



With books in their indigenous Tripura language in hand, these students are all smiles. But for all their enthusiasm, the books will be barely opened in the coming school years, owing to a lack of teachers who can read from them. This photo was taken from Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

The books are there, but who'll teach them?

5 years on, indigenous language books initiative yet to progress

MINTU DESHWARA

Most of the students at Sreemangal's Daluchhara Government Primary School are members of the Tripura community.

But entering the classrooms, this correspondent saw that teaching was being conducted in Bnagla. "Two-third of our students are from the Tripura community, but we only get two to three sets of books in their language," said Arun Datta, head teacher of the school.

"Last year, I only received teachers' copies for two classes, while this year we got none," he complained, mentioning that there's also no indigenous teachers at the school who could teach from the books.

"We aren't provided any specific plans [from the government] in this regard, neither were we trained for it," he added.

But those involved with the school said students are most comfortable when they're taught in their mother tongue. "Whenever a teacher asks them to read from a Tripura language book, they show great enthusiasm," said Janak Tripura, a land donor member of the school's managing committee.

"It's their language, they know it very well," he continued. "But the teachers can't read the books themselves, and as a result cannot teach that way."

Pratiksha Debbarma, a student of the school, said, "I wish the teachers could teach us from these books, as we know the language very well."

Besides Daluchhara Government Primary School, this correspondent saw the same scenario in Sreemangal's Jamburachhara Government Primary school, Bishamoni Government Primary School and Ishachhara Government Primary School in Kulaura upazila.

In 2017, the government had first introduced primary school books in indigenous languages in order to prevent dropout of indigenous students. Although the curriculum has been upgraded

from pre-primary to first, second and third grades over the years, the initiative is yet to take off proper due to the lack of trained teachers.

Speaking to this newspaper, AFM Zakaria, chairperson of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology's anthropology department, said education in indigenous mother tongue is in crisis mode in the country.

He said in order to aid indigenous students as well as contribute in preserving indigenous cultures, resolving the teaching issue is a must.

Md Muslem Uddin, deputy director of primary education department in Sylhet division, said books in Tripura, Garo and Sadri languages have been distributed to 675 students in Sylhet division this year.

"We have to talk the higher authorities about the ongoing issues marring the process of teaching in indigenous mother languages," he added.

Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Adivasi Forum, said though the initiative by the government is commendable, five years have passed without any sort of progress in this regard, which is worrisome.

"Garo language books are not taught even in my own native village," he told The Daily Star. "There is no plan or policy regarding the whole situation, neither is there any guideline on when and how to teach in these languages."

He said the government should take urgent measures to address the issue, suggesting recruitment of teachers who know or specialise in the languages as an early step. "It is necessary to make a policy in this regard, along with appropriate budget allocations for it. If not done quickly, this noble initiative by the government will surely be wasted," he added.

According to official estimates, there are 39 indigenous languages in the country, Sanjeeb said.



It's their language, they know it very well. But the teachers can't read the books themselves, and as a result cannot teach that way.

JANAK TRIPURA
Daluchhara Govt Pny
School managing
committee member



PHOTO: TITU DAS

A welcome surprise

Even in winter, Barishal markets flooded with hilsa

SUSHANTA GHOSH

Hilsa is typically not associated with winter. But surprisingly, this year's cold season has brought about a change with that in Barishal, as large hilsa fish are being netted, which have set the division's wholesale markets buzzing.

"There's been a lot of hilsa in the river over the last two-three weeks," said an elated Alauddin Majhi, an angler from Bhola sadar. He said he has caught at least 200 fish in last seven days.

According to Barishal Divisional Fisheries Office, the hilsa is being caught from the Meghna, Arial Kha, Ilisha, Tetulia, Biskhal and other big rivers of the division -- which wasn't seen in the last few years.

During a visit to Port Road Hilsa Mokam, the largest hilsa wholesale market in Barishal, this correspondent got to know that at least four to five hundred of the fish are coming to the market every day. Prices were found to be relatively stable.

Along with large, above one kg hilsas, there's also jatkas below 10 inches, although catching the latter is banned.

Researchers and fisheries officials attributed this to the anglers' use of current nets, along with the fact that mother hilsas have laid eggs recently.

Dr Md Anisur Rahman, principal scientific officer of Chandpur-based Bangladesh Fisheries Research Institute, said successful management over the last couple of years, including the establishment of sanctuaries and protection of jatka, has created favourable conditions in the rivers. Last year, more than 51 percent hilsa eggs hatched due to good management.

Asked about the use of illegal current nets, Anisur Rahman Talukder, deputy director of BFDI, said anglers are using them at night. "They're able to do this as we don't have enough human resources to protect the wide estuary and rivers all the time."

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Memo No. 46.02.4243.000.07.008.16-91 Date: 31.01.2022

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Md. Saad Zoglu Faruque
Upazila Engineer
LGED, Kathalia, Jhalokathi
E-mail: ue.kathalia@lged.gov.bd

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Office of the Upazila Engineer
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1	Naogaon-S/ADP/2021-22/01	653075	02-Feb-2022 9:00	16-Feb-2022 15:00	LTM
2	Naogaon-S/ADP/2021-22/02	654065	02-Feb-2022 9:00	16-Feb-2022 15:00	
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5	Naogaon-S/Dev/2021-22/05	653089	02-Feb-2022 9:00	16-Feb-2022 16:00	
6	Naogaon-S/Dev/2021-22/06	653090	02-Feb-2022 9:00	16-Feb-2022 16:00	
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11	Naogaon-S/Dev/2021-22/11	653095	02-Feb-2022 9:00	16-Feb-2022 16:30	
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Md. Imteaz Zaherul Haque
Upazila Engineer
Naogaon Sadar, Naogaon
Mob: 01708-161579
E-mail: ue.naogaon-s@lged.gov.bd

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