



27 Rights Groups Demanded to issue ID cards to real Hilsa fishers and also Cancellation of ID cards of Fake Fishermen

Compensation must be provided at least seven days before the banning period

Dhaka, 18 March 2017. A group of 27 Rights Based Civil Society Networks, farmers, fishers and labour organizations has demanded cancellation of registration of the fake fishermen. They said, people who are not fishermen in anyway are getting various supports and government services while real fishermen are being deprived of those services and benefits. The group formed a human chain and organized a rally today in front of the National Press Club has also demanded that, ration for the fishermen during the banning period must reach the fishermen at least 7 days before the banning period. The human chain and rally titled 'Registration of fake fishermen should be cancelled, ration must be provided at least seven days before the banning period' was jointly organized by Online Knowledge Society, Arpon, Uddipan, Unnayan Dhara Trust, Udayan Bangladesh, SDO, COAST Trust, National Krishani Shova Labour Alliance, National Labour Alliance, Dak Dia Jai, Docap, Dwip Unnayan Society, Nolchity Model Society, Pirojpur Gono Unnayan Somity, Prantojon, PSI, Bangladesh Labour Federation, Bangladesh Bhumihiin Somity, Labour Resource Centre, Bangladesh Agricultural Firm Labour Federation, Sonkalpa Trust, Songram, CDP, Bangladesh Fish Workers Alliance, Muktir Dak and Hoar Farmers and Fishers Alliance.

The rally was moderated by Mustafa Kamal Akand of COAST Trust, among others Subal Sarkar of Bangladesh Bhumihiin Somity, Kaderl Hazari of ARPAN, Asif Iqbal of of Muktir Dak, Sanat Kumar Bhowmik and Md. Mujibul Haque Munir of COAST Trust, Shibly Anwar of LRC and Anupam Mahmud of Haor Farmers and Fishers Alliance spoke at the occasion.

On behalf of the organizers some specific demands were placed, such as: 1) Fishermen's participation must be ensured in the rice distribution process and it should be made free from the influential people, 2) Fishermen must be facilitated to open bank account with 10 taka, money of ration should be provided through these bank accounts or mobile banking, 3) Fisherman loan with low interest rate should be provided like farmers' loan, 4) Special allocation must be made from the Climate Change Trust Fund, 5) Special quota must be introduced in social safety nets like old age allowance and widow allowance, 6) All large fish landing points must be equipped with weather forecasting and weather signaling mechanism and all fishing boats must be equipped with appropriate lifesaving equipment like life jacket, 7) Large fishing boats must be refrained from fishing near the coastlines, bellow 40 meter deep areas.

Sanat Kumar Bhowmik, Director of COAST said, as a result of various government initiatives Hilsa production has been increased by 44 thousand metric tons per year. Annual Hilsa production is now amounting about 22 thousand crore taka. Government has banned fishing in coastal areas during March- April, and thus about 5 lakh fisher families and 20-25 lakh fish workers have lost their regular livelihood options. Government is supposed to provide 40 kgs of rice to each fisher families, but in many areas it is yet to be reached to the fishermen. For this reason, fishermen are suffering miserable lives with their families.

Kader Hajari said, during the banning period fisher families face various difficulties regarding their livelihoods and social and human rights since they have very few alternative livelihood options. Subal Sarkar said, Hilsa contributes to 1% of GDP, so government must pay special attention to the Hilsha producers. Mr. Mujibul Haque Munir said, the revenue from annual increased production of Hilsa is tk 200 crore where the amount for fishers' compensation is only 130 crore which is not that much hard for the government. He also said, though allocation for each fisher family is 40 kgs of rice, many are not getting the same amount. Asif Iqbal said, near 30% of fishermen ID cards have been provided to those who are not fishermen in anyway, on the other hand about 40% real fishermen are yet to get that ID cards.

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