



The main premises of Fisheryghat wholesale fish market lie empty as fish traders sit on the adjacent streets due to a court injunction on the operation of the market there. Sales suffer in the trading hub as dealers or agents have split up over relocating to the newly constructed marketplace in Char Chaktai, inset. The photos were taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: ANURUP KANTI DAS



Stalemate hits Ctg fish trading hub

ARUN BIKASH DEY and ANURUP KANTI DAS, Ctg

The fish trading hub of Chittagong has suffered a decline in sales as agents (arotdar) have split up over shifting the market from Fisheryghat to a new place.

The agents, who are reluctant to relocate, allege that those advocating for the newly constructed market in Char Chaktai want to gain personal benefits.

Char Chaktai is around half-a-kilometre away from the present Fisheryghat wholesale fish market.

On February 22, the agents of Fisheryghat wholesale fish market relocated to Char Chaktai, but many of them returned three weeks later.

Those who were back started selling fish on the streets around the old Fisheryghat market on Friday because there is a court injunction on the old trading centre.

Against this backdrop, the trading activities have suffered badly, said agents and traders, claiming that the daily transaction had dropped by 25 percent.

Fisheryghat is one of the largest wholesale fish markets in the country with 84 agents and around 2,000 fishermen and traders involved in the business.

According to agents, the daily trading stands at Tk 75-100 crore in the hub. Fishermen from different districts gather at Fisheryghat every day with their catches from both sweet and salt water sources. In all, the trading hub provides livelihoods for more than 10,000 people.

CONFLICT

The agents or dealers split up after Bangladesh Jatiya Matsyajibi Somobay Samiti, the owner, shifted the 42-year-old market to Char Chaktai in February.

However, most of them returned after 22 days due to a feud in Sonali Jantrik Matsya Shilpa Somobay Samiti, which runs the market.

Jatiya Matsyajibi Somobay Samiti, a national organisation of fish traders, owns the marketplace, but Sonali Jantrik Matsya Shilpa Somobay Samiti, a Chittagong based association of traders, operates the market.

According to insiders, one of the groups of agents is led by president, general secretary and vice president of Sonali Jantrik Matsya Shilpa Somobay Samiti and the other by six directors of the samiti.

Seeking anonymity, an agent said, "Many of the agents who were reluctant to relocate used to own 17-18 shops each in the old market. If they relocate they would not get allocation of as many shops."

He added that those agents did not use the shops themselves but rather rented them out to other people. "They are threatening those who want to go to the new market, saying if they do not comply, they might never get back to the old market."

There are around 84 shops owned by as many agents in the old Fisheryghat market. In Char Chaktai, the market has more than a hundred shops, said traders.

Hazi Md Mohsin, a director of the Sonali samiti, who resigned from the post in March, protesting "irregularities" of president and general secretary, alleged that the three leaders took allocation of at least 10 shops each in the new market and sold dealership some of the shops at Tk 20-25 lakh each.

Moreover, the new market lacks facilities like purchase of ice in low prices and materials needed for preserving and packaging fish, he said. "The president and GS forcibly took us there but most of the agents returned seeing the lack of facilities there."

However, Ali Sawdagor, president of the Sonali samiti, denied the allegations. "Nobody can give any evidence of irregularities...the new market is

equipped with all modern facilities."

Meanwhile, Masuk Nizam, chairman of Jatiya Matsyajibi Somobay Samiti, said they built the new market following a "request" from the Sonali samiti. "They (agents and traders) wanted us to build the new market equipped with modern facilities," he said.

"They all went there in February but many of them returned to the old place due to intra-organisational feuding."

Trashing the allegations of the old market advocates, Masuk said the new market was equipped with restrooms, and primary fish packaging facilities.

"Fisheryghat is congested," he said, referring to the increasingly expanding business. It is not easily accessible from the river, while fishermen can directly unload catches at Char Chaktai, he said, adding the new market was spacious, hygienic.

The area of Fisheryghat is 50,000 sq ft, while Char Chaktai sprawls over 177,000 sq ft, said Swarup Bikash Barua, an agent.

INJUNCTION

Following the feud between the agents, Jatiya Matsyajibi Somobay Samiti filed a petition with a Chittagong court which gave an injunction on fish trading in the Fisheryghat market on Thursday. So, the agents opposed to relocation started selling fish on the streets the next day.

The Jatiya samiti chairman, Masuk Nizam, said, "Now what can we do? If they want to return to the old market, they must sign a new agreement with us. So, we went to the court seeking an injunction on fish trading at the old market."

Meanwhile, the agents, who were reluctant to go to the new market, said they would move the court to get the injunction vacated.

"We will appeal to the court... as we do not want to go to the new market," said Hazi Md Mohsin, former director of the Sonali samiti.

Ctg man 'murdered over land dispute'

3 weeks after filing of GD over death threat from brother, cousin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A man was found murdered near his house in Karnaphuli upazila of Chittagong yesterday three weeks after he filed a general diary mentioning a death threat received from his brother and cousin.

The body of Alamgir alias Hakkaiya, 48, son of Saleh Ahmed, bore injury marks in the head, legs and throat, according to the police inquest report.

He did not return after he had gone out of home on Saturday afternoon, said police.

The body was smeared with mud, said Karnaphuli Police Station Sub-inspector Belal Hossain. "Primarily, we suspect that he was strangled."

Alamgir's younger brother Sekandar, 30, and cousin Nurul Absar, 50, have been on the run since the body was found in a bamboo garden, said police.

They have a long standing dispute over ancestral land, said their relatives and police.

Alamgir's another cousin Nur Sofa, 60, said Alamgir filed a GD with a Chittagong court on June 10 against Sekandar and Nurul after he got death threat from them.

Officer-in-Charge Rofiqul Islam said they are investigating whether the two were involved in the murder.

Bulu gets ad-interim bail for six months

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday granted ad-interim bail to detained BNP leader Barkatullah Bulu for six months in seven arson attack cases filed in 2015.

The court also issued seven rules asking the government to explain why Bulu should not be granted regular bail in the cases.

The cases were filed with different police stations in the capital for arson attacks from January to March in 2015 during a non-stop movement enforced by the then BNP-led 18-party alliance.

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Miftah Uddin Choudhury and Justice ANM Bashir Ullah came up with the orders and rules following seven petitions filed by the accused BNP leader seeking bail in the cases.

Barrister Saqeb Mahbub, a lawyer for Bulu, told The Daily Star that his client cannot get released from jail following the HC orders as he is accused in several other cases.

Barkatullah Bulu was sent to jail on May 18 after his surrender seeking bail in 31 arson attack cases.

Earlier, different Dhaka courts issued arrest warrants against a section of BNP leaders and activists including Bulu after investigation officers showed them fugitives in the charge sheets.

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