

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 Saifulah, 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.



Fishermen cast their nets in Dekar Haor of Sunamganj, but catches remain scarce. Once a haven for native fish, the haor has lost much of its abundance due to insufficient rain, unplanned dams, and plastic pollution that have disrupted fish breeding. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Floating fields of hope in Pirojpur marshlands

KM HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

The sun rises over the marshlands of Pirojpur’s Nazirpur, casting golden ripples across the still waters. Small boats loaded with vegetable saplings and fresh greens glide toward Boithakata’s weekly floating market. Farmers, their boats tied side by side, bargain and laugh as the rhythmic sound of oars turns the quiet river into a bustling marketplace.

Among them, around 50-year-old Mizanur Rahman arrives at Boithakata market by an engine-run boat. He buys each couple of saplings at Tk 5-7 from farmers and sells them in local markets for Tk 10-15, depending on variety.

Collecting seasonal saplings from marshland farmers, he travels from market to market for several days until everything is sold.

“After collecting saplings, we move to different markets, and it takes four or five days to sell them,” said Mizanur, resting in his boat between customers.

He also buys different varieties of vegetables produced

in the marshlands.

Like him, many traders buy saplings and vegetables from floating markets and distribute them across nearby upazilas.

Every week, farmers from different marshland villages come to wholesale floating markets by small boats filled

buyer busy loading his boat at Boithakata.

The marshy landscape stretches across parts of Nazirpur, Nesarabad, and Banaripara upazilas, where low-lying villages under Daulbari Dobra, Kolardoania, Malikhali, Boldia, Bisharkandi, and Iluhar

made of water hyacinth,” he said, adding that the practice continues for six months from June. Heavy rains, like this year, reduce sapling demand and delay cultivation.

Alongside floating beds, farmers grow saplings and vegetables on slightly raised highlands inside the marshland, locally known as kandi.

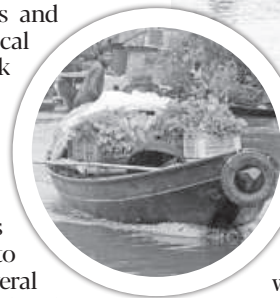
“From September, when the water starts to fall, we begin cultivating winter vegetables on these kandis and get production in two to three months,” said Chandu Mia from Umererpar village in Banaripara.

On the 120 to 250-yard-long kandi, they grow seasonal gourd, bitter gourd, cucumber, pumpkin, sweet gourd, leafy vegetables, and saplings.

Women also play a vital role. They help nurse saplings and harvest vegetables.

“During the sapling season, we help the men with the primary process,” said Minara Begum. “And later care for the plants on the kandi.”

Thousands of families across Pirojpur and Barishal depend on this centuries-old practice for their livelihoods. Amid waterlogged adversity, they have turned floating beds and kandis into fertile fields of hope.



with vegetables and saplings.

Boithakata, which sits on Saturday and Tuesday, and Manoharpur, on Friday and Monday, are the largest.

“For a long time, I’ve been collecting vegetable saplings from this market and transporting them to different parts of the country,” said Sakhawat Hossain, a wholesale

unions remain submerged nearly eight months a year.

Traditional cultivation is nearly impossible there.

“As the area stays underwater most of the year, we cannot grow anything on the ground,” said Al Amin, a farmer from Mugarjhor village.

“But for more than a century, we have been producing vegetable saplings and vegetables on floating beds

NCP to be in talks, on streets too

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The Jamaat-e-Islami also signed but announced protest programmes to press its demands for a legal basis for the charter and a referendum by November.

“To formalise its legitimacy, a referendum is the appropriate mechanism. And it should be held by November,” said Ahsanul Mahboob Zubair, assistant secretary general of Jamaat. “We will announce necessary programmes following discussions with parties staging simultaneous protests with us.”

The consensus commission held a meeting yesterday to discuss its recommendations for the government on the implementation process and will meet again today, said a source at the commission.

The commission’s Vice-President Prof Ali Riaz earlier said parties still have the opportunity to sign the charter later. The commission’s tenure has been extended to October 31.

In addition to a legal foundation and a formal Constitutional Order, the NCP wants clarity on how dissent notes on key issues will be addressed and what question will be placed in the proposed referendum.

NCP Convener Nahid Islam yesterday said, “If the consensus commission calls for discussions, we’ll attend. We’ll also reach out to the people, since what

happened yesterday [July charter signing ceremony] was against the people. We will announce protest programmes soon.

“If the July charter has no legal foundation, it will have no value or significance.

“Chief Adviser Prof Muhammad Yunus came to power at the call of the students and people during the uprising, and all the responsibility was handed to him. Therefore, the only way to give the July charter a legal standing is through an order by Prof Yunus as the head of government, followed by a referendum and subsequent actions,” he said.

He said the NCP does not want a repeat of 1990, when national leaders and political parties “pocketed the people’s aspirations.”

Nahid added that by not signing the charter, the NCP had not been politically sidelined. Rather, those who attended Friday’s event “have been distanced from the mass uprising and the people.”

Termining the “attacks” on protesting July warriors on Friday “humiliating,” he said Friday’s event did not reflect people’s aspirations.

On the party’s election symbol, he reiterated that it is confident it will participate with the Shapla symbol.

NCP Senior Joint Convener Samantha Sharmin told this newspaper, “The [protest] programmes will be announced step by

step.”

Government sources and two NCP leaders said several advisers, including Mahfuj Alam and Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain, are in contact with the NCP to persuade it to endorse the charter. A key member of the consensus commission is also maintaining communication.

Asked about the progress, one NCP leader said, “It is too early to make any comments.” The NCP held an informal meeting with the commission last Tuesday, where it said it would not sign the charter unless the reform process advances through a Constitutional Order.

A day later, Prof Yunus met Nahid. Two advisers and a member of the commission also met the NCP leader on Thursday.

Yesterday, BNP Standing Committee member Salahuddin Ahmed said the NCP and the four leftist parties still have the opportunity to sign the charter. “I wouldn’t say they refused to sign. The opportunity to sign remains, and I hope they will do so in due course. It won’t have a major impact on the next election,” he told reporters.

According to commission sources, a draft proposal on implementation has been prepared based on talks with political parties and experts. The draft is being finalised, with some sections requiring further

clarification. A meeting with legal experts is scheduled for Sunday, while informal discussions with parties will continue.

Commission sources said a formal order must precede any referendum, but the contents of the order and the referendum question are yet to be decided. Whether the referendum will be held alongside the national election or earlier will be left

Condemned cells

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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.

Mosliur Rahman Johan, 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

to the government.

Iftekharruzzaman, a member of the commission, told The Daily Star, “The recommendations we are going to present to the government already have inputs from various political parties and experts, and our own reflections. To give it a final shape, we’ve decided to hold another round of discussions with the experts.”

Meanwhile, Principal Delawar Hossain Azizi, member secretary of the MPO bhukto Shikkha Jatiyokoron Protash Jote (alliance seeking nationalisation of MPO education), demanded the removal of the education adviser.

“We suspect he is trying to create unrest by pushing teachers into a standoff with the government, with the intention of delaying the election and clinging to power,” Azizi told The Daily Star.

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.

MPO teachers

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He said Gono Odhikar Parishad would stand with the teachers until their demands were met.

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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 Udjapan 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.

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.