



These fishers could catch only a handful of hilsa in the Meghna even though it is the peak season.



SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Fishermen from Bhola, Barishal and Kuakata are returning empty handed from the rivers in the coastal region due to a lack of hilsa in the water bodies, even though it is the harvest season of the fish. Many of them had taken out loans to take their boats and trawlers to the rivers for catching hilsa, and are now worried about how they will pay back the loans and remain aloof with their families under the circumstances.

According to the Department of Fisheries, the hilsa season got delayed a bit due to heat and climate change, and more fish will be in the rivers a few days later.

"I could manage to catch only around 2-3 kilogrammes of hilsa in the last four days, which we had to eat while staying on the trawler in the Meghna river. As such, I returned empty handed. I wonder how I am going to return the money I had borrowed," said Russel Majhi, a fisherman from Tulatali village under Bhola Sadar upazila.

Monir Majhi, another fisher, said that it costs Tk 3,000 including oil to go to river once. "Six of us went to catch hilsa, but we returned empty handed," he added.

Fisherman Md Jasim Mia said hilsas are avoiding the rivers as ships from Chattogram are using this river route.

Some other fishermen said siltation and pollution of the rivers and presence of a huge number of fishing trawlers are reasons why hilsas are not entering the rivers from the Bay.

Nuru Majhi, president of Mahipur Fishermen's Association, said there is no hilsa at Kuakata, Alipur and Mahipur fish landing stations. He said around 50,000 people in this region, engaged in hilsa catching and trading, are now in dire straits.

According to sources at the Divisional Fisheries Office in Barishal, there are 4.21 lakh registered fishermen in the division.

Although at least 2,000-3,000 maunds of hilsa were expected to arrive daily at the 25 fish landing stations in the division, even half of it has not been received, the sources also said.

"It is not true that there is no hilsa at all; the number, however, is much less than expected. The situation may change in a few days when more hilsa will enter the rivers once the temperature of water becomes favourable for laying eggs," said Nripendra Nath Biswas, deputy director of the Barishal divisional fisheries office.

DELAY IN MEDICAL REPORTS

Probe, trial pending for 965 cases

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Investigations into at least 965 cases filed with different police stations under Chattogram Metropolitan Police are currently halted due to delay in issuance of medical reports in connection with the cases by Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

As such, the trial procedures of the cases also remain pending with different metropolitan courts in Chattogram.

According to medical, police and court staffers, these reports are crucial for any case, as they can change its whole merit.

Sometimes the medical staffers take bribes to manipulate the reports and thereby change police investigation.

The matter came to light after judicial magistrates openly spoke up about the matter at the police-magistracy conference on March 6, although investigation officers have been facing the issue for a long time.

This correspondent talked to at least 15 sub-inspectors and inspectors of 16 police stations under CMP in this regard.

The officers alleged that the IOs even have to bribe hospital officials Tk 500-5,000 based on the category and merit of the cases to get the necessary reports including post mortem, and DNA, forensic and medical certificates.

Most complaints regarding delayed issuance of medical reports and bribery are against the casualty and orthopaedic departments of CMCH.

The casualty department provides reports on physical assault, serious injuries or stabbing while the orthopaedics department gives reports on broken limbs or other serious injuries.

The cases filed under the penal code with police stations and courts require medical certificates for police reports.

"I had to bribe medical staffers Tk 500-2,000 to collect medical certificates to submit my investigation report on time," said an SI of CMP's West Zone, wishing anonymity. Several other police officers of different zones of CMP echoed him.

In 2022, the CMCH authorities launched a probe into allegations of bribery against an assistant registrar of the casualty department. He allegedly used to take bribes from IOs on the basis of the case's merit.

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At the police-magistracy conference, Rabiul Alam, chief metropolitan magistrate of Chattogram, urged the authorities concerned of CMCH to issue the pending medical reports as early as possible.

"It is a critical issue. We are working together to resolve the matter," said Nishkriti Chakma, deputy commissioner (crime and operations) at CMP Headquarters.

Contacted, Brig Gen Shamim

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A seven-year-long waterlogging woe



MIRZA SHAKIL, Tangail

Rasulpur area of Tangail Sadar upazila has been experiencing waterlogging over the past seven years.

The menace ensued after debris from a road construction project was dumped at the mouth of a canal flowing through the area, obstructing its flow and hindering its ability to drain away water.

As such, students of Rasulpur Bachhiron Nechha High School and Rasulpur Government Primary School, traders at Rasulpur Market, and dwellers of numerous houses in the area have been suffering immensely due to waterlogging every time it rains.

In monsoon, their sufferings know no bounds as the situation becomes exacerbated.

In 2017, when the road connecting Tangail with the Bangabandhu Bridge through Sadar upazila was turned into a four-lane one, the contractors dumped the debris at the mouth of the canal, alleged locals.

Since then, waterlogging in the area has been a persistent ordeal.

"Every time it rains, students are compelled to tread through muddy water while entering or leaving the school premises. In monsoon, their sufferings worsen as waterlogging becomes persistent throughout the season," said Md Abdul Mannan Sarkar, headteacher of Rasulpur Bachhiron Nechha High School.

Rashed Rahman, president of the school's managing committee, said, "We have written several times to the local lawmaker, Tangail's deputy commissioner, Sadar upazila parishad chairman, and Bangladesh Water Development Board executive engineer, seeking remedies to the problem."

However, no step has been taken to this end yet, he added.

Sajjad Hossain, executive engineer of BWDB in Tangail, said, "We are aware of the problem but the local administration and public representatives will have to take steps in this regard."

Contacted, Md Kaiserul Islam, deputy commissioner of Tangail, said the schools' authorities informed him about the matter. "Necessary steps will be taken in this regard after investigation," he added.

Constructing market by filling up two ponds

Habiganj mayor's move draws flak

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Habiganj Municipality Mayor Ataur Rahman has announced to construct a multi-storey market in the town by filling up two ponds.

He said this in the latest municipal budget announcement for FY 2024-25 unveiled at a press conference on July 8.



The announcement has drawn flaks from different quarters, including town dwellers and environmentalists, as it comes at a time when numerous areas in the town are facing a scarcity of freshwater alongside waterlogging problems.

Also, filling up of any waterbody is prohibited in the Water Conservation Act, 2000.

The two ponds, one being 60 decimals in size while the other one acre, are located in Tinkona area of the town in front of the Water Development Board's Habiganj district office.

Protesting the mayor's announcement, residents have organised various programmes.

Confirming the matter, SM Farhad, member secretary of Sacheton Nagorik Committee in Habiganj, said a memorandum has also been submitted to the deputy commissioner of the district for steps to prevent filling up the ponds for constructing market.

Shah Shaheda Akhter, coordinator of BELA in Sylhet, said they also sent a letter to the officials concerned on April 15.

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Two die after falling sick in septic tank

UNB, Kushtia

Two people died and another was injured after falling sick inside a septic tank at Daulatpur upazila of Kushtia yesterday.

The deceased were identified as Liton Hossain, 30, a cleaner, and Rajon Hossain, 30, a neighbour who went to rescue Liton, said Mahabubur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Daulatpur Police Station.

The injured is Rajon's younger brother, Mizan Hossain, 18.

The incident occurred at the residence of Mosharraf Hossen of Bagowan village in Mathurapur union around 8:00am.

Locals and fire service members took them to Daulatpur Upazila Health Complex, where doctors declared Liton and Rajon dead.

"In the morning, Liton, who was working in the septic tank next to our house, started having difficulty breathing. My brother went to rescue him. Later, my brother also started having breathing difficulties. Then, I got injured while trying to rescue my brother. Later, we were rescued and taken to the hospital," said Mizan.

Police recovered the bodies and sent those to Kushtia Sadar Hospital for autopsy, added the OC.



The playground of Kharashuni Government Primary School in Jhenaidah has been turned into a site to store construction materials for the last couple of months.

PHOTO: STAR

A nuisance on school ground

Students suffer as construction materials remain piled up

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenaidah

The premises of Kharashuni Government Primary School in Jhenaidah Sadar upazila has remained occupied since last Ramadan, storing materials of a road construction project by the district administration.

As a result, the students are unable to use the ground for assembly and sports activities, while the smoke and smell of bitumen and sound of stone crushing add nuisance during school hours.

"The contractor kept the construction materials on our school ground in last Ramadan without my permission, and has not

removed those even though months have passed already. The UNO and primary education officer in the upazila have been informed, but no step has been taken in this regard yet," said Md Jomir Hossain, headteacher of the school.

"The students and teachers are having a hard time engaging in academic activities amid this nuisance. Also, they are being deprived of the scope to play on the ground during recess, as the entire land remains occupied by construction materials and equipment," he added.

Locals alleged that the project is being initiated by

JANNAT FERDOUS

A fifth grader

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