

Fishing ban may raise hilsa output

Hilsas spawned before being caught

STAR REPORT

Almost all mother hilsas spawned eggs during the 22-day fishing ban as the period was extended by a week this year, said experts. Most of the hilsas caught since the expiry of the ban on Wednesday did not have eggs. Chief Scientific Officer Anisur Rahman at Chandpur Fisheries Research Institute said the fishing ban was imposed for 15 days in previous years. "This year's extended ban has been fully successful in saving mother hilsas," said Anisur Rahman. Last year, the production of hilsa was 3,87,000 tonnes, but it soared to about 5 lakh tonnes this year. Visiting Dokanghar area in Chandpur Sadar upazila on Thursday, our correspondent found that fishermen resumed fishing in the Padma and sold their catch with renewed enthusiasm. There were no eggs in hilsas piled up at the wholesale market. Mizanur Rahman said he along with his fellow fisherman refrained from going to the river during the ban. But he alleged that they received only 16 kg rice each from the government during the period although they were supposed to get 20 kg.

The government should provide fishermen with cash incentives alongside rice, he added. Md Safi Dewan, a member of Ibrahimpur Union Parishad, said they formed a 15-member committee to keep a vigil on fishermen if they violated the ban. The committee did not allow a single boat to go to the river for fishing. Chandpur Fisheries Officer Shafiqur Rahman said a huge amount of mother hilsas was netted during the same period in the previous years, but this year it came down to nearly zero. The task force, Bangladesh Coast Guard and River Police conducted 145 drives and 134 mobile courts in Chandpur from October 12 to November 2. During the period, 61 fishermen were detained for violating the ban. Some 7.5 lakh metre gill nets, 11 boats and 297 kg hilsa were seized during the drives. The mobile courts handed down jail terms to 36 fishermen, fined 25 others Tk 87,000 and filed 61 cases in this connection. Chandpur Deputy Commissioner Abdus Sabur Mondal said fishermen and common people abided by the ban as the administration created awareness. He said people would get its benefit in future.



Officials treating fishermen with sweets in Haimchar of Chandpur as the government's drive to protect mother hilsas became successful. Inset, a trader carries hilsa at Karwan Bazar wholesale fish market in the capital. The government has banned hilsa fishing from October 12 to November 2 to protect mother hilsas and increase fish production. The photos were taken yesterday. PHOTO: ALAM PALASH, ANISUR RAHMAN

Depression in Bay

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If the depression turns into a cyclone, it will be called "Cyclone Nada", said sources at the Met office, adding that the cyclone may cause flooding in some parts of Bangladesh and eastern India. Meanwhile, the first match of Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) which was scheduled to start at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium at 2:30pm yesterday between defending champion Comilla Victorians and Rajshahi King was abandoned due to bad weather. The depression over the west-central bay and adjoining area moved north-westwards and was centred at 12:00noon yesterday about 1035km west southwest of Chittagong port, 995km west-south-west of Cox's Bazar, 885km southwest of Mongla port and 895km southwest of Payra Port, said a Met office special bulletin.

It is likely to intensify further and move in a north north-westerly direction. Under its influence, deep convection is taking place over the North Bay. Squally weather may affect the maritime ports and coastal areas of Bangladesh. Sea will remain moderate near the depression centre. Light to moderate rainfall over the country from Thursday evening may also see some heavy to very heavy showers till November 6. The maritime ports of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, Mongla and Payra have been advised to keep hoisted distant cautionary signal No 3 as a deep convection is moving over the North Bay, added the bulletin. All fishing boats and trawlers over the North Bay were advised to come close to the coast and proceed with caution until further notice.

Wheat cultivation withheld in 8 dists

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notified, leaving farmers no time to act. The blast attack came at a time when wheat production in Bangladesh had just started picking up to 13 lakh MT in two previous years after remaining stagnant at as low as 8 to 9 lakh MT for past one decade. Better wheat breeds developed by Wheat Research Centre (WRC) contributed a lot in increasing domestic wheat output in recent years. Yet, Bangladesh has to import as high as 40 lakh MT of wheat from the international market to meet growing domestic demand. Wheat production had hit a record high at 19.08 lakh MT in fiscal 1998-99. But later the acreage and production began to fall gradually as many farmers shifted to other winter crops like maize, potato and vegetables that promised higher profits. Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury told The Daily Star that the government would ask farmers in last season's affected districts not to cultivate wheat in the coming season. Meanwhile, she said, process is underway to turn the WRC into an independent institute having the mandate to develop varieties resistant to wheat

blast. In the aftermath of blast attack in Bangladesh's wheat fields, world's premier wheat and maize research institute, Mexico-based CIMMYT, feared that, "The consequences of a wider outbreak in South Asia could be devastating to a region of 300 million undernourished people, whose inhabitants consume over 100 million tonnes of wheat each year." CIMMYT Director General Martin Kropff also visited Bangladesh for a better understanding of wheat blast's first Asia attack. Naresh Chandra Deb Barma, director of the country's lone public sector Wheat Research Centre in Dinajpur, told The Daily Star that farmers in last season's wheat blast affected areas are being advised not to go for wheat in this November. Besides, he said, farmers are being made aware in other wheat growing regions about treating seeds with fungicides, and not to sow wheat late. The WRC director explained that last time weather was erratic in February with high temperature and too much of rainfall, creating conducive environment for dormant fungi to attack the late-sowed wheat at flower-

ing stage. Prof Dr M Bahadur Meah, who teaches plant pathology at Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), Mymensingh, and heads the wheat blast advisory body, also insisted that the government agencies must ensure wheat growers do not sow the seeds beyond November 20 to minimise blast recurrence probability. Field Service Wing's Director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) Chaitanya Kumar Das told The Daily Star that seeds are not supplied or extension services are being provided for wheat in this season in last season's affected districts. Rather, he said, the farmers are being motivated to do alternate crops for a change. He said seed samples, collected from government agencies as well as farmers' saved ones, from across the country have been sent to BAU for screening to ensure those are free of fungus (Magnaporthe oryzae). General Manager (Seed) of Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) told this correspondent that treating seeds with fungicides would help farmers protect their wheat fields from blast attacks.

Wheat growers meet up two-third of 60,000 MT annual seeds requirements from the ones that they themselves save in their stock while BADC provides the remaining one-third. In a paper published in the August issue of Plant Disease, an American Phytopathological Society journal, said a lab test carried out by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) confirmed that Bangladesh's affected wheat samples had fungus of South America lineage. CIMMYT Bangladesh Representative TP Tiwari and WRC scientists PK Malaker and Naresh Chandra Deb Barma along with other researchers coauthored the paper. Published in British journal BMC Biology last month, another paper, coauthored by 31 renowned scientists, researchers and experts from across the world, also stated that the blast emergence in Bangladesh was caused by a South American lineage. M Tofazzal Islam, one of the authors, who teaches biotechnology at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Agricultural University, told The Daily Star that emphasis needs to be given on developing wheat varieties resistant to blast-causing fungi.

Race tightens

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majority," he said. Obama shuttled into Florida for fiery rallies aimed at turning out the Democratic base for Clinton in a must-win state for Trump, who is under pressure to snatch battleground states and even poach one or two Democratic strongholds if he is to prevail. Yesterday, Trump headed to New Hampshire, Ohio and Pennsylvania, while Clinton stumps in Ohio and Michigan. NEW POLL NUMBERS A nationwide CBS/New York Times survey showed Clinton's lead shrinking to three points, at 45 percent against Trump's 42 percent, a sign the bombastic mogul is winning over once-way Republican voters. "This will be a close race and you cannot take it for granted," Obama warned supporters in Jacksonville, painting an apocalyptic vision of what Trump would mean for American democracy.

Clinton added to the portrayal, telling North Carolinians that "if Donald Trump were to win this election we would have a commander in chief who is completely out of his depth and whose ideas are incredibly dangerous." Running mate Tim Kaine visited the border state of Arizona, making a play for Hispanic voters by delivering a speech entirely in Spanish. Clinton's last stand will come in Philadelphia on the eve of the election at a joint rally bringing together two of America's most prominent Democratic couples. She will be joined by husband Bill Clinton, President Obama and one of 2016's most potent campaigners, First Lady Michelle Obama. A Trump win in Pennsylvania would be a giant step toward his becoming the 45th president. Clinton's rally in Philadelphia -- the City of Brotherly Love -- will send an unmistakable message: Trump is a

threat to the republic. It was here that the US Constitution came into being in 1787. 'COMING HOME' Melania Trump, the Slovenian-born former model who could become America's first foreign-born first lady in two centuries, also chose Pennsylvania Thursday for her first solo campaign appearance. "He certainly knows how to shake things up, doesn't he?" she said of Trump's incendiary campaign. Trump's third wife made a bald play for votes of suburban mothers, who could make all the difference in the tightly contested state where Clinton's lead has narrowed, by fretting that "children and teenagers can be fragile" and pledging to address bullying if she becomes first lady. Despite the Manhattan mogul's boasts about sexual assault, and allegations of groping by several women, white women are evenly split between

the candidates, the CBS poll showed. As the race nears its conclusion, profound Republican skepticism about Trump's controversial candidacy appears to be ebbing. "I think Republicans are coming home," Congressman Jason Chaffetz told CNN. Similarly, Clinton's FBI troubles -- the bureau is taking new looks into the case of her private email server -- appear to have dissuaded few Democrats, with only eight percent saying it would make them less likely to vote for her. Trump has seized on the controversy, airing a new ad highlighting the FBI probe and declaring Clinton "unfit to serve" -- language Clinton often uses to describe her rival. With the campaign in its final stages, Trump was sticking to the teleprompter and avoiding his most explosive rhetoric. "Nice and cool. Right? Stay on point, Donald, stay on point," the 70-year-old said aloud during a Florida rally.

Fear, but also hope

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teacher is mentally preparing herself for the big reveal of the next President of the United States. Ms Begum expresses her apprehension about the election results, with doubt in her voice. "I'm afraid. I don't want Trump to win. If he wins there will be civil war in this country because he has no knowledge of leading a country." She is not alone in fearing a Donald Trump presidency. The republican's constant verbal attack on the immigrant populations and islamophobic comments when discussing issues of national security has kept many Bangladeshis worried about their future in the United States. Twenty-eight-year-old Bangladeshi-American Melissa Nuruzzaman, a New York City attorney, is also voting this election and feeling uneasy about how people will vote. "In my county (a political subdivision of a state), I don't foresee a lot of Trump support; the voters here are die hard democrats" she begins assuredly, "I am scared of people who vote for Sanders and third party candidates. We can only hope for the candidate that gets elected to be a true representation of what America is and Donald Trump wouldn't embody that." Many like Melissa are holding their breath, hoping Trump does not become America's next leader. Although many Bangladeshis like Mrs. Begum and Melissa are wrapped up in the fervor of the election, others are taking the situation in stride. Salima Rahim, a U.S. citizen for 18 years is neither excited nor nervous about Election Day but she feels sure Clinton will win. Some individuals are still holding out hope for a better future. For a young Bangladeshi-American high school students from the Riverdale/Kingsbridge Academy in the Bronx, who wanted to remain anonymous, a belief in the US political system overrides any concern. The teenager noted that although citizens are feeling tense he is not going to worry about who becomes president because "no matter who wins, we're a democracy and the president doesn't get to do whatever he

wants. We have congress, we have a legislative branch, and judicial branch. If they make a law you don't like, the house of representatives and other political authorities can take care of that." Trump is not the only candidate that is being criticized by the Bangladeshi community. Amid her email scandals and past involvement in Benghazi, Clinton's campaign has not been received favorably. Reflecting on the 2016 Presidential election Ms Begum replied in a pensive tone, "If Trump wins then hate crimes will increase and it will be difficult to live in this country for people like us." There have been several attacks on Bangladeshis, some resulting in deaths, in the recent past, sending ripples of fear through the community in the city. Some of them have been termed hate crimes by police and the relatives of the victims. In one incident where an Imam and his assistant were shot dead, some of his followers pointed to the republican candidate's inflammatory speech. "Trump and his drama has created Islamophobia." Begum is not sure about Hillary Clinton, the Democrat hopeful, as well. She lied about so many things which she wasn't supposed to do," she said. Melissa felt the US election had similarities with Bangladesh elections. "This election resonates with Bangladeshis because we are used to two parties, two leaders and we're forced to choose one, come election time. Now we have Trump and Clinton so it's like the Bangladeshi election; we have to pick the lesser of two evils. I think the Bangladeshi community and America on a whole need to reflect on our values because a country that is so young such as Bangladesh is stuck between two candidates and America is over 200 years old and faces the same issue." The final candidates of the 2016 Presidential race have been met with reluctant acceptance by Bangladeshis in America, a feeling not foreign to this particular community.

Fresh attack on Hindu houses

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The minister also claimed barely "one or two houses were affected" and then went on to accuse the media of exaggeration. Contrary to his claim, however, the local administration in a survey found at least 58 families were affected and 17 temples were either damaged or looted when religious zealots went berserk for around two hours in at least eight Hindu-dominated areas that day. The office of the Nasirnagar Upazila Nirbahi Officer conducted the survey and submitted its findings to the deputy commissioner of Brahmanbaria on Wednesday. Initial media reports suggested around 100 homes and at least 10 temples were vandalised and/or looted. The UNO's office also found that six people, including a physically challenged woman, were injured as "an unruly mob" ran amok through the areas. The total damage has been estimated at Tk 71 lakh, said the survey report obtained by The Daily Star. Sunday's attack followed a Facebook post from the account of Rasraj Das, a local fisherman, "hurting the religious sentiment" of the Muslims.

The post showed a photo of Hindu God Shiva placed on the photo of Kaba, considered a holy place in Islam. Rasraj, 27, is now in jail in a case filed over the post. Before his arrest and the systematic mayhem, he claimed he had nothing to do with the post, but apologised for it anyway. Relatives say his account may have been hacked. Following widespread criticisms over the failure of the police and the local administration to prevent the attack, the officer-in-charge of Nasirnagar police was withdrawn. Various quarters have also been demanding the immediate resignation of the fisheries minister and the UNO. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal has defended the police role, saying the force acted promptly. Meanwhile, Brahmanbaria District AL has suspended three local AL leaders for their alleged instigation and involvement in the attack, RAM Obaidul Mukhtar Chowdhury, president of the district AL, told The Daily Star last night. The three are Abul Hashem, Nasirnagar union chairman and also assistant secretary of the upazila AL,

Faruk Mia, president of Haripur union AL, and Haji Suruj Ali, president of Chapartola union AL. The district AL has also formed a probe team to determine if any other AL men had any role, Obaidul added. "We will take organisational action if the investigation team finds anyone from the Awami League linked with the heinous incident." THE LIST The valuables damaged and looted from temples include gold and silver idols of different sizes, donation boxes, gold, cash and worshiping materials, according to the list prepared by the UNO office. The attackers took away a gold idol of Krishna weighing 15 tolas from Gouro Mondir, the biggest temple in Nasirnagar Sadar Union. A 20-tola silver crown and Tk 50,000 were also looted from there. Gouro Mondir alone lost cash and assets worth Tk 20 lakh, the survey found. Valuables looted and damaged from the 58 houses include gold and other ornaments, furniture, TV sets, iron, idols, bronze dishes, showcases, cash, mobile sets, suitcases, sewing

machines, blankets and fishing nets. The family of Bimol Chowdhury of Goshpara under Nasirnagar union is the worst affected. Valuables worth about Tk 5.50 lakh, including Tk 2 lakh in cash and 8 tolas of gold, were looted from his house. THE ARSON ATTACK Nasirnagar UNO Choudhury Muazzem Ahmed said there might be a political motive behind yesterday's attack. "A conspiracy is being hatched to create unrest in the area and spread panic among the minority community," he told The Daily Star. Contacted, Rezwannur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Brahmanbaria, said "We had brought the situation under control, but this fresh attack was made to create panic and destroy communal harmony." Padda Devi of Banikpara, one of the areas that came under the arson attack, said they couldn't identify the attackers. "Several people came around 3:00am and left after setting fire," said Padda, whose cowshed was set afire. "We could have died had they torched our house."

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