



Shutki (dried fish) makers spread fish on a bamboo platform for drying in the sun at Mohishluti Shutki Palli in Tarash upazila of Sirajganj.

PHOTO: STAR

# Poor fish supply upsets shutki makers in Chalanbeel

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, back from Mohishluti, Sirajganj

Fish farmers of Pabna, Sirajganj and Natore districts in Chalanbeel region are busy producing dried fish (shutki), but they are quite depressed this year as they are not getting adequate supply of local varieties of fish from the biggest waterbody in north Bengal. Only 200 maunds to 250 maunds of fish are being dried every day at Mohishluti Shutki Arat in Tarash upazila of Sirajganj during the peak of fish drying season this year, although 500 maunds to 600 maunds were dried per day last year. Six out of ten big sheds for drying fish at the Mohishluti Shutki Palli are shut this year due to lack of adequate supply of fish,

according to the producers of dried fish in Chalanbeel. "I am drying fish in one of the two sheds here as I did not get adequate supply of fish this year," fish trader Delwar Hossain of Solonga upazila of Sirajganj told this correspondent when he (correspondent) visited Mohishluti Shutki Palli. "Around 50 maunds to 60 maunds of fish are needed every day for running one shed fully, but I was able to collect only 20 maunds to 30 maunds from Mohishluti fish market, the biggest fish market of Chalanbeel, in the last few weeks," Delwar added. Producers of Chalanbeel dry puti, koi, moushi, tengra, pabda, shoil, taki, bayem, guchi and many other local varieties of fish. Production of all varieties of local fish

decreased this year, bringing suffering for the fishermen in Chalanbeel, producers said. Due to lack of floodwater and less rain during the monsoon, Chalanbeel did not get sufficient flow of water this year, resulting in poor fish production, according to fishery experts. "Production of local variety fish has decreased this year in the biggest waterbody of the northern district due to the scarcity of water," Pabna District Fishery Officer Md Abdur Rouf told this correspondent. "The producers dried about 100 maunds to 120 maunds of fish every day in Mohishluti Shutki Palli a year ago, but only 40 maunds to 50 maunds are being dried every day this year due to the lack of adequate supply of fish," said Md Tofazzal

Hossain, another dried fish producer. Although the production of dried fish is 50 percent less this year than last year, the price has soared, making the producers of dried fish quite happy, Tofazzal said. Each maund of dried fish was sold at Tk 6,000 to Tk 8,000 a year ago, while it is Tk 12,000 to Tk 15,000 this year, he said, adding that they are expecting trading of Tk 100 crore to Tk 150 crore of dried fish in Chalanbeel this year. Several thousand marginal fishermen in different districts in Chalanbeel area produce dried fish in their households and sell those in the winter for earning extra money every year, but they are suffering due to scarcity of fish in the waterbody this year, said Md Ashrafur Islam, a marginal dried fish trader of Sirajganj.

## Sundarbans to get 4 eco-tourism centres

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The forest department has decided to build four new tourist centres for planned eco-tourism in the Sundarbans as the number of tourists is increasing day by day. The centres are being developed in Alibandha of Sharankhola range, Andharmanik of Chandpai range of the East Sundarbans division and Sheikhertek and Kailashganj of West Sundarban division at a total cost of Tk 24.99 crore. The tourists will be able to see the wildlife and the mangrove forest with the highest security, said Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) of Eastern Sundarbans Division Mahmudul Hasan. "As the eco-tourists are increasing day by day, we will build a modern gangway or jetty so that they can easily get on or off vessels. We will also make watchtowers for the tourist to see the natural sceneries of the Sundarbans," he added. "We have decided to make an adequate number of wooden paths, restrooms with modern washrooms, as well as other facilities," he added. Unesco declared 1,39,700 hectares of forests of East Wildlife Sanctuary Katka-Kanchikhali, Nilkumal South Sanctuary and West Sanctuary as the 798th World Heritage Site in 1996. Since then, the number of domestic and foreign eco-tourists in this mangrove forest has increased significantly every year, the DFO said. Around 1,83,890 tourists, both local and foreign, visited the Sundarbans in the fiscal year 2016-17, which rose to around 2,21,969 in the fiscal year 2017-2018. In that fiscal year, the forest department earned Tk 2 crore as revenue from the tourism sector, the forest officer said. The local people of the Sundarbans said the number of local and foreign eco-tourists is increasing in the Karamajal, Harbariya, Katka, Jamtala, Tiger Point, Badamtala Sea, Kachikhali, Dubala Sutki Palli, Dubeyaki, Kalagachia, Mandarbariya and Hiran Point-Nilkamal areas. East Sundarbans Division officials said the Sundarbans is the largest mangrove forest in the world, covering an area of 6,017 sq km in Bangladesh. There are 210 species of fish, 24 species of shrimp, 14 species of crabs, and one species of lobster and other aquatic creatures in the Sundarbans's 1,874.1 sq km waterbodies. In the Sundarbans, the main tree is Sundari, with 334 species of plants, 165 species of algae and 13 species of orchids. There are 375 species of wild animals in the Sundarbans. Among them are the Royal Bengal Tiger, Chitral and Maya deer, six species of dolphins, including Irabotir, saline water crocodiles, turtles, King Cobras and other species of snakes. There are 315 species of birds, DFO Mahmudul Hasan. The sunset and sunrise are seen from the sea beach of Badamtala of Katka of East Sundarbans of Bagerhat. Besides, the local and foreign tourists have an additional interest in the biodiversity of the Sundarbans. The DFO also expressed his concern about the impact of climate change, reduced flow of sweet water due to the Farakka dam and man-made hazards as they threaten the bio-diversity of the Sundarbans. Reproduction of Roy Bengal Tiger, deer and other wildlife is also hampered due to those reasons. The forest department is giving importance to environment-friendly and planned eco-tourism with greater protection of the biodiversity of the Sundarbans, he said, adding that the department is building the four eco-centres for planned eco-tourism.

## A little help proves much for poor couple

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Deputy Commissioner (DC) Md Shahidul Islam amazed and elated a visually impaired woman and her husband while they were waiting in his office to get a document for their land. Visually impaired Anna Begum, 45, and her husband Rashed Miah, 50, were waiting in front of the record room on the ground floor of the DC's office in Tangail in the chilly weather yesterday morning. The poor couple from Ghugi village under Dulla union in Mirzapur upazila of the district went to the office to collect a document for their piece of land. The DC saw them while he was climbing the stairs to go to his office on the first floor of the building. He went to the couple and asked what they were waiting for, said Tangail Senior Information Officer Kazi Golam Ahad, who was with the DC at that time. After hearing the couple, Shahidul called the officials of the record room and directed them to give the document to the waiting couple immediately. After handing over the land document, the DC called the couple to his



PHOTO: STAR

Visually impaired Anna Begum makes a gesture of blessing to Tangail DC Shahidul Islam who helped her to get a land document.

office room and gave them two blankets as well as Tk 500 cash, making them speechless, Ahad said. Later, the surprised couple left the office telling the DC "God bless you," he added. Md Shahidul Islam, a Bangladesh Civil Service cadre of 21st batch, was deputy secretary at the Ministry of Local Government before joining as DC of Tangail in October 2018.

## 30 hurt, 20 houses damaged in clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

At least 30 people, including four policemen, were injured and 20 houses damaged in a clash between two rival groups at Fukra village in Saltha upazila in the last two days. Police opened fire to bring the situation under control and detained seven people in connection with the incident. The injured were taken to Nagarkanda Upazila Health Complex and Faridpur Medical College Hospital. Locals said there was a longstanding conflict between Haider Shikder and Kawser Matabbor of Fukra village over establishing supremacy in the locality. As a sequel to the conflict, Lal Mia, a supporter of Haider, locked in an scuffle with Ruhul Mollah, a supporter of Kawser, at Fukra Bazar around 8:00pm on Tuesday. At that time, Lal Mia sustained injuries. After the incident, the supporters of the two rivals attacked each other with lethal weapons, leaving 10 people from both sides injured. On information, police rushed to the spot and fired 27 rubber bullets and six teargas shells to bring the situation under control. Yesterday morning, the two



One of the 20 houses that got badly damaged at Fukra village in Saltha upazila of Faridpur during yesterday's clash between two groups.

PHOTO: STAR

groups again clashed with lethal weapons, leaving 20 people injured. Twenty houses were also damaged. Police later fired five rubber bullets and 18 teargas shells to bring the

situation under control.

Four policemen were also injured during the incident, said Md Delwar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Saltha Police Station.

Saltha Upazila Nirbahi Officer Md Maksudul Islam and Additional Superintendent of Police FM Mohiuddin visited the spot, said the OC.

## Bamboo bridge their only means

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

People of five villages in Sadar upazila have been facing untold suffering due to lack of a concrete bridge over the Ratnai river. The villages are Shiberkuti, Purbotari, Pashchimtari, Majhertari and Ghughutari in Kulaghat union. Despite repeated pleas, the authorities concerned are yet to take any initiative in this regard, said locals, adding that there was never a bridge over the river in Maydanerghat area of Shiberkuti village. Villagers voluntarily made bamboo bridge with their own money almost every year to maintain communication with the union parishad (UP), upazila parishad and district headquarters, said local UP member Anisur Rahman Sabuj. They use the bamboo bridge for nine to ten months in a year and during the monsoon, they have to cross the river by boat, he said. They informed the officials of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) about the matter but to no effect, said Sabuj. Farmer Azahar Ali, 64, of Shiberkuti



A man crosses the bamboo bridge over the Ratnai river at Shiberkuti village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila. Villagers have been facing untold suffering due to lack of a concrete bridge over the river.

PHOTO: STAR

village said they have to face untold suffering while taking their agri products to the markets in the town. They have been getting promises about building a concrete bridge over the river during the local and parliamentary elections every time after the Liberation War but nothing is seen here till now, said Shafiqul

Islam, 68, of Majhertari village. "This bamboo bridge is our sorrow and there is no sign of socio-economic progress in the area due to lack of a concrete bridge," he said. Boatman Abu Sahed, 48, of Shiberkuti village, said he runs his boat for carrying people and their goods of five villages for three to four months during the monsoon.

College student Shamsul Islam of Purbotari village said during monsoon, they have to cross the river by boat amid risk of accident. Lalmonirhat LGED Executive Engineer Md Amiruzzaman said there is a plan to build a concrete bridge over the river. They will conduct soil test soon, said the engineer.

## Youth dies after inhaling toxic gas inside fuel tank

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A youth died after inhaling poisonous gas while cleaning the fuel tank of an oil-laden lorry in Medda area of Brahmanbaria municipality on Wednesday morning. The deceased was identified as Sohel Mia, 24, son of late Elahi Khandaker of Ghatara village under Brahmanbaria Sadar upazila. He used to work as a helper of the lorry driver. Inspector Atiqur Rahman, in-charge of number-1 Brahmanbaria Sadar Police Outpost, confirmed the matter. He said Sohel was hired to clean the fuel tank of S Rahman Filling Station early on Wednesday. He fell sick after entering the fuel tank to clean it. He was immediately taken to Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital but died before he arrived at the hospital. When contacted, the on-duty doctor of the emergency department of Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital Dr Mirza Sayeed said they are initially assuming that Sohel died after inhaling the poisonous gas in the tank. The exact cause of death will be determined after the autopsy, he added.

## Woman dies as mudhouse falls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

A 52-year-old woman died when an earthen wall of her house fell on her at Kalijuri village in Kanaighat upazila on Tuesday morning. The deceased was Shahida Begum, 52, wife of freedom fighter Abdul Musobbir of the village. Quoting the deceased's husband, Tomij Uddin, a member of Laksmiprasad Union Parishad, said she was doing household chores in the house when the earthen wall fell on her, leaving her critically injured. "When her family members took her to the upazila health complex, the duty doctors declared her dead", he said. Kanaighat Police Station Officer-in-Charge Abdul Ahad said the body will be handed over to her family members after autopsy.