

FISHING IN BAY

# Stymied by poor catch, lengthy ban

HABIBUR RAHMAN WITH FIROZ A MUZAHD

For the past three years, the government has been imposing 65 days of fishing ban in the exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Bangladesh at Bay of Bengal.

Although the ban -- imposed every year from May 20 till July 23 -- is intended to protect and increase fish population, it has no significant impact on fish population in the Bay throughout the rest of the year, said fishers based in Pirojpur.

They said the ban in Bangladesh EEG alone cannot ensure an increase in fish population, as fishers in neighbouring EEZs of India and Myanmar continue to net fish during the ban period, right along the Bangladesh maritime boundaries.

In addition to the 65-day ban, the local fishers also have to refrain from fishing in the sea for another 22 days, around October-November every year, to protect the breeding of hilsa -- the most sought-after fish in Bangladesh and West Bengal of India.

Both the fishing bans, amounting to almost three months, fall within the eight peak months of fishing season that usually runs from mid-April to mid-November.

But their catch in the remaining five months -- when fishing trawlers are allowed to fish in the sea -- has been lower than the usual over the past several years, said both fishers and trawler owners.

Fishing trawler owners said they bear the expense of a voyage with money loaned from moneylenders, such as fish wholesalers, and the money to repay the loan and payment for the fishers comes from profit made from sale of fish netted in a particular voyage.

But over the past several fishing

seasons, most of their voyages have not been producing much profit due to poor catch, resulting in failure to pay their fishers, let alone repay the debt, they added.

"We get a cut of the profit only if the trawler owner makes profit after meeting all expenses," said fisherman Sibul Das, from Tona village in Pirojpur Sadar upazila.

Before heading out to the sea on a voyage, the fishers loan money,

in the form of rice, which is not enough for even a four-member family.

Many of them tried changing their profession for survival, but it is difficult to learn a new trade when they spent most of their lives learning how to fish in the sea, Ismail lamented.

Bimal Chandra, a fishing trawler owner, also from Tona village, said, "After spending over TK 1.5 lakh



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

**Fishers on their trawlers wait wearing a glum expression as their catch has been poor despite lifting of fishing ban recently. The photo was taken from Badura fishing dock in Pirojpur Sadar upazila.**

known as 'dadon', from trawler owners and leave the money with their family for their household expenses.

That debt continues to pile up as they cannot repay the loan with the meagre income they have been making from fishing in the sea, said another fisher Ismail Hossain.

When the fishers' families struggle without cash during the periods of fishing bans, the only government assistance they get is

on a voyage to the sea, a fishing trawler oftentimes returns without expected fish."

The threat of pirates has been eradicated -- thanks to the authorities; but the volume of fish being netted is falling significantly due to multiple bans during the peak season, he added.

In the last couple of years, he had to count TK 10 lakh in losses, said another trawler owner Mohammad Shahjahan, from the same area.

## Govt decided this, not BPC

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government agency racked up losses of Tk 726.7 crore.

The losses could have been borne for another six months had the government not taken out Tk 10,000 crore from the BPC in the last two fiscal years per a law enacted in 2018, Rahman said.

The BPC deposited Tk 10,000 crore to the government exchequer from its profit in fiscals 2019-20 and 2020-21.

With the Tk 43,136 crore profit made by the BPC between fiscals 2014-15 and 2020-21, five energy-efficient projects were taken up that cost Tk 33,734 crore.

The projects include: establishing a Single Point Mooring with a double line at Moheshkhali for safe unloading of imported crude oil, installing fuel pipeline from Chattogram to Dhaka and another jet fuel pipeline from Rugganj to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport.

Besides, the BPC does not get money from the government for importing fuel as well as for the development projects.

"Only when we learnt that there were no funds to meet up the loss that we solicited the hike as we sensed the situation could go out of control soon otherwise."

The ministry solicited the price hike that the government chose to implement.

"It is the government's call, ultimately -- the BPC does not have the authority to take such big decisions that are viewed as political nuisance worldwide," Rahman added.

But Shamsul Alam, energy advisor to the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, differs.

"It is a bureaucratic decision to raise the fuel price and not a political one."

The government is now acting as a player instead of a regulator while the transport operators are acting as a regulator.

"The BPC violated the law in raising the fuel price and in future, the officials will face the trial for violation of law," he added.

The government had many options other than raising the fuel price to cover its losses, said Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director of the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

Were the taxes on fuel imports waived, the government could have averted the price hike. The government could have compensated the BPC's losses with a stimulus package, Moazzem added.

Because of the fuel price hike,

the garment sector will have to bear losses of Tk 3,000 crore loss, said Mohiuddin Rubel, a director of the Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

"We have just started to recover from the fallout of the pandemic and at this stage, such a decision was taken," he said.

This was not the right time to increase the fuel price, said Mohammad Hatem, president of the Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association.

The mass people have been pushed into a deep crisis for the fuel price rise, said Mozammel Haque, general secretary of the Bangladesh Jatri Kallyan Somity.

The passengers have to pay an additional Tk 200 crore daily and Tk 73,000 crore annually for the increased bus fares brought on by the Tk 15 hike per litre in the price of diesel, he added.

Meanwhile, the energy ministry yesterday said there is no plan to raise the prices of petrol and octane as the fuel supply across the country will be uninterrupted and the stock is enough.

"The government will take strict legal action if anyone creates an artificial fuel crisis or sells fuel at a higher price," the energy ministry statement added.

## Judiciary has zero

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tolerance. We will have to uphold our long tradition of communal harmony," Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain said.

Justice Hasan Foez Siddique, a judge of the SC's Appellate Division, told the function that the Liberation War in 1971 had settled whether Bangladesh would be a communal or a non-communal country.

"We all are citizens of Bangladesh. There is no such word as 'minority' in our constitution. Let us think that we all are Bangalees and citizens of Bangladesh. Let us get united so that communalism cannot rise in the country," he said.

Addressing the function, Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim said the government's stance is very rigid against those who want to destroy the communal harmony.

"The government will not spare the perpetrators. It does not matter how powerful they are ..." he said, adding that no one would be allowed to fish in troubled waters.

Attorney General and SCBA President AM Amin Uddin said attempts were being made to spread "venom of communalism" in the country. "But we will resist it unitedly. The government has taken stern action," he said.

Justice Gobinda Chandra Tagore, a judge of the High Court Division of the SC, Vice Chairman of Bangladesh Bar Council and former SCBA president Muhammad Yusuf Hossain Humayun, SCBA Vice President Muhammad Shafique Ullah, and Joya Bhattacharya, convener of Bijoya Punormiloni Uddjapan Parishad, among others, spoke at the programme.

## UNSC expresses

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increased fighting in borderlands involving ethnic armed organizations.

The council members also called for an "equitable, safe and unhindered delivery and distribution of Covid-19 vaccines," as well as "safe and unhindered humanitarian access to all people in need."

"They underlined that vaccines should be accessible to all and called for greater international support to ensure the availability of Covid-19 vaccines and to expedite their roll out," the statement said.

## Stomach ulcer: Causes

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patients, which is 3.28 percent of the total number, reveals the study published in the Mymensingh Medical Journal.

**CAUSE:** Stress, smoking and unhealthy diet were once thought to be the principal causes of stomach ulcers. However, the bacterium *Helicobacter pylori* is now known to be responsible for 60 percent of stomach ulcers.

Long-term use of nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs such as aspirin, ibuprofen, or naproxen can also cause stomach ulcer.

Sometimes, the condition that presents itself as stomach ulcer can actually be stomach cancer, specially, in older people.

**SYMPTOMS:** Stomach ulcers can sometimes not

show any symptoms. Other times, symptoms include abdominal pain, indigestion, nausea, loss of appetite, vomiting, weight loss, bright or altered blood present in vomit or bowel motions, symptoms of anemia etc.

**PREVENTION:** Diagnosis and treatment will depend on your symptoms and the severity of your ulcer. To prevent the spread of bacteria that might cause a stomach ulcer, wash your hands with soap on a regular basis. Make sure to consume well-cleaned and well-cooked food.

If you need to take NSAIDs, the overuse of which can cause stomach ulcer, be sure to follow the recommended dosage. Always take these medications with food and adequate liquids.

A fishing trawler costs Tk 35 lakh, but banks do not provide any loan assistance for the sector, he also said.

Local fish wholesaler Iqbal Hossain, who often lends money to trawler owners, said, "Many trawler owners flee the area after failing to repay the loan. But the money is hardly recovered if the matter is taken to the court."

Instead of imposing the 65-day ban, fish population in the sea could be increased by prohibiting the use of fine nets on improvised seagoing fishing vessels and by confiscating illegal fishing nets such as 'Behundi' in both sea and rivers near the coastline, said, Pirojpur District Trawler Owners' Association President Kamal Das.

Asked whether the 65-day fishing ban in Bangladesh EEG alone is helping increase overall fish population, Prof Hossain Zamal of Department of Fisheries under Faculty of Marine Sciences and Fisheries at Chittagong University, said more research is needed to ascertain the benefits of the fixed 65-day ban, from May 20 to 23 July, and the dates can be modified based on the research.

Aside from strict enforcement of laws prohibiting illegal fishing nets to increase fish population, which in the long run would benefit fishers in the country, the authorities in India and Myanmar could be convinced through diplomacy to observe the 65-day ban in the Bay of Bengal at the same time with Bangladesh, he also said.

Contacted, Pirojpur District Fisheries Officer Abdul Bari said the government has been looking to better assist the fishers with food assistance under various programs during the periods of fishing ban.

## Green together

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Suspension of 10 coal-based power plants is a huge decision by the government towards this regard.

At a panel discussion yesterday, private sector leaders also shared their experiences of using green technologies and plans of future actions to help achieve ambitious goal of net zero emission by 2050.

Rajarshi Dey Sarkar, vice president and general manager of Novo Nordisk Pharma; Ipsitha Fahmin, human resource business partner -- Bangladesh, Maersk; MA Bashir Ahmed, deputy managing director at Deshbandhu Group; Jan Plenge, export director of Nokia Networks, and Sean Moller, global accounts director of Bluetown, all spoke at the panel.

Ali Mushtaq Butt, head of Trade Mission and Danida Business at the Denmark Ministry of Foreign Affairs, moderated the panel.

## DoE failed

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The HC came up with the directives following a writ petition filed by the Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela) in 2011, seeking necessary orders on the government to protect the waterbodies in Savar.

The petitioner's lawyer Syeda Rezwana Hasan told The Daily Star that around 30 industrial companies, most of which have no environmental clearance certificates, have been polluting the waterbodies.

"Therefore, the local environment and ecological system, along with the locals' lives, are being severely affected."

Sayed Ahmed Kabir also appeared for the petitioner, while Deputy Attorney General Wayes Al Haroni and lawyer Muntasir Uddin Ahmed represented the state and the DoE respectively.

## US to provide

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countries took part in it.

Bangladesh demanded that vaccines be made public good affordable to all countries, and pharmaceutical companies be encouraged and assisted to produce it locally.

Momen disclosed that Bangladesh has distributed 78 million vaccine doses, including the first dose of 46 million and 32 million as the second dose.

He said Bangladesh needs more doses to vaccinate at least 80 percent of its 165 million people.

The good news is, Momen said, the Covid-19 daily infection rate in Bangladesh is now around 1 percent.

## Mexico City sets

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When schools closed for more than a year during the Covid-19 pandemic, some students turned to the service to take part in online classes.

## BB cancels tests after question

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The three were placed on a one-day remand each yesterday, he said.

According to police officials, Sohel had himself appeared for recruitment tests after getting leaked question papers. Later, he got involved in the syndicate.

He was arrested twice, they added.

So far, DB arrested eight people, including an ICT technician of Ahsanullah University of Science and Technology (AUST), over the question paper leak.

Muktaruzzaman Royel, the arrested technician, handed the leaked questions to a syndicate that later sold it to thousands of jobseekers.

During primary interrogation, Muktaruzzaman named two more staffers of AUST who were involved in the leak.

According to DB, the syndicate amassed more than Tk 60 crore selling these leaked questions papers.

Muktaruzzaman, the kingpin of the racket, told investigators that he generally got the questions from an office employee.

This time, Parvez Miah, a lab assistant, leaked the questions, he added.

On Wednesday, the AUST authorities suspended these three staffers over the matter.

The question paper of Saturday's recruitment test for hiring 1,511 cash officers

in five state-owned banks was leaked from AUST, which was tasked with preparing the questions, DB said.

Ahead of the test, the syndicate members also set up 11 temporary booths in different places of Dhaka. At the booths, their "clients" were given the questions and they memorised the answers there.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Bank on Wednesday sought an explanation from AUST.

Md Serajul Islam, spokesperson for the central bank, said the bank sent a letter to AUST and asked it to reply within November 14.

"The central bank has made the decision for its [AUST] alleged involvement in leaking question papers of preliminary tests of five state-owned banks," he said.

The central bank will take further steps based on the response, he added.

Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit has also started enquiring about the assets of the syndicate members.

Meanwhile, written examinations for two posts of three banks -- senior officer (IT) of Sonali Bank and Bangladesh Development Bank; and assistant database administrator of Janata Bank and Sonali Bank -- that were supposed to be held on November 13 and 20 have been postponed, said a notification of Bangladesh Bank yesterday.

## Indira rules out Tashkent-type

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planning at this time to ask the Security Council to act.

**YAHYA REJECTS NURUL AMIN'S REQUEST**

Pakistan President Yahya Khan rejected Nurul Amin's request for an early release of the draft constitution to enable political parties to formulate their points of view in advance, reported The Pakistan Times today. The paper quoted Nurul Amin saying that though he was not shown the draft constitution he could conclude from his discussion with the president that separate electorate system would be provided in the proposed constitution.

**ON THE WAR FRONT**

Mukti Bahini raided a Pakistani camp at Alamdanga in Kushtia district today killing 17 Pakistani soldiers. Two freedom fighters embraced martyrdom in the action. On the same day, Mukti Bahini destroyed two ferry boats near Kamarkhali Ghat.

Muktibahini ambushed today occupation troops in Karnail Bazar area killing eight enemy soldiers.

Mukti Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops in Arial area of Sylhet today killing

seven enemy soldiers. On the same day in another ambush in Teliapara area Muktibahini killed four Pakistani soldiers. In Jurigowalbari Mukti Bahini killed five occupation soldiers and one Razakar today. Besides, road communication was disrupted by destroying a bridge between Jaintiapur and Kalinagar area.

In a report titled "Dacca Business Centre shaken by bomb blast" The Daily Telegraph of London today said that a heavy explosion had shaken business centre of Dacca yesterday when a bomb exploded in a car a few yards from the entrance to the main post office. A reliable British eyewitness saw one man killed but later it was learnt three people were killed, the newspaper added.

It further said that the morale of 6,000 West Pakistan policemen who were brought to East Pakistan in March was at a very low point. "They are beginning to show signs of severe strain. Several units have been confined to barracks for the past week," added The Daily Telegraph.

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## Staffer admits removing oxygen

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admitted that he removed the oxygen mask, Rab officials said at a press briefing.

The victim, Bikash Chandra Biswas, 17, was the son of Bishu Chandra Biswas of Putimari village in Gaibandha's Saghata upazila. Bikash, alongside studying, used to work part-time at a metal workshop at Kachua Bazar to support his family.

Bikash was injured critically after a motorcycle rear-ended his bicycle when he was returning home from work on Tuesday evening.

He was first taken to Saghata Upazila Health Complex and then moved to the Bogura SZMCH.

Addressing the briefing at Rab media centre in the capital's Karwan Bazar, Rab official Al Moin said Dholu first demanded Tk 500 from Bikash's family as "tip" after they reached the hospital.

Later, Dholu agreed on Tk 200. Soon after the victim was taken to the emergency ward, Bikash was administered oxygen and sent to the surgery ward, said the Rab official.

"Dholu then took Bikash to the surgery ward. As there was no bed, the victim was given a bed on the floor. After that, Dholu asked for money from the victim's family. The family then gave him Tk 150, but Dholu demanded more," he said.

Bikash's father Bishu, a blacksmith in Putimari village, earlier said, "I had only Tk 150 in my pocket. I gave that as tip. However, Dholu refused to take it and demanded Tk 200. Later, a man who was with Dholu took the money and put it in Dholu's pocket and tried to convince him."

## President urges caution

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at the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

"In order to implement Digital Bangladesh, we need to create skilled human resources enriched with modern technological knowledge at this Fourth Industrial Revolution era," he added.

Hamid called the year of 2021 a unique and memorable one in the history of the Bangalee nation, saying the country is simultaneously celebrating twin mega historic events -- the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the golden jubilee of Bangladesh Independence.

"Digital Bangladesh is no longer a dream but a reality," he said, adding that the country's education and judicial activities, healthcare, banking services have become dependent on IT.

The head of the state said in 2009, only eight lakh people of the country had internet service but at present the number of internet users is over 12 crore.

He also said the number of mobile phone users has increased more than four times.

Bangabandhu laid the foundation of science research and information and communication technology with far-sighted thinking and subsequently Bangladesh became a member of ITU on September 5 in 1973, he added.

But, after the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu by the anti-liberation forces on August 15, 1975, the progress of ICT in Bangladesh came to a halt, said Hamid.

After 21 years, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the worthy successor of the Father

of the Nation, took pragmatic steps, including development of infrastructure for the advancement of information technology in the country, he said.

The president said the government in last one decade executed many plans, including the four pillars of Digital Bangladesh - connectivity, efficient human resource development, e-government and ICT industry promotion resulting in an unprecedented development of ICT.

"The digital distance between cities and villages is shrinking ... the government successfully reduced the cost of internet bandwidth, developed infrastructure, brought digital devices within reach, and delivered services at the people's doorsteps," he mentioned.

He added that people are now availing more than two hundred civic services staying at home through mobile phones.

The president said the digital economy is developing in the country with the implementation of Digital Bangladesh.

Software and IT services developed in Bangladesh are being provided to more than 80 countries of the world including USA, Europe, Canada and Australia, he said.

Hamid said exports in the IT sector have exceeded \$1.3 billion. He hoped that by 2025, the revenue earned from IT will exceed \$5 billion and the contribution of software and ICT services to GDP will increase to 5 percent.

Keeping this goal in mind, the present government has set up 39 high-tech and software technology parks, IT training and incubation centers across the country, the president mentioned.