

BANNED FISHING TRAPS

A threat to native fish species

MIRZA SHAKIL

Native fish stocks are in serious decline due to indiscriminate use of fishing nets nowadays.

Rampant use of a banned fish trap, locally called China Doary, in different waterbodies and rivers in Tangail is threatening the fish resources, especially native mother fishes and fries.

China Doary is more harmful and destructive than any other fishing nets, including the current nets.

Fisheries officials said fishing by such trap or net is completely prohibited to protect native mother fishes and increasing fish production as well.

A section of greedy fishermen, however, use the harmful nets for fishing in different waterbodies and rivers, threatening fish resources, especially the native ones, they added.

Although authorities concern often conduct drives against use of such banned fishing nets, it is too inadequate to prevent the heinous act, they further said.

They also mentioned that it is quite difficult for them to stop use of such banned traps or nets in remote areas due to lack of necessary manpower and logistics.

Moreover, getting cooperation from the law enforcers in this regard is not so easy as well, they added.

China Doary, made with iron rods and thick nets, in more



A section of some greedy fishermen set this banned fishing traps in the Jamuna river to catch indigenous fish. The photo was taken from Govindasi village in Tangail's Bhuapur upazila recently.

PHOTO: STAR

harmful as fishes cannot escape from the trap once they enter it.

People usually set the traps late at the night and lift it in the morning.

Due to rampant use of China nets almost all the fishes are disappeared from the Jamuna river, said Manik Miah, a fisherman from Kakua area in Tangail Sadar upazila.

"Earlier, I used to catch fish worth Tk 3,000 to Tk 5,000 every day, but it is hard to get

fish worth Tk 500 to Tk 1,000 nowadays," Manik said.

Though a section of some greedy people first started using the illegal fishing traps, many dishonest fishermen are now using it, he added.

Another fisherman Narayan Rajbongshi of Mahela village in Kalihati upazila said they often have to return empty handed as almost all the fishes are vanished due to use of illegal fishing nets at different spots of the river.

Both the fishermen and locals use banned fishing traps in different waterbodies and rivers, especially during the monsoon, said Övijit Ghosh, a rights activist and a resident of Govindasi village in Bhuapur upazila.

If the production, marketing and use of China nets cannot be stopped immediately, indigenous fish resources will completely disappear from the waterbodies soon, he added.

Contacted, Tangail District Fisheries Officer Abul Kalam Azad said drives are on against use of illegal fishing traps.

A major part of these fishing traps enters the country illegally, while the rest is manufactured locally, especially in Munshiganj.

Such illegal traps are mainly available at different rural markets, he said, adding that people need to stop use of such traps to save our native fish from extinction.

Educational institution lost to erosion by Brahmaputra

S DILIP ROY

Authorities of Dakkhin Khauria School and College in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila have been compelled to suspend all classes as erosion by the Brahmaputra river devoured a major portion of the institution building.

As a result, education of nearly 600 students of the institution, located in Nayarhat union, has been badly hampered.

Jahirul Islam Mandal, principal of Dakkhin Khauria School and College, said almost 70 percent of the educational institution have gone into the Brahmaputra river in the last couple of days, forcing them to stop all educational activities for the last one week.

Directorate of Education and Engineering handed over the building in 2020, he said, adding that the institution has about 550 students at secondary level and about 120 students at higher secondary level.

Nayarhat Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Asaduzzaman said since erosion by the Brahmaputra has taken a serious turn people under his union are passing days amid fear of losing several hundred hectares of cropland and many homesteads.

Kurigram WDB Executive Engineer Abdullah Al Mamun said the intensity of erosion is so severe that it is quite impossible to stop the erosion by dumping sand-filled geo bags.

Preparations are underway to adopt a plan to prevent the erosion permanently, he said. Chilmari Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mahbubur Rahman said they were taking reparation to start academic activities of Dakkhin Khauria School and College within two kilometres of its previous location.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

The academic building of Dakkhin Khauria School and College at Nayarhat in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila have been devoured partially due to sudden erosion by the Brahmaputra river.

NEWS

UN peacekeepers face pushback in Mali, elsewhere

AFP, United Nations

When Mali recently called for a UN peacekeeping force to depart the country "without delay," it was the latest sign of unease in parts of Africa over the role of the so-called Blue Helmet operations.

Mali Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop last month called for the UN Security Council to withdraw peacekeepers from his country "without delay," denouncing their "failure" to meet security challenges.

The UN Security Council, which was due to vote on the renewal of the mission's mandate on June 29, is likely to agree to Mali's request, according to diplomatic sources.

A draft resolution, which will have to be approved by the Council, "acknowledges the withdrawal" and refers to a six-month period to organize the departure of around 12,000 military and police personnel, a source told AFP.

The mission has been in "persistent crisis" since Mali's military coup in 2020, Anjali Dayal, a professor at Fordham University in New York City, told AFP.

Mali's military has increasingly imposed operational restrictions on the peacekeepers, demanding that the mission instead tackles terror groups in the country.

7 of a family killed

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Abu Zafar, station officer of fire service in Bhanga, said, "We rushed to the scene and doused the flames within around 30 minutes. Then we recovered the bodies that were burnt completely.

"We think the fire originated from a gas cylinder."

Sohag Mia, a witness, said, "I, along with a few others, rushed to the scene seeing the fire. The blaze was so severe that we could not go closer. Then, we saw an injured man lying a few yards away from the ambulance. We rescued him and took him to a hospital."

Shahjahan, superintendent of police in Faridpur, said the driver died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital around 5:00pm.

Faridpur district administration formed a five-member body headed by an additional district magistrate to investigate the accident.

The family members will be given Tk 20,000 for each of the victims for the funerals, officials said.

Can booters best their old foes?

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Although Bangladesh know they have no alternative but to beat Maldives, who got off to a fine start by defeating Bhutan 2-0, to do so they will have to overcome three major concerns: their lack of goal threat, a habit of conceding late goals and their fragility in pressure situations.

Their inability to score goals has been a longstanding concern, with Bangladesh managing to net only 14 goals in their last 20 international matches since the Tri-nation Cup in Nepal in 2021. Interestingly, defenders have scored more than forwards in that time.

Conceding goals in the dying moments has also been a big concern and took the spotlight after the men in red and green conceded twice in the last moments against Lebanon after a valiant performance.

Another big headache going into the match will be Bangladesh's tendency to break down in crunch situations. On the eight occasions in the SAFF Championship when Bangladesh needed a positive result to avert an exit, they managed to survive only twice.

In the 1999 SAFF Championship, Bangladesh started their campaign with a goalless draw against India and needed a victory in their last match to

progress and did so by emphatically defeating Pakistan 4-0. In the 2009 edition, Bangladesh needed just a draw against Sri Lanka to progress to the semifinals and did the job by defeating the Islanders 2-1.

On the other occasions, Bangladesh were knocked out by Maldives twice in 2011 and 2015 and by Nepal in 2018 and 2021. Sri Lanka and Pakistan sent Bangladesh home in 2008 and 2013.

After securing one point from the first two matches in the 2011 SAFF Championship, Bangladesh needed a win against Maldives to qualify but fell to a 1-3 defeat. Maldives beat them by an identical 3-1 scoreline in 2015 in the same situation after Bangladesh were desperate for a win following a 0-4 loss to Afghanistan.

In 2021, Bangladesh seemed to be on the right track following a 1-0 win over Sri Lanka and a 1-1 draw against India but their aspirations took a hit after they lost 2-0 to Maldives and they were eventually dumped out after conceding an 88th-minute penalty during a 1-1 draw with Nepal in the final group-stage match.

Maldives will now be looking to spoil Bangladesh's party again. The only question is whether the men in red and green can survive by besting the Islanders. Only time will tell.

Two top UN officials

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peacekeeping missions in eight countries, according to the Armed Forces Division.

Catherine Pollard, UN under-secretary-general for management strategy, policy and compliance, arrived in Dhaka on a five-day visit on Friday. She called on Jatiya Sangsad Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury at her office yesterday.

Pollard acknowledged the contribution Bangladesh has made to the UN peacekeeping operations. She also appreciated Bangladesh's success in women empowerment.

A foreign ministry statement yesterday said Pollard admired Bangladesh's proactive role in peacekeeping operations.

The Speaker informed the UN official about the steps taken by Bangladesh to bring qualitative changes to the lives of women and vulnerable sections of the society.

She mentioned strong female representation in national politics and peacekeeping, and reiterated Bangladesh's strong commitment to advance the women, peace and security agenda.

Shirin Sharmin expressed concern at the prolonged Rohingya crisis and stressed the need for an early

solution.

Pollard and UN Under-Secretary-General for Peace Operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix will attend the UN peacekeeping ministerial preparatory meeting on June 25-26. Lacroix arrived in Dhaka yesterday evening.

The theme of the preparatory meeting, to be co-hosted by Bangladesh, Canada, and Uruguay, is "Women in UN Peacekeeping". The conference will be attended by more than 100 delegates from around 45 countries.

Pollard will visit Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training in Gazipur with other delegates on the second day of the conference.

"This is the first of a series of four themed conferences ahead of the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial, to be held in Accra, Ghana, on 5 and 6 December 2023," said Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman for the UN secretary-general, at a briefing in New York on Friday.

Early next month, the UN deputy secretary-general, Amina Mohammed, will be visiting Bangladesh to engage with the government and other stakeholders to discuss climate action and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

FENTANYL TRAFFICKING

Beijing slams US indictments of Chinese firms

AFP, Beijing

Beijing criticised US authorities yesterday for charging four Chinese companies and eight individuals with trafficking chemicals used in manufacturing fentanyl, calling the arrests "arbitrary detention".

The US Justice Department is intensifying a crackdown on the synthetic opioid responsible for

hundreds of thousands of overdose deaths in America over the past decade.

Its latest move is the first time Washington has charged Chinese firms for trafficking fentanyl precursor chemicals to the United States, rather than Mexico, the origin of most fentanyl found in America.

Two of the eight individuals were

arrested and taken into custody in Honolulu, Hawaii.

"This is a typical example of arbitrary detention and unilateral sanctions," the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement.

"It is completely illegal and seriously damages the basic human rights of Chinese citizens and Chinese companies. China strongly condemns this."

When patient safety takes a back seat

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"I wonder how a physician sees such a large number of patients in a single day. The Central Hospital authority has allowed her to do so," said Prof Dr Rashid E-Mahbub.

Although she presents herself as an advocate of natural childbirth, data from the hospital revealed that the rate of C-sections for all childbirths under her care was over 36%, which is more than double the WHO recommended rate of 15%.

A survey by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics reveals that the C-section rate was 41.4 percent in 2022 across the country. This rate is higher in cities.

Dr MA Quasem, vice president of the board of directors at Central Hospital, said, "We verbally warned Dr Sangjukta Saha that she should

not see so many patients per day."

Refuting Dr Quasem, she said, "They never told me any such thing."

After the incident, Dr Sangjukta blamed Akhi's death on the hospital authorities and said she was not responsible because she was not present at the hospital during the C-section. She also said she did not know anything about Akhi's admission to the hospital.

However, speaking at a press conference at her residence yesterday, she admitted that Zamir, her personal assistant and driver, had informed her that her patient Akhi was on the way to Central Hospital to meet her.

Replying to a question about why she did not renew her registration with the BMDC in the last 13 years, she said she could not manage time

to do so.

Talking about providing consultation to so many patients per day, Prof Rowshan Ara, former president of the Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh, said, "If a doctor sees such a large number of patients per day, it is highly likely that quality service will be compromised. A physician must examine and provide counselling to each of their patients very carefully."

Akhi's husband Yakub Ali filed a case with Dhanmondi Police Station on Wednesday accusing the doctors and the hospital authorities of wrong treatment and falsehood. Later, the two doctors who proceeded with the C-section were arrested and sent to jail by a Dhaka court.

A huge blow to banking sector

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the proposal, and the amended bill was passed by voice vote.

"It is purely an internal con job done by the directors," said Mansur, also a former chairman of Brac Bank.

The cabinet, Bangladesh Bank and the finance minister were not involved in taking the decision, but the directors eventually managed the majority of the parliament members' vote, he said.

"I have never seen such type of things take place in Bangladesh," said Mansur, also a former economist of the IMF.

There is no democratic accountability in the country, which is why the bill has been passed without any due diligence, said Debapriya Bhattacharya, a distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"And the lack of accountability has been just exposed nakedly just before the national election. The decision process is just rare," he said.

The Banking Companies Act 1991 stated a director could hold his/her directorship for six years in a row, but the provision was withdrawn in 1995, meaning that there was no bar on how many years a director could hold his position in a bank board.

In 1997, the government again amended the act, in which the bank directors were allowed to stay on for six years. But the provision was removed in 2003.

In 2013, the act was amended, allowing a director to hold the bank directorship for six years, and the tenure was subsequently extended to nine years in 2018. And finally, the tenure has been extended to 12 years this time.

"It seems that the directors of the bank have just captured the state power. The directors are the de facto defaulters and they usually give donations to the government on several occasions," Bhattacharya said.

A number of central bank probes revealed that a good number of directors were involved in siphoning a large amount of depositors' money from both state and private banks.

The government is now under a programme of the International Monetary Fund, which stipulates that the non-performing loans in the banking sector will have to be brought down.

"This has given an indication of the gravity of the power held by the bank directors."

Allowing the directors to stay on for 12 years will weaken banks' corporate governance and ultimately increase the defaulted loans further, Bhattacharya said.

In the first three months of 2023, banks' defaulted loans increased by Tk 10,964 crore to take the total to Tk 131,621 crore, up 16 percent from a year earlier, data from the Bangladesh Bank showed.

"The government should have protected the interest of the depositors, but it has served the directors. This means they are the real ruler of the country as they have gathered vast power," Bhattacharya said.

The bank management's freedom will be squeezed more in the coming days due to the initiative, said Salehuddin Ahmed, a former BB governor.

New leadership is highly important for improving an organisation, but the country's banking sector will be deprived of this due to the amendment.

"If a director can hold his/her position for 12 years in a row, how will new leadership be created in the banking sector?"