

Hilsa netting on, despite ban

Hard-pressed fishermen catch the popular fish in different areas of Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A section of local fishermen in Galachipa, Dashmina, Baufal and Rangabali upazilas are netting hilsa despite the ongoing ban. They are catching the fish, particularly during the night, in the Tentulia river. A 100km area of the river in the four upazilas has been declared sanctuary for hilsa but many fishermen are netting the fish on the sanctuary despite a two-month ban started from March 1, said Patuakhali district fisheries office sources said. The government enforced the ban on netting, selling and transporting hilsa to protect the mother fish till spawning. During the period, no fisherman is allowed to throw nets in the waters where there is movement of hilsa, say fisheries officials. On a recent visit to Panpattee area under Galachipa upazila, this correspondent saw some fishermen loading nets on their trawler to catch jatka in the river. Nazrul Islam, a landless fisherman of Borobaishdia area in Rangabali upazila, said "Despite the ongoing ban I'm netting

jatka to run my six-member family." Another fisherman Bacchu Gazi of Panpattee village in Galachipa said finding no other alternative this time he is netting jatka to pay his loan money taken from a local NGO. Md Mojammel Hossain, acting fisheries officer in Galachipa, said they have already taken various awareness programmes in different areas to increase awareness over jatka netting. Galachipa Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Shah Md Rafiqul Islam said action will be taken if anyone catches fish amid the ongoing ban. On March 11, Baufal UNO and two employees of his office were injured in an attack by criminals when they were conducting a mobile court drive against catching jatka in the Tentulia river. UNO Pijus Chandra Das and his employees came under attack by a group of around 50 men when they were returning from the drive. The attackers threw brick bats on the mobile court team and police fired point-blank shots to bring the situation under control.



The bank of the Tentulia river in Patuakhali's Galachipa upazila buzzes with fishermen with boats carrying nets meant for catching hilsa. PHOTO: COLLECTED

Woman hacked dead, man dies in clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Criminals hacked a housewife to death in Bagerhat Sadar upazila while a man was killed in a clash in Baruikhali area of Morrelganj municipality yesterday. The deceased in Bagerhat Sadar was Marzina Begum, 38, wife of Mohammad Ali Sheikh of Fultala Purbapara village in the upazila. Informed by villagers, police recovered Marzina's body from a shrimp enclosure near her house yesterday morning and sent it to Bagerhat Sadar Hospital for autopsy, said Sadar Model Police Station OC Mahtab Uddin. "Marzina went out of her room during a mild storm around 9:00pm on Sunday night and remained missing since then. Later locals found her body that bore injury marks on the neck," OC Mahtab quoted the deceased's family members as saying. The victim in Baruikhali area of Morrelganj municipality was Lokman Majhi, 50, son of Asmat Majhi of the area. As a sequel to a land dispute, Lokman and Yunus along with their supporters locked in a clash yesterday noon, which left Lokman and another man injured, said Lokman's wife Neharu Begum. Lokman later died at a local clinic, said KM Azizul Islam, OC of Morrelganj Police Station.

Jamalpur declared free of early marriage

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

Jamalpur, which was usually known as one of the most early marriage-prone district in the country, has been declared free from early marriage. The announcement came at a discussion programme, jointly organised by Jamalpur district administration and Department of Women Affairs, at Jamalpur Officers' Club premises in the town yesterday. Lawmaker from Jamalpur-5 constituency Mozaffar Hossain attended the programme as the chief with Jamalpur Deputy Commissioner (DC) Ahmed Kabir in the chair. Among others, Executive Director of Ain O Salish Kendra Shipa Hafiza and Jamalpur Municipality Mayor Mirza Sakhawatul Alam Moni were present as special guests. Quoting a study, conducted by UNICEF in 2013, speakers said the district consisting of seven upazilas see 81.82 percent marriage rates

of girls, aged below 18, and it is ranked in the top of the list of early marriage prone districts in the country. Through programmes funded by UNFPA and UNICEF and efforts by the district administration and Department of Women Affairs in coordination with several Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have made Jamalpur district free from child marriage, speakers said. The initiative that started in 2014, saw a tremendous success in terms of reducing early marriages by implementing various programmes like awareness campaign, advocacy and community dialogues, within the span of only five years, they said. The discussants also added that the local administration in cooperation with community people was able to prevent at least 372 early marriages till December, 2018. DC Kabir said all the upazila administrations concerned declared their respective areas free from early marriage in between February 12 to March 17. The DC later led an oath taking programme where a good number of participants vowed to play roles against multiform of violence against women.

Supporter of AL's UZ candidate murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A supporter of Awami League (AL) nominated candidate Delwar Hossain in the upazila parishad election was found murdered at Purura village in Saltha of the district early yesterday. Election to Saltha upazila parishad was held yesterday. The deceased was farmer Nurul Islam Mollah, 37, son of Abdul Mannan Mollah of the village. The victim's cousin Abul Hossain said Nurul went to sleep after taking his meal on Sunday night. Later, family members found the body beside the toilet of the house around 4:30am. He was hit with a sharp weapon in the head from behind, said Abul Hossain. Earlier on March 3, Nurul came under attack by the supporters of AL rebel candidate, said Abul Hossain. Delwar said Nurul was his supporter. Criminals killed him so that he could not work for AL. Delwar Hossain, officer-in-charge (OC) of Saltha Police Station, said on information, police sent the body to Faridpur Medical College Hospital for autopsy. They are trying to arrest the criminals, said the OC.



A pickup van crossing the risky bridge on the Panga river in Nilphamari's Domar upazila. PHOTO: EAM ASADUZZAMAN

Aging bridge poses risk in Nilphamari

20,000 people cross the decrepit structure daily

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

An aging bridge on the Panga river at busy Domar-Panchagarh road via Boragari Bazar in Domar upazila lies in awful state, posing a serious threat to passengers. The 160-feet long and 8-feet wide concrete bridge was constructed at Gomnati village during Pakistan era and its half portion was completely damaged in 1971 Liberation War as occupation forces fired mortar shells to disrupt communication. After the Liberation War, the government set up a bailey bridge on the damaged portion to restore communication but it was damaged again in the flood of 1988 and since then it has not been repaired, said Abdul Hamid, chairman of Gomnati Union Parishad (UP). Every day over 20,000 people and several hundred vehicles cross the bridge amid risk of accident as it is the only way to go to Panchagarh and Thakurgaon for people of Dimla and Domar upazilas, said locals. During a recent visit, this correspondent found that cracks developed on the pillars and beams beneath the bridge. Abdul Hafiz, a bus driver, said "We cross the risky bridge amid fear of death." UP member Zahidul Islam said a deadly accident may take place anytime if a new bridge is not constructed there. Executive Engineer of Nilphamari Roads and Highways Department Hamidur Rahman said they wrote to the higher authorities for fund to build a concrete bridge replacing the vulnerable one but to no respond yet.

Journo faces 'crossfire threat'

Assaulted by Rab, the newsman received treatment

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A local journalist received 'threat of crossfire' from a member of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) in Birganj upazila yesterday. The victim, Md Abdur Razzak, 47, is son of Abdul Zabbar of Sujalpur area under Birganj municipality and editor of Birganj Protidin, an online news portal. He is also the upazila correspondent of Bangla daily Jai Jai Din and a news collector of private television channel Ekattor. Razzak said a team of Rab-5 consisting of six members in a microbus approached him when he was covering the upazila parishad election in Birganj. Replying to a query from a Rab member, Razzak said he was covering the election as a journalist. But the Rab member hit him thrice and asked him to leave the polling centre, threatening him with crossfire, said Razzak. The elite force also abused him verbally, he said. The journalist then informed Additional Superintendent of Police Md Salauddin about the matter over phone. Immediate after the phone call, the microbus carrying the Rab men left the spot while Razzak returned home amid fear. Afterwards, a police team came to the journalist's home and took him to Birganj Upazila Health Complex where he received primary treatment. The team of Rab-5 came from Rajshahi, said Major Sohail Rana Prince, commanding officer of Dinajpur Rab. He visited the spot and regretted for the incident. Action will be taken against the accused Rab member after investigation, said Major Prince.

Indian bicycle expedition team in Benapole

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A three-member bicycle expedition team from India arrived in Bangladesh through Benapole immigration check post yesterday morning. The team will travel on bicycles from Benapole to Cox's Bazar via Dhaka in 17 days to create awareness on negative impact of plastic on the environment. Activists of various social organizations welcomed the team in Bangladesh. The members of the team are Partha Mukherjee, Suprotim Majumdar and Manos Ghosh. Speaking with journalists, team leader Partha Mukherjee said people have become excessively reliant on plastic that takes hundreds of years to degrade in the nature. Plastic is affecting the nature adversely and unless its use is checked, civilisations will face serious consequences in near future. The expedition team in both the countries will try to create awareness among people on the negative impact of plastic, he added.

GANG RAPE OF WOMAN, DAUGHTER Main accused arrested in Narsingdi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested the main accused in the case for the gang rape of a woman and her daughter in Narsingdi's Shibpur upazila. Acting on a tip-off, a team of Rab-11 conducted a drive in Madhabdi municipality under Narsingdi and arrested Md Mokhles, 36, Rab officials told journalists, holding a press briefing at its office in Narayanganj. Mokhles, son of late Chan Miah of Sristygarh area in Shibpur, is accused in six cases, including those for robbery and possessing illegal arms, said Lt Col Kazi Shamsher Uddin, commanding officer of Rab-11. "During primary interrogation, Mokhles confessed that he was involved with the rape and it happened as per his plan, Shamsher said. On Friday, a 48-year-old woman and her 30-year-old daughter were gang-raped at a jute mill in Sristygarh area. The woman filed a case with Shibpur Police Station against six people, including Mokhles, in the connection. In the case statement, the woman said they had started for Habiganj on a bus around 3:00pm on Friday from Sayedabad in Dhaka. After the bus went out of order near Sristygarh around 6:30pm, the accused approached the victims and offered them a ride on another bus. At one stage, the accused dragged them to an abandoned room of a nearby jute mill, raped them and fled, goes the case statement. After the incident, the victims went to the police station. The law enforcers made overnight drives and arrested Delwar Hossain and Shafique. Of the accused, Delwar Hossain, 30, Md Shafique, 25, both residents of Sristygarh, were earlier arrested by police.



Gang rape accused Mokhless at the office of Rab-11 in Narayanganj yesterday afternoon. PHOTO: STAR