



Clockwise, two fishermen repairing nets in Chittagong's Firingibazar area; families of fishermen stand near their home in Zianagar Upazila of Pirojpur; fishermen in Munshiganj's Banglabazar area form a human chain demanding compensation rice; a fisherman's family sits idle at their home in Krishnopor village in Manikganj's Shibalay upazila; and another fisherman repairing his net in Chandramohan village in Barisal sadar upazila.



PHOTO: STAR

Promises not kept

FROM PAGE 1
labourers to run their families. Had the rice been given at the beginning of the ban, it would have been helpful," said Nirmal Jaladas, president of Kathar Muslimabad Jelepura Fishermen Association in Chittagong, which has 240 members.

This year, the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock listed a total of 3,56,723 families in 76 upazilas of 14 districts -- Chandpur, Laxmipur, Feni, Noakhali, Cox's Bazar, Chittagong, Bhola, Madaripur, Shariatpur, Barisal, Patuakhali, Barguna, Pirojpur and Jhalakathi.

The government allocated 7134.46 tonnes of rice for these families, according to a fisheries ministry letter issued on August 14.

But the allocation is only half of what the Ministry of Fisheries and Livestock had sought, said Narayan Chandra Chanda, state minister of the ministry.

"We requested for 14,000 tonnes of

rice for the fishermen. But we got only half of that. So we could not provide rice to everyone," the minister said.

"I know fishermen are suffering. As the hilsa conservation project saw a huge success, I'll talk to the prime minister about this."

Apparently, there is a lack of coordination between the fisheries ministry, and the disaster management and relief ministry.

Shah Kamal, secretary of the disaster management ministry, said they provided more rice than what the fisheries ministry had sought.

He, however, said it was not possible to provide rice to the fishermen of all the 29 districts, where the ban is in place.

"The rice is for vulnerable people. Do you think all fishermen are vulnerable? It is not possible to provide rice to all fishermen as we do not have separate budget for them," he pointed out.

"Still, we have allocated rice for some districts that were not on the list

of the fisheries ministry. For example, Munshiganj was not on the list. Still, we allocated rice for Munshiganj."

Contacted, Munshiganj Deputy Commissioner Saila Farzana said they were yet to get any rice.

"We sought rice for 1,984 registered fishermen. But we haven't yet got any. Maybe we'll get it later," she said.

Although the ban is in place in 29 districts, fishermen of only 14 districts are entitled to get the benefit.

For example, fishermen of Rajshahi, Pabna and Sirajganj are not on the list of the food support programme.

"Law enforcers arrested many fishermen in Sujanagar upazila and sent them to jail for catching fish. We are afraid of the arrests," said Toyzal Sheikh, a fisherman of Bonkhola village in Pabna's Sujanagar upazila.

He added that his family has been passing days half-fed.

The stories of other fishermen are similar.

Al Amin, UNO of Dohar in Dhaka

said, "We haven't yet received any allocation for the fishermen of Dohar. I've written it to our higher authorities and also discussed the matter with the local lawmaker."

"The fishermen might get the compensation in November ..." said Al Amin. There are 826 registered fishermen in Dohar.

Against this backdrop, many fishermen are turning to local loan sharks or non-government organisations (NGOs) for money to run their families.

"Every week, I have to pay Tk 900 in instalment to an NGO. But I have no income now," said Narayan Chandro Malo.

However, rice already reached several districts.

Some fishermen from Patuakhali said they received the VGF rice last Friday, weeks after the ban was enforced.

Abul Bashar Akon, 35, from Nimdee village in the district's Bauful upazila, said he got 20kg of rice that day.

In Barisal, there are 73,594 registered fishermen. Of them, 49,049 have been registered especially for hilsa catching. But 43,644 fishermen have been approved for the food support programme.

Fishermen of four out of 10 upazilas in the district got rice yesterday, said Bazlur Rashid, deputy director of the department of fisheries in Barisal.

In Bhola, 88,111 fishermen out of 1,20,000 have been approved for the programme. Fishermen of only seven out of 70 unions in the district got the support so far.

Bhola DFO Rezaul Karim said only two-thirds of the registered fishermen would get the food support.

The fisheries ministry allocated Tk 90 lakh to the fisheries officials of 29 districts for conducting the drives and campaigns against netting hilsa, said ministry officials.

According to the department, 1,614 mobile courts so far conducted 8,252 drives and seized 22.46 tonnes of hilsa

and 106.88 lakh metres of gillnets.

The administration filed 1,261 cases against fishermen and realised Tk 33.62 lakh in fine. About 900 fishermen in 29 districts were jailed for different terms for catching hilsa violating the ban.

Bangladesh is now the largest hilsa producing country in the world, accounting for around 60 percent of the world's production. The country produced 3.87 lakh metric tonnes of hilsa in 2014-15, according to the fisheries department.

The production may have crossed 4 lakh metric tonnes in the last fiscal year, said officials involved in the hilsa conservation project.

Before the government took steps to conserve hilsa, the production was only 1.99 lakh tonnes in 2002-03 fiscal year.

(Our correspondents from Barisal, Pabna, Chittagong, Rajshahi, Manikganj, Jhalakathi, Patuakhali, Pirojpur and Munshiganj contributed to the report)



Mahmudullah madness

FROM PAGE 1
saw Bangladesh take a positive 128-run lead against England with seven second innings wickets still standing, the biggest talking point among the home fans understandably revolved around one shocker of a shot from Mahmudullah Riyad.

The right-hander, while on 47 and having already put on a valuable 86 runs with opener Imrul Kayes for the third wicket, attempted a wild sweep off what was the last ball of the day and was clean bowled, depriving Bangladesh of going into the third day on a strong footing.

It is true that the Tigers, on 152 for 3, will start the third day with a slight edge over England, and a lead close to 300 would definitely put them in pole position to win the game after that near miss in the fascinating Chittagong Test, which they lost by 22 runs. The good news is that Imrul, who reached his fifty with a confident reverse-sweep, was growing in confidence with an unbeaten 59.

But to achieve that goal the Tigers, who have so far shown that they have got the tail of a lizard, need to get their act together after that infamous first-innings collapse from 171-1 to 220 all

out.

Apart from Mahmudullah's explosion of mind under fading light with the umpires insisting the players to bat for another 15 minutes till the bell ticks to five even after the completion of the mandatory 90 overs, plus those additional 30 minutes in the morning - something like a rude reminder for the professionals from their employers -- the fascinating second day will also be remembered for one hell of an achievement from 19-year-old off-spinner Mehedi Hasan.

Mehedi picked up his second five-for as England, resuming the day on 50-3, stared down the barrel before being revived by a resolute 99-run ninth-wicket stand between Adil Rashid (44) and Chris Woakes (46).

Mehedi, who has become only the second off-spinner to take five wickets in the first two Tests after West Indian Sonny Ramadhin, started the day from where he had left off on Friday by rattling the England top-order with two wickets in six-odd overs.

His partnership with left-arm spinner Taijul Islam was so devastating that at one stage it put England at 144-8 against Bangladesh's first-innings total of 220.

Mehedi made the first breakthrough of the morning by removing Moeen Ali (10) before Taijul struck the crucial blow by having all-rounder Ben Stokes sent back for a duck, thanks to a sharp catch at short leg by Mominul Haque.

Taijul also had the dangerous Joe Root trapped in front of the wicket for 56 with an intelligent arm ball. It opened up the prospect for Bangladesh to gain a considerable first-innings lead but those hopes were thudded by the frustrating ninth-wicket stand.

The left-right pair certainly played well under the glorious sunshine till tea and eventually gave England a crucial first innings lead of 24 runs.

But there was apparently not any extraordinary effort from Bangladesh captain Mushfiqur Rahim to break that partnership, which absorbed the spin attack first before revelling amidst conventional field placements.

With the partnership building, Mushfiqur, instead of trying to buy the wickets, played the game of patience and rotated his bowlers and waited for the opposition to err. Mushfiqur, who had a mixed day behind the stumps and dropped two sharp catches, even

used his lone pacer Kamrul Islam Rabbi whose three uneventful overs cost 15 runs. He also used off-spinner Shuvagata Hom to no effect and tried the leg-spin of Sabbir Rahman.

However, Sabbir created an opportunity when he delivered a high full toss that Woakes, then on 38, pulled straight to Mehedi at short mid-wicket. But following a review the third umpire deemed it over waist height and the field umpire called it a no ball.

It was a cruel decision at a moment when Bangladesh desperately needed that breakthrough with England at 222-8. It was also cruel because had it been hit for a four nobody would have bothered to go for a review. Besides, it was perhaps a harsh call like the famous one from pacer Rubel Hossain against Rohit Sharma in the World Cup quarterfinal against India in 2015.

Despite that close call, Mushfiqur's wish was finally granted. He quickly used his bowlers for the new ball and the moment it was due after 80 overs, Mehedi and Taijul mopped England up quickly.

Woakes was brilliantly caught at leg slip by Shuvagata off Mehedi, who

finished with fantastic figures of 28-2-82-6. Taijul had Steven Finn caught behind in the next over to finish with 25.3-65-3. Bangladesh's champion all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan bowled ten-odd overs in different spells, but the left-arm-er was not in his elements yesterday.

Tamim Iqbal, who hit an imperious century in the first innings, started Bangladesh's second innings in the same sublime fashion. With the left-hander smashing every loose ball to the boundary, Bangladesh wiped out England's 24-run first innings lead in just six overs. He raced on to 40 off just 47 balls with the help of seven cracking boundaries before being caught at leg-slip by England captain Alastair Cook off debutant left-arm spinner Zafar Ansari.

Tamim's dismissal led to the fall of Mominul Haque, who had hit a fine fifty in the first innings. He chased an outswinger from Stokes and was caught at slip for one, leaving Bangladesh at 66 for 2.

However, the home team played well after that until that brainfreeze from Mahmudullah, who had used the crease very well for his 57-ball 47 that contained five fours.

Correction

In yesterday's lead report headlined "ICT ICONS HONOURED", we misidentified Tausif Ahmad, co-founder and chief operations officer of HungryNaki. We regret the error.

Scotland

FROM PAGE 16
Finland has been giving out care packages to all expectant mothers for 80 years. The boxes, which include around 80 items useful for babies, have been credited with cutting infant mortality and raising life chances.

The boxes contain items such as baby clothes and nappies. Babies sometimes sleep in the boxes.

Sturgeon said the first mothers living in pilot areas would start getting the boxes in January and that there would be a full roll-out in the summer.

"We promised a baby box of all essential items for all newborns. It's a policy borrowed from Finland where it's contributed to the lowest rates of child mortality in the world," she told delegates.

"I'm delighted to give you an update on our plans to introduce it here. Next month we'll launch a competition in partnership with the V&A in Dundee for the design of the box."

"The first boxes will be delivered to newborns born in pilot areas on New Year's Day."

She joked that such a box would "beat a lump of coal" as a first-foot offering, a reference to the Scottish tradition of giving people coal to mark the New Year.

The boxes will be part of a general overhaul of free childcare provision in the country. Ms Sturgeon pledged that services would greater flexibility for parents.

She made her comments in her closing speech to the Scottish National Party's conference in Glasgow.

Pump owners lift strike

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commission and scrapping a move to increase CNG price.

The announcement came after a meeting among Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader, State Minister for Power and Energy Nasrul Hamid and the owners of compressed natural gas (CNG) and other filling stations.

The two ministries formed separate committees to scrutinise the demands, said Obaidul Quader after the meeting held at the headquarters of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) in the capital.

The committees comprised of government officials and representatives of the owners associations have been asked to submit reports in two months. The government would take further steps on the basis of the reports, Quader said.

After this statement of the minister, Bangladesh CNG Filling Station and

Conversion Workshop Owners Association president Madud Khan and Bangladesh Petrol Pump O Tank Lorry Malik Sramik Oikya Parishad convener Nazmul Hoque separately announced withdrawal of their strikes.

Both the organisations at separate press conferences had earlier announced to enforce the indefinite strike from 6:00am today.

A major and common demand of both the organisations was reduction of the lease fees of land that connects the filling stations with roads.

According to the Land Management Policy, 2015, of the Roads and Highways Department (RHD), the filling stations have to lease the land and the fees are set on the basis of the area of land.

But the RHD in October last year "abnormally" increased the fees and imposed other charges, they claimed.

For example, a filling station previously had to pay around Tk 53,000

annually for using 24 decimals of RHD land. But the same station now has to pay around Tk 11.28 lakh annually, claimed the station owners.

Another demand of the CNG refuelling station owners is to scrap the government's move to increase the CNG price. The demand came as the gas distributor companies have recently proposed that the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) increase CNG price by around 83 percent.

The current price of CNG is Tk 35 per cubic metre.

Another major demand of the filling station owners is to increase their sales commission. Currently, pump owners get 4.03 percent commission for selling octane and petrol and 2.7 percent for diesel.

But the pump owners demand that the commission be increased up to 7 percent for octane and petrol and 5 percent for diesel.

Japan looking

FROM PAGE 16
The number of farmers has halved in the past two decades to 1.92 million this year, while the average age has exceeded 66, according to the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Ministry.

Labour shortages have become a common challenge for farming communities nationwide.

At an Oct. 12 meeting of the House of Representatives Budget Committee, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said the government will allow farmers in government-designated strategic special zones to accept foreign workers.

"We'll make good use of the foreign workforce for agricultural communities that are facing serious labor shortages due to the aging [of farmers]," the prime minister said.

In the agricultural sector, the government currently runs a technical training program for foreigners with

the aim of sharing Japan's expertise with developing countries.

The scheme allows trainees to work for up to three years in Japan on the condition that they stay with the same farmer in principle.

Therefore, foreign workers are not allowed to work flexibly, such as by moving from one production area to another on the basis of how busy an area is.

Some members of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party are saying foreign employees should be treated as regular workers.

The Ibaraki and Nagasaki prefectural governments lobbied the central government in August, saying they could expand their farmlands if foreign workers could join their workforce during the busy seasons.

There is, however, persistent caution about accepting foreign workers, mainly because they could end up overstaying.