisers Shamsher Mobin Chowdhury and Reaz Rahman were present.

Google Glass

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(electroencephalography) to measure electrical activity in the brain and convert these signals into instructions for Glass.

Google Glass, which launched in the UK last month, is usually controlled by voice commands or via a touchpad located on the arm of the device.

Although the MindRDR technology might appear frivolous at first glance, its creators hope technology like it could one day help individuals suffering from locked-in syndrome or quadriplegia the opportunity to use technology like Glass to interact with the world.

Google itself does not officially support MindRDR (or offer it in the Glass app store) but a spokeswoman for the company told the BBC: "Of course, we are always interested in hearing about new applications of Glass and we've already seen some great research from a variety of medical fields from surgery to Parkinson's."

"Google Glass cannot read your

mind," the spokeswoman added.

In its current implementation the MindRDR only has two 'controls' – a 'yes' signal triggered by a peak in electrical brain activity and a 'no' signal triggered by a trough in activity.

This lack of nuance is one of the defining challenges facing current-generation EEG technology. Although the hardware used to detect brain activity are now fairly cheap (This Place used a NeuroSky headset that costs less than £100), the fidelity of their measurements and the difficulty for users to broadcast 'precise' brain signals will mean that it's many years before we're all uploaded snaps to Instagram just by thinking about it.

The creators of MindRDR recognise this and for that reason have launched their app on the developer community GitHub, allowing programmers around the world to take a look at their code and hopefully tweak it to make it more useful.

Chaotic all the time

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believing it would slow down speeding vehicles.

However, this couldn't prevent two other menaces: picking up and dropping passengers at any spot around the intersection and random jaywalking.

Though there are bus bays only within 300 yards of the intersection on both sides, drivers stop their buses practically anywhere they wish except at the bays, triggering unusual traffic congestion and encouraging people to jaywalk.

Visiting the intersection in the morning recently, this correspondent witnessed just when the traffic light turned green, some public buses from the direction of Uttara stopped at the crossing to pick up passengers, forcing hundreds of other vehicles behind to remain immobile for around a minute at least.

And when the errant buses finally moved followed by other vehicles, about two dozen jaywalkers from the airport side started running across the road towards Ashkona rail crossing, halting traffic once again

for nearly a minute.

Taking advantage of this, vehicles that were waiting at Ashkona rail crossing for the red signal to clear zoomed to the other side in complete violation of traffic rules.

The spectacle kept repeating during the two-hour-long stay of this correspondent. Though the traffic police were sometimes found using a rope to restrain pedestrians from jaywalking, this hardly worked. Many pedestrians jumped over the rope and galloped and reached the otherside.

At one stage, the policemen got tired, stopped trying to prevent jaywalking and left the safety of the pedestrians in their own hands.

Traffic Inspector of Uttara Zone Humayun Kabir thinks jaywalking is the root cause of the chaos at such an important spot. "But we cannot take action against them because the number of jaywalkers is just too high."

But what actions are taken against the drivers of buses who stop whimsically and haphazardly?

The officer claimed that they file

around 15 cases daily against the bus drivers and tow 12 vehicles every day.

Besides, sometimes stopping a bus in the middle of the road for taking action against it causes further traffic congestion and additional delay of commuters. Considering this, police in many cases refrain from taking measures against errant bus drivers, he added.

To improve the situation, Humayun suggested construction of an underpass for pedestrians and widening of roads around the intersection.

SM Salehuddin, former executive director of Dhaka Transport Coordination Board, said since the traffic flow at the spot is likely to keep on increasing, building a flyover would be a sustainable solution to this.

"If it is not possible, construction of an underpass connecting the east and the west sides of the roundabout is very necessary [to prevent jaywalking]," he said, suggesting tougher police action against bus drivers flouting traffic rules.

Verdict on July 17

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Peyara Begum, mother of one-and-a-half-year-old Tanvir, had said: "This is the state of justice in our country. We want punishment to those involved in the crime. We want them hanged or jailed."

Incumbent Public Prosecutor Shaheen Ahmed Khan, however, regretted yesterday while pointing out to the judge that the Drug (control) Ordinance, 1982 was insufficient in getting due justice for the inhuman crime.

"It is simply a murder case. Children were killed by the drug," Shaheen told the court.

"But even the honourable judge's power seems inadequate in trying such an offence with the current drug law providing for 10 years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Tk 200,000 as the highest punishment," the PP lamented.

"They [the accused] deserve the highest punishment anyway."

Two of the five accused, manager Mizanur Rahman and director Helena Pasha, were present at the court yesterday. They are being tried

along with the rest in absentia for producing paracetamol syrup brand 'Flammadol' that tested positive for the toxic chemical diethylene glycol in tests conducted both at home and abroad.

The case against manufacturing company Adflame was one of the four that sued separate pharmaceuticals. Three other manufacturers accused of producing the same adulterated paracetamol syrup were Polychem Laboratories Ltd, BCI (Bangladesh) Ltd, and Rex Pharmaceuticals.

The fifth pharmaceutical -- City Chemical and Pharmaceutical Works Ltd -- was not prosecuted apparently for having a close connection with the then ruling BNP.

A DDA circular had earlier doomed the fate of all the cases even before those took effect on December 19, 1992. "As there is no appropriate arrangement in the government laboratory for detecting diethylene glycol in paracetamol syrup, samples of some of these brands have been sent abroad in November 1992 with the help of the WHO,"

mentioned the circular on December 5.

Uncertainty over the test's authenticity stemming from the DDA circular already helped two accused in the case against Rex Pharma getting acquitted in 2003.

The Daily Star investigation collected documents establishing that the drugs were tested properly both at home and abroad and had indeed contained the toxic chemicals.

However, even after The Daily Star probe led to resumption of the trial in the case against Adflame, complainant of the case Abul Khair Chowdhury, the then drug superintendent, spoke in favour of the accused.

To the utter astonishment of the then PP Jahangir, Khair could not even recall the manufacturing company's name, Adflame, against which he himself had filed the case.

The cases against BCI and Polychem have still been pending with the HC since 1994.

The Daily Star also found in October 2010 that the DDA did not have a single document preserved in relation to the adulteration.

CID can inquire, not investigate

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The same bench on May 5 had said, "In addition to the ongoing investigation, the Criminal Investigation Department of police shall also separately investigate the case."

According to legal experts, any organisation or authority can carry out inquiry into any incident even if no case is filed in the connection. But an investigation is carried out by a government-appointed agency only after a case has been filed and only that agency can submit the charge sheet in that case.

Different agencies were asked to run inquiry into the seven-murder incident only to help the Detective Branch of Police, the investigation agency of the two cases filed in connection with the incident, they believe.

While handing down the order, the HC bench also said the regular investigation [by the DB] will continue in its own course at the same time.

The CID and other agencies will

collect evidence and information and then will submit their reports to this court. The court will then send the reports to the investigation officer and the trial court dealing with the case so that they can determine whether further investigation into the case is required, the HC said.

Rejecting the government's plea, the HC bench said that the petition did not mention any specific authorities of the government which had instructed the office of the attorney general (AG) to move the petition before it.

In the petition submitted on Wednesday, the AG office argued that two agencies cannot conduct investigation simultaneously in a case as per the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC).

The petition came more than two months after Narayanganj ward councillor Nazrul Islam, senior lawyer Chandan Sarker and five others were

abducted and killed allegedly by Rab men for money.

Following yesterday's HC order, AG Mahbubey Alam told The Daily Star that the order means the CID can conduct inquiry into the incident but cannot press any charge sheet in the case to the trial court. It is the DB that will submit the charge sheet.

The AG also said that his office will move the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court seeking cancellation of yesterday's HC order, adding that complications were arising as two separate agencies were conducting investigation into the same cases.

Meanwhile, the HC bench yesterday received progress reports from four government agencies over the seven-murder incident.

The government-formed seven-member probe committee, the inspector general of police (IGP), Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and the CID submitted the reports to the HC

through the AG office.

The AG told the court that the seven-member committee has so far recorded statements of 350 people, including three dismissed Rab officials in connection with the incident.

The CID in its report said 14 people have been arrested in connection with this incident. Three dismissed Rab officials and three witnesses have given statements to the magistrate and the CID is trying to collect the copies of the confessional statements.

The Rab report said that they have recorded statements of 80 people, including some Rab officials and staff, to examine whether any of them were involved in the incident.

The IGP said in his report that his office has taken necessary measures to ensure safety and security of the victims' families and the witnesses.

The HC is yet to fix any date to pass further order in this regard.

Bangladesh-born

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Ruhul, who has a British passport, is now believed to be in Iraq and he will be arrested when enters the UK, an official statement in London said.

Dhaka has yet to issue a statement relating to Ruhul Amin. Contacted by The Daily Star yesterday, the Moulvibazar police chief said he had no knowledge about this.

Last month, a Bangladesh-born US citizen, Rahatul Ashikim Khan, was arrested in the US on charges of conspiring to provide material support to terrorists.

Ruhul was recently seen in a recruitment video for the militant group Isis, BBC reported. He is said to be the third Briton in the video along with 20-year-olds Nasser Muthana and Reyaad Khan, who are both from Cardiff.

The clip shows the trio armed with AK-47 rifles in Syria preaching terror and trying to promote jihad to

Muslim worshippers back in the UK. They are believed to be among 500 Britons fighting in the conflict in Syria, according to media reports.

Ruhul was identified as "Brother Abu Bara' al Hindi" in the video, which called for UK Muslims to join Isis in Iraq. He insists joining the group will cure the stress and "depression" of living in the West, writes Daily Mirror.

He claims to be British and says in an English accent: "Are you willing to sacrifice the job you've got, the big car you've got, the family you have? Are you willing to sacrifice this, for the sake of Allah?"

"Then if you sacrifice something for Allah, Allah will give you 700 times more than this."

The video, "There is No Life without Jihad", was posted on YouTube by the Isis Al Hayat Media Centre after militants led by Isis made rapid advances through Iraq in recent weeks.