

22-day ban on hilsa fishing from Oct 7

UNB, Dhaka

The government has imposed a 22-day ban, starting October 7, on catching, selling and transporting hilsa in a 7,000-km breeding ground to ensure the safe spawning of this popular fish during its peak breeding period.

The decision was made at a meeting of the National Taskforce formed to implement the “Mother Hilsa Protection Campaign 2018” held yesterday with Fisheries and Livestock Minister Narayon Chandra Chanda in the chair, said a PID handout.

The objective of the restriction is to save mother hilsa which lays eggs during the period.

There will be a ban on catching of all kinds of fish in the rivers of 37 districts during the time, the handout said.

At the meeting, the minister urged all, including fishermen and fishermen's associations, to help make the countrywide programme a success.

Indian commerce minister arrives in Dhaka today

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Indian Minister for Commerce, Industry and Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhu arrives in Dhaka this afternoon on a five-day visit to discuss trade and other bilateral issues between Bangladesh and India.

He is visiting Bangladesh at the invitation of Commerce Minister Tofail Ahmed.

Suresh will have important meetings with top leaders of the government where political issues are likely to dominate, according to sources in Dhaka.

He will hold a meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart Tofail on Wednesday where the two will discuss issues of mutual interest of the two countries.

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Salahuddin 'trespassing' Indian court sets Friday for verdict delivery

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kolkata

A court in India's Shillong has set Friday for delivering the verdict in a case filed against BNP leader Salahuddin Ahmed for illegally entering Indian territory.

The court finished hearings on August 13.

Salahuddin told The Daily Star yesterday that he was hopeful of getting justice. The date for verdict delivery had been deferred four times before, he said.

Salahuddin, now 57, was a state minister of the last Khaleda Zia-led BNP government.

People found him allegedly "hanging around" in Shillong on May 11, 2015, according to Meghalaya police and Indian media.

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Garments workers employed by Knit and Knitex Private Ltd gather on a road before a squad of policemen in Gazipur yesterday. They blocked the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway for around five hours demanding that their due salaries be paid.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Yameen seeks second term

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meanwhile, have threatened sanctions if the vote is not free and fair.

Many voters across the Indian Ocean archipelago said they stood in line for over five hours to cast their ballot, while expatriate Maldivians voted in neighbouring Sri Lanka and India.

The Elections Commission said balloting was extended by three hours until 7pm (1400 GMT) because of technical glitches suffered by tablet computers containing electoral rolls, and officials had to use manual systems to verify voters' identities.

An election official said the deadline was also extended due to heavy voter turnout, and anyone in the queue by 7pm would be able to cast their ballot.

"Eight hours & counting. Waiting to exercise my democratic right! Let's do this, Insha Allah!," former foreign

minister Duna Maumoon said on Twitter.

Maumoon, who is also the estranged niece of Yameen and daughter of former president Maumoon Abdul Gayoom, cast her vote at a booth in the Maldivian embassy in Colombo.

Yameen voted minutes after polling booths opened in the capital Male, where opposition campaign efforts had been frustrated by a media crack-down and police harassment.

Before polls opened, police raided the campaign headquarters of the opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) and searched the building for several hours in a bid to stop what they called "illegal activities". There were no arrests.

Yameen's challenger, the relatively unknown Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, also cast his vote.

Solih has the backing of a united opposition trying to oust Yameen

although he has struggled for visibility with the electorate because the media is fearful of falling foul of heavy-handed decrees and reporting restrictions.

Mohamed Nasheed, who was elected president of a newly-democratic Maldives in 2008 but who now lives in exile, urged the international community to reject the results of a flawed election.

Some 262,000 people in the archipelago -- famed for its white beaches and blue lagoons -- were eligible to vote in an election from which independent international monitors have been barred.

Only a handful of foreign media have been allowed in.

The Asian Network for Free Elections, a foreign monitoring group that was denied access to the Maldives, said the campaign was heavily tilted in favour of 59-year-old Yameen.

Local observers said the balloting

itself went off peacefully and most of the delays were due to technical issues. Results are expected by early today (Monday).

The government has used "vaguely worded laws to silence dissent and to intimidate and imprison critics", some of whom have been assaulted and even murdered, according to Human Rights Watch.

There have been warnings that Yameen could try to hold on to power at all costs.

In February he declared a state of emergency, suspended the constitution and ordered troops to storm the Supreme Court and arrest judges and other rivals to stave off impeachment.

Yameen told supporters on the eve of the election he had overcome "huge obstacles" since controversially winning power in a contested run-off in 2013, but had handled the challenges "with resilience".

AL watchful, BNP hopeful

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AL leaders say Dr Kamal and B Chowdhury will get media coverage but not public support.

Mahbubul Alam Hanif, joint general secretary of the AL, told this newspaper, "We are not worried about the ultimatum issued by Dr Kamal and B Chowdhury. They do not have any public support. People too are not bothered about their ultimatum as they are alienated from the masses."

Also yesterday, Information Minister and JSD chief Hasanul Haq Inu at a programme in Kushtia alleged that Dr Kamal has been used to cover up the "heinous crimes" of BNP and Jamaat.

IT'LL 'TAKE SHAPE GRADUALLY'

According to BNP insiders, the party will come up this week with a proposal over the process for a greater national unity.

As all the opposition leaders were present at the rally and a unity pro-

cess began, it will mount pressure on the government to accept the demand for a non-partisan interim administration, they added.

Before the January 5, 2014 elections, the movement for a neutral polls-time administration was led by the BNP-led 20-party alliance, but this time almost all the political parties outside the government have voiced the demand.

"All the leaders came under a single platform. Now we will come up with our next course of action. We will finalise the programmes soon," Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, BNP's standing committee member, told The Daily Star.

The movement will "take shape gradually" and the government will be compelled to accept the demand, he added.

Organised by the Jatiya Oikya Prokriya, the rally was also joined by leaders of nine other components of the BNP-led 20-party alliance, Juktfront led by B Chowdhury,

Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal led by ASM Abdur Rab, Nagorik Oikya led by Mahmudur Rahman Manna and Ganosamhati Andolon.

This was the first time since the 2014 general election that they were seen together on one stage. The development came three months before the next parliamentary polls.

About the rally, Gonoshasthaya Kendra founder Zafrullah Chowdhury told this paper, "This is a very positive step and the BNP sees it positively. This will lead to a qualitative change in the country's politics."

But Rashed Khan Menon, social welfare minister and chief of the Workers Party of Bangladesh, alleged that the masterminds of army-backed caretaker government got united to foil the election.

At a programme in Barisal, he said leaders of the unity process are trying to rehabilitate the corrupt politicians and war criminals in the country's politics.

Poles shifting

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When Sujan joined Nasir's group, the followers of Mohiuddin were left without a leader, party sources said.

Moreover, the former mayor's son Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury Nowfel has also been reluctant to engage in factional rivalries.

Nowfel told The Daily Star that AL President Sheikh Hasina had made him central organising secretary of the party to strengthen party activities.

"Those who talk about factional rivalry are trying to weaken the party. It is true that my father had a huge number of followers as he had a long political career. After the demise of my father, their usual political activities are going on," he added.

Party insiders say Mohiuddin, in his final years, prepared Nowfel to contest in the general election in Kotwali-Bakalia constituency where Jatiya Party leader Ziauddin Bablu was elected in the last election.

Nowfel said he was willing to take part in the election. "If the prime minister nominates me, I will contest. I am not eyeing any specific constituency."

Meanwhile, MA Latif, MP of the Port-Patenga constituency, who had a long-standing feud with Mohiuddin, recently started to have frequent communication with the followers of his dead rival while Sujan, his competitor in the race for the AL ticket, is getting close to Mayor

Widespread

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Citing an example of the corruption, the corruption watchdog chief said that a businessman imported 20 shallow engines but when he went to get them released, the customs officer demanded Tk 70,000 as bribe. This was despite the importer having the needed documents.

As he refused to pay, the customs officer asked him to conduct a physical test of all the diesel-run machines to ensure that it matched with the horse power mentioned in the import documents.

Finally, the importer decided to pay the customs officer Tk 20,000, as testing each machine would be a time-consuming process, he said.

Highlighting the importance of Mongla port for the exporters and importers, Iftekharuzzaman said that 60 percent of the country's imported vehicles were released through there annually. Moreover, clinkers, fertilisers and coal are also imported in bulk quantity through this sea port.

Meanwhile, the transport workers' union illegally took Tk 5.4 crore as "toll" from Burimari land port users, the findings showed. They demanded Tk 900 from each truck.

Trucks at the land port cannot be hired without the help of a middleman, who takes Tk 400 as "toll" from each truck, the TIB said.

Furthermore, at Burimari land port at Lalmonirhat, the loading and unloading staffers are very powerful, because the importers and exporters are "hostages to them", Iftekharuzzaman said. Businessmen have to pay Tk 200-Tk 500 as tips to them for loading and unloading goods from the trucks, he said.

The workers say the Tk 39 per tonne which is fixed for them is not adequate. They also demanded more than Tk 40 a tonne from the trucks coming to the land port from India and Bhutan at the land port, the TIB survey found.

Stressing on the importance of customs offices, TIB suggested quick digitisation or making the export, import and customs paperless to stop the corruption.

The customs department is responsible for 2.65 percent of the country's GDP and 31.62 percent of that revenue comes from exports and imports which mainly take place through those two land and seaport.



Aargetooth sawfish being cut up for sale in Khulna. Prized by fishermen for its valuable meat and fins, the sawfish, which is a kind of ray, have declined in number and are listed as being critically endangered.

PHOTO: WCS BANGLADESH