

## Faridpur, Rajbari fishers defy hilsa ban over aid delay

UNB, Faridpur

Defying the government ban on catching hilsa during the breeding season, many fishermen in Faridpur and Rajbari have continued fishing in the Padma River, citing delays in receiving government assistance and pressure to repay loans.

A visit to the riverbanks revealed a scene that hardly reflected a fishing ban; rather, it looked like a hilsa harvest festival.

Hundreds of fishermen were seen casting nets at more than 50 points along the Padma in both districts.



PHOTO: UNB

"Even though I hold a fisher's card, I haven't received any rice from the government this season," said Saifullah, a fisherman from Uttarchannel union in Faridpur. "We were promised 25-kilo rice, but those who got aid received no more than 20."

According to the Fisheries Department, a total of 8,012 registered fishermen in Faridpur and Rajbari depend directly on hilsa fishing, while at least another 5,000 rely on the trade for their livelihood.

Faridpur Senior Fisheries Officer Prashanta Kumar Sardar said, "We are conducting regular mobile court drives to ensure compliance with the government's ban on hilsa fishing. Legal action, including fines and imprisonment, is being taken against violators."

He also said efforts are underway to distribute the government's aid to all registered fishermen during the restriction period.

## Low pressure likely to form over Bay on October 24

UNB, Dhaka

A low-pressure area is likely to form over the southeast Bay of Bengal and adjoining area around October 24, according to the Bangladesh Meteorological Department.

The Met office also predicted rain or thunder showers at one or two places over Khulna, Barishal and Chattogram divisions.

The weather may remain mainly dry with partly cloudy sky elsewhere over the country.

Day and night temperatures may remain nearly unchanged over the country.

A seasonal low lies over South Bay, extending its trough to North Bay.



Labourers mix bitumen and stone as thick smoke rises from the mixture. To earn a living, they work amid intense heat and fumes that pose serious health risks, including breathing problems. Each worker earns around Tk 600 to Tk 900 for a day's work, from morning till late afternoon. The photo was taken in Sreeghat area of Bagerhat yesterday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Condemned cells dehumanise people

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condemned prisoners. "We should ensure regular mental health check-ups for them," he said.

Shireen Huq, head of Naripokkho, condemned capital punishment altogether, calling it a form of judicial killing.

"People think that the inhumane conditions that convicts are kept in are a

part of punishment. That is not a part of punishment -- the punishment is the sentence given -- the rest is torture," she said.

Mosfiqur Rahman Johar, human rights affairs secretary of the National Citizen Party and the photographer behind the exhibition, said the death penalty and human rights issues are

often viewed through a politicised lens.

Barrister Sara Hossain said the country ranks among the top ten globally in issuing death sentences. "Way too many laws prescribe the death sentence," she said.

Sara pointed out that those awaiting execution face extreme isolation and limited human contact.

"Death row convicts are allowed to meet their families only once every six months," she said.

She also highlighted the inequity in legal representation faced by those on death row. "Counsel appointed by the state to represent the defence of death row convicts are given only Tk 3,000 per case," she said.

"Beyond this, they are not provided any form of support. Those who can afford to appoint private lawyers often get away."

"While we must change the laws and abolish the death penalty, we must also raise awareness about the conditions of those on death row," she said.

He claimed that teachers are responsible for 80 percent of the duties during a national election. Calling on other political parties to show solidarity, he said, "Help us realise our demands, and we will stand with you in holding a fair election."

The teachers launched their indefinite protest in front of the Jatiya Press Club on October 12. However, after being stopped by police, they relocated to the Central Shaheed Minar that afternoon.

Several of the demonstrators have been on a hunger strike until death.



## A festival of light, livelihood

### Potters in the north passing busy days as Diwali nears

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

With Diwali approaching, potters in the northern parts of the country are abuzz with activity as they race to meet soaring demand for earthen lamps, locally known as diya.

Across Lalmonirhat, Rangpur, Gaibandha, Nilphamari, and Kurigram, around 3,000 potter families are working day and night, hoping the festive season will bring much-needed income.

Each household is preparing 20,000 to 80,000 lamps, with potters estimating that about 12 crore will be needed in the Rangpur region alone. In local markets, 100 lamps are selling for Tk 150-160 (standard), Tk 220-250 (medium), and Tk 300-350 (fine finish).

However, rising costs of clay and firewood have made production more expensive than previous years.

"I've prepared around 80,000 lamps this year," said Mohan Chandra Pal, 55, from Rangpur's Kaunia upazila. "Wholesalers are coming from different areas to buy these lamps. We're hopeful this year will be profitable."

In Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, Bishnu Chandra Pal, 45, said, "We make small, medium, and large lamps. First, we mould and sun-dry them, then bake them in kilns. It now costs Tk 30-70 to produce 100 pieces. Prices have gone up everywhere -- clay, wood, everything."

Some, like Nityananda Pal of Phulbari upazila, have shifted to trading. "I buy directly from potters and sell in markets. My target is to sell three lakh lamps this year."

For many, Diwali brings an economic lifeline. "On Diwali alone, a family can earn Tk 60,000 to Tk 2 lakh," said Jogen Chandra Pal, 60, from Lalmonirhat sadar.

"The diya is the heart of Diwali," said Pradip Roy, secretary of Lalmonirhat Puja Uddipan Parishad. "Lighting the lamp is not just celebration, it is prayer -- a remembrance and a hope."

## One repatriation

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The European countries need workforce, but they want to hire through legal channels and stop illegal migration," a foreign ministry official told this correspondent.

Italy is one of the frontline countries where migrants arrive first and then move to other European nations.

For Bangladesh, Italy is the number one destination for its workers, the official said, adding, "We would definitely promote regular and safe migration."

In

May this year,

Bangladesh and Italy also signed an MoU to combat transnational organised crime, such as human trafficking and migrant smuggling, as well as

terrorism and cybercrime, while promoting regular migration.

Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi visited Bangladesh on May 5-6, and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni was scheduled to visit Bangladesh on August 30 but cancelled it due to other priorities. Meloni is now planning to visit Bangladesh in December.

According to foreign ministry officials, there were about 40,000 visa applications pending until last year, as it was taking time for the Italian authorities to verify applicants' personal data.

This year, the number of pending visa applications has drastically come down, they said.

## A lighthouse for all

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elevated the country's

art scene to a higher

level. He had a unique

imaginative style and

expressed complex ideas

with simplicity and clarity.

This soft-spoken man was

always ready to extend a

helping hand."

University of Liberal

Arts Bangladesh Prof

Imran Rahman said, "I

first met him in the late

1970s, and our bond

deepened through the

Bengal Foundation. He was

truly a man of arts, letters,

and humanity. Beyond

teaching, he was involved

in many initiatives. His

liberal and secular values

were remarkable. The

legacy he left behind must

be shared with the younger

generation."

Writer Mashrur Arefin

said, "Syed Manzoorul

Islam was my direct

teacher. I completed my

Master's degree with his

blessings. We never lost

touch with him. Sir loved

books deeply. He believed that one must also work for a living."

"He was a genuine human being -- a lighthouse for all of us," said Arefin, also managing director of City Bank.

Poet and Prothom Alo Executive Editor Sajjad Sharif said, "I am quite emotional because the last time I saw Sir was in this very room, during a workshop. I have always been his student. He never spoke ill of anyone or appeared dejected. Instead, he was tolerant of our impulsive behaviour. His students often became his friends."

"Bangladesh has come a long way, but it's also true that we have witnessed the death of many possibilities. The country has become a graveyard of unfulfilled potential. Manzoorul bhai's passing is part of that loss. Everyone whose lives he touched will remember him," he said.