

Restore media access to SC courtrooms

Demand journos at sit-in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different journalists' organisations yesterday demanded the immediate restoration of journalists' access to Supreme Court courtrooms to collect information, warning that they will launch a broader coordinated programme if the restriction is not withdrawn.

Journalists have been barred from entering the SC courtrooms and various High Court benches since January 7.

"The media had stood by the judiciary whenever previous governments attempted to undermine the courts or suppress judicial independence. When the same media faces obstacles from the highest court while performing its duty, questions arise about the democratic mindset of the judiciary's leadership," said Editors' Council President and New Age Editor Nurul Kabir.

He was speaking at a sit-in organised by the Law Reporters' Forum (LRF) in front of the SC.

"If there is any practical problem with journalists entering courtrooms, it can be resolved through

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PHOTO: STAR

Journalists stage a protest in front of the Supreme Court yesterday, demanding immediate restoration of their access to SC courtrooms to collect information.

Barriers to recognition leave many behind

Speakers call for access to basic services for marginalised groups

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A large number of people from marginalised communities, including hijras and the manta population, remain without National Identity (NID) cards, leaving many unable to access education, healthcare and government social safety-net programmes, speakers said yesterday.

The hijra community was officially recognised in 2013, but most members still lack proper documentation, said Ramisa Chowdhury, a paralegal at Bandhu Welfare Society.

While government statistics put the hijra population at around 12,000, the actual figure is close to 5 lakh, she said at a conference on the five-year strategic framework for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals held at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in Dhaka.

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Working on 'accurate' list of freedom fighters

Says Liberation War affairs minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Policymakers yesterday stressed the need for accurate, impartial and error-free lists of martyrs, freedom fighters and Birangonas to establish the history of the Liberation War on a factual and universally accepted basis.

Speaking at a discussion organised by the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs in Dhaka, they called for a national database based on documentary evidence, official and military records, wartime archives, eyewitness accounts, local-level data and research, rather than emotion, assumptions or fragmented information.

They also stressed the need to preserve testimonies of eyewitnesses and people with direct wartime experience and

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200 trawlers stranded over ice shortage

Frequent load-shedding cuts production at local factories

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, *Patuakhali*

At the height of the hilsa season, when fishing trawlers should be crowding the Bay of Bengal, around 200 remain stranded at the Mahipur and Alipur fish landing centres in Patuakhali due to an acute shortage of ice caused by frequent load-shedding.

Production at local ice factories has fallen sharply, leaving supplies far short of demand. As fishermen need sufficient ice to preserve their catch during fishing trips, many trawlers have been unable to head out to sea for the past week.

"Only 85 megawatts of electricity were being received from the national grid against a daily demand of around 130 megawatts."

Fishermen preparing to leave from areas near Kuakata said a can of 50kg ice that used to cost Tk 150 is now selling for Tk 300. Even at the higher price, however, they cannot get the quantity they need.

The crisis is affecting fishermen, trawler owners and ice factory owners alike.

Md Fazlu Gazi, owner of Gazi Ice Plant in Mahipur, said load-shedding was occurring 10-12 times a day in the area.

"Freezing ice from water requires 12-14 hours of uninterrupted electricity. Frequent load-shedding disrupts the process. As a result, we are unable to produce and supply ice according to fishermen's demand," he said.

Stakeholders demanded an uninterrupted power supply to resolve the crisis.

Sayed Mia, owner of fishing trawler FB Sonabanu, said the trawler had been docked at Mahipur Fish Landing Centre for five days.

"A trawler typically requires 150-200 cans of ice for a fishing trip. Several factories were willing to supply only 50-60 cans, that too at a much higher price than usual," he said.

He said it was not possible to go on a fishing trip with such a small quantity of ice.

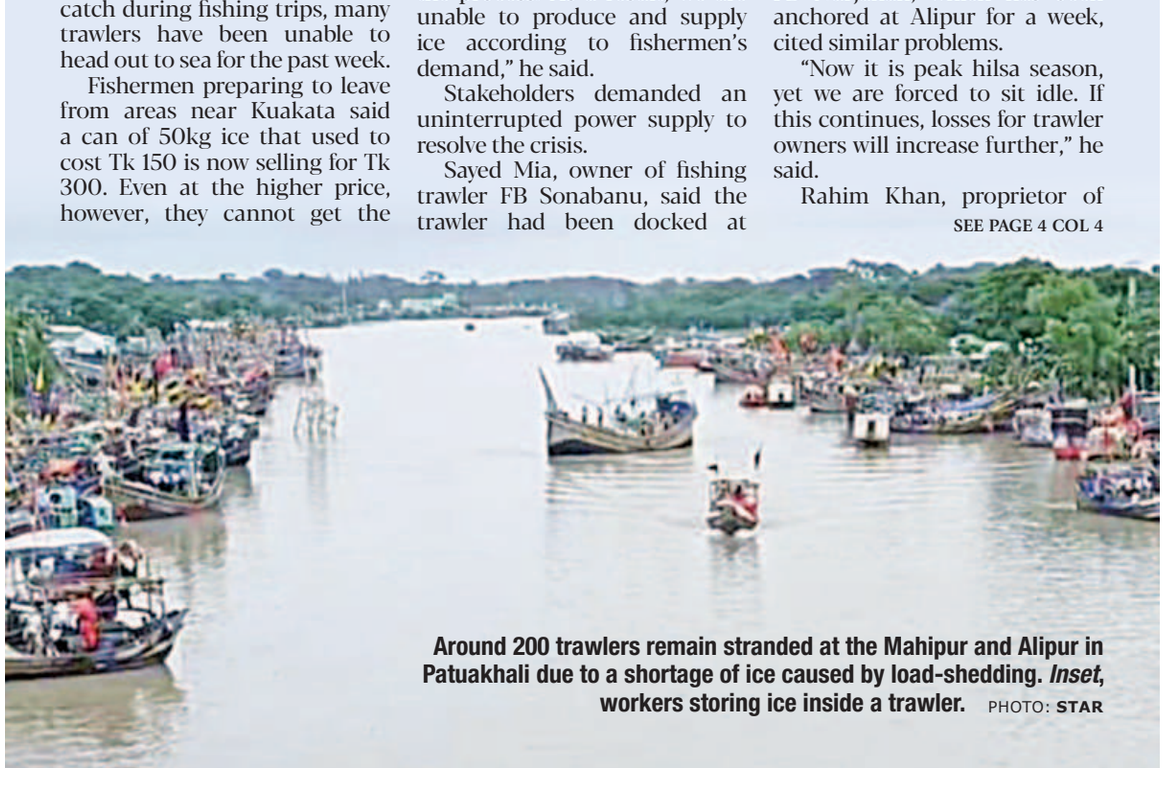
Mizan Hossain, owner of FB Nurjahan, which has been anchored at Alipur for a week, cited similar problems.

"Now it is peak hilsa season, yet we are forced to sit idle. If this continues, losses for trawler owners will increase further," he said.

Rahim Khan, proprietor of

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Around 200 trawlers remain stranded at the Mahipur and Alipur in Patuakhali due to a shortage of ice caused by load-shedding. *Inset*, workers storing ice inside a trawler. PHOTO: STAR

