



The "Poradah Mela" is annually organised by local fish traders and union parishad for just one day on the last week of the Bangla month of Magh at Mohishaban union in Gabtali upazila of Bogura. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

## Centuries-old fish fair draws thousands

MOSTAFA SHABUJ, Bogura

A fish fair believed to be centuries old was held in a festive mood in Bogura yesterday in spite of a ban imposed by the district administration for the pandemic.

The "Poradah Mela" is annually organised by local traders and union parishad for just one day on the last week of the Bangla month of Magh in a large field at Mohishaban union in Gabtali upazila.

Yesterday hundreds of thousands of people from adjacent districts flocked to the area to see and purchase a myriad of big fish, both farmed and wild caught and weighing as much as 30 kilogrammes.

Around 350 fish traders from across the country had set up shop with hopes of making hefty profits while another 500 shops sold different goods, including spices, fruits, and sweets. Amusement rides entertained the small and old alike.

Trader Lalon Sheikh arrives from Kustia every year with even fish from the sea. "I can sell fish worth Tk 1 lakh or Tk 2 lakh every year," he said.

"This year, we, two brothers, brought big fishes from Rajshahi's Tanore upazila worth Tk 26 lakh. We hope we can make a profit after selling it," said local trader Md Sahed Ali.

Yamin Sarker, another fish trader, said, "At the end of the day, not a single fish remains unsold. Everybody gets profits."

"In one day, fish traders make sales worth Tk 3 crore to Tk 5 crore. The fair is



being organised for the last 250 years," said one of the organisers, Sankor Kumar.

Abdul Mojid Mondol, chairman of the Mohishaban union, said, "The fair has become a part of our tradition. Our forefathers started this fair 250 years ago. It centres around a mythological story."

"Poradah sat on the path of a holy pilgrimage for the Hindu monks or devotees," said Nikunjo Kumar Pal, president of the Mohishaban Central Poradah Sonnasi Mela Celebration

Committee.

"Sonnasi Puja here was started 450 years ago when lord Shiva emerged at this place from a river. Since then, Hindu monks from different countries of South Asia used to come here for worship," he said.

"Later, locals started organising a fish fair, the biggest in the northern district," he added.

With regard to the topographical and cultural contexts, this fair could well be over 250 years old, said Nahid Sultana, regional director (Rajshahi

and Rangpur) of the Department of Archaeology.

"We invite our daughters and our sons-in-law during the fair. Poradah Mela is more joyful than any religious festival. It's a must come for our relatives. Therefore, everybody joins us to celebrate the fair," said local Sumon Chandra Pal.

Rafiqul Alam, a sweet treats vendor who had set up shop on the south side, said, "We made a big roshogollah weighing 8 kilogramme in the shape of a fish, because it's the largest fish fair of the country."

However, this year the fair was organised in violation of a ban put in place by the district administration.

While the fair was running in full swing, the local administration tried to shut it down. But the traders protested and the event was allowed to continue for the day.

When contacted, Ziaul Haque, deputy commissioner of Bogura, said, "Due to the coronavirus pandemic, we did not give the local organisers permission to arrange it this year."

"Therefore, the UNO (upazila nirbahi officer) and our magistrate tried to convince them to stop the fair. We will take action against the organisers," he said.

On the bright side, Bangladesh Forest Department and the local administration were able to prevent the trade of a critically endangered fish.

The Gangetic Goonch, also known as the Devil catfish, or Baghair in Bangla, was enlisted as "Critically Endangered" in the IUCN Red List of Bangladesh (2000).

## Nasrin's family wants to take over Evaly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parents of Shamima Nasrin, former chairman of Evaly, yesterday told the High Court that they would like to take over the company and ensure its revival.

They expressed this desire while virtually appearing before the High Court bench of Justice Muhammad Khurshid Alam Sarkar during a hearing over this issue.

After their statements were taken, Nasrin's parents were told to submit their plans regarding Evaly before the court through an affidavit on February 15.

Rafiqul Alam Talukder and Farida Talukder, Nasrin's father and mother, and Ehsan Sarwar Chowdhury, former executive director of Evaly, told the court they want to buy all the shares owned by Nasrin and her husband Mohammad Russel, the company's former managing director.

They also asked to be included in Evaly's court-appointed board of directors to help run the company as Russel and Nasrin are currently in jail.

On February 7, the same court asked them to show cause in two weeks as to why their bank accounts should not be frozen, Sayed Mahsib Hossain, a lawyer moving a petition before the court for winding up the company, told The Daily Star.

On September 22, the court issued an injunction order restraining Evaly, which allegedly has liabilities of more than Tk 1,000 crore, from selling and transferring its assets until further notice.

STOCK MARKET

## Turnover drops despite stocks rising

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

Turnover at the Dhaka Stock Exchange (DSE) fell by about 20 per cent yesterday as investors adopted a wait-and-see approach even though major indices continued to move upward.

Many investors think the market will drop again if profit-taking ensues and so, they opted for a wait-and-see approach, according to a merchant banker.

But since optimistic investors poured in their funds for the past few days, the main index of the DSE remains over 7,000 points, he said.

The DSEX, the benchmark index of the bourse, edged up eight points, or 0.12 per cent, to 7,081 by the end of the day.

However, turnover at the DSE plunged to Tk 1,150 crore, down 20.8 per cent from Tk 1,449 crore the previous day.

Among major sectors, textiles, services and real estate, and life insurance closed in the positive while general insurance, non-bank financial institutions, and IT faced correction.

Stocks of Beximco Ltd traded the most, worth Tk 66 crore, followed by Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, Fortune Shoes, Orion Pharmaceuticals, and Bay Leasing.

Alltex Industries topped the gainers list, rising 10 per cent, followed by Tamiuddin Textiles, Union Insurance, Appollo Ispat, and BD Thai Food.

Yeakin Polymer shed the most, dropping 4.75 per cent, followed by Express Insurance, Daffodil Computers, Green Delta Insurance, and Crystal Insurance.

At the DSE, 205 stocks advanced, 128 fell and 46 remained the same.

The Chittagong Stock Exchange (CSE) also rose yesterday as the CASPI, the main index of the port city bourse, added 5 points, or 0.02 per cent, to hit 20,720.

Among the 303 traded stocks, 143 rose, 115 fell and 45 remained unchanged.

## Japan offers gas to Europe over Ukraine fears

AFP, Tokyo

Japan is offering Europe part of its liquefied natural gas imports over fears supplies will be disrupted by tensions surrounding a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine, Tokyo's trade minister said Wednesday.

Multiple gas shipments are already being diverted to Europe by private Japanese firms and will arrive this month, Koichi Haguda said, declining to give details of how many boats or how much LNG is involved.

More ships will head to Europe in March, but the supplies will be strictly contingent on ensuring domestic demand is met, he said. Fears are mounting that a conflict in Ukraine could cause an energy crisis in Europe, which depends heavily on Russian supplies.

Analysts judge it unlikely Russia would completely halt supplies to Europe in the case of conflict, and Japan's reserves are likely to be insufficient to make up the difference if Moscow did so.

But Tokyo's offer comes with frenetic diplomatic manoeuvring under way in an attempt to ease tensions with Russia over Ukraine.

Haguda told reporters he had received requests from the US and EU ambassadors "to accommodate the need" for the fuel in Europe.

"We have communicated to both the US and EU that this co-operation is to be carried out only to the extent that it does not affect Japan's electricity and gas supplies," he said.

Japan was the world's top LNG importer until last year, and is heavily dependent on the fuel.



A general view of the Negishi LNG Terminal which is jointly operated by Tokyo Gas and JERA in Yokohama.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Qatar to host gas exporters summit

AFP, Doha

With Europe worried about its gas supplies amid fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine, Qatar will host a summit of top natural gas exporters including Russia, organisers said Tuesday.

The United States has sought the help of its close ally Qatar in providing emergency supplies if pipelines to Western Europe are cut, according to US officials.

Organisers did not immediately confirm whether Russia's President Vladimir Putin would attend the biannual Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) summit on February 22.

Russia, Iran and Qatar are key members of the forum, which will also hold two days of ministerial meetings.

The United States and Australia, two other leading exporters, are not part of the group.