



Since the BIWTA could not recover the vessel, private rescue vessels attempting to pull out MV Dudu Mia-1 that sank in the Kirtankhola river in Barishal on December 14. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO:  
TITU DAS

## BIWTA salvage wing needs salvaging

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channel or navigability constraint,” said Rafikul.

Hamza and Rustam can operate in seven to eight-feet-deep water while Nirbhik and Pratyay require a depth of at least sixteen to twenty feet to operate. MV Dudu Mia-1 is not the only bulk cargo vessel that sank this year.

MV Mamun Moni-1, while transporting clinker (used in the production of cement), sank in the Kirtankhola in Charbariya area on April 22.

On May 25, a sand-laden bulkhead MV Siam went down in Miyar char area in the Meghna river. On August 8, a fertiliser-loaded MV Taposhi and another goods-loaded cargo sank in the river in Gobindapur.

None of these has been salvaged by the BIWTA yet.

Starting on January 1, a private rescue operation is currently underway to salvage MV Dudu Mia-1 after the BIWTA failed with Nirbhik. PS Salvage, the rescue company, said it would need at least 20 days to pull the vessel up.

In the meantime, the BIWTA rescue unit’s failure to recover sunken water vessels is making naval routes across the country risky, especially where the river is narrow and during the dry season when navigability becomes poor, said experts.

Some launch masters on the Dhaka-Barishal route said operating vessels down the Kirtankhola has turned riskier due to these yet-to-be salvaged sunken cargo vessels.

“A fatal accident may occur at any time if the cargo is not removed from the spot. It is very difficult for us to navigate, especially during this ongoing foggy weather,” said Jahangir Hossain, the master of Parabat Launch.

“We have to slowly navigate through narrow spaces due to sunken cargo and submerged chars which consume an additional couple of hours to reach the destination,” said a visibly concerned Jahangir.

**‘FOR SHOW’**  
Abul Kalam Khan, owner of Kuakata-2 vessel, said, “The four rescue ships are

not capable of pulling a cargo vessel or a passenger launch. The salvage effort has so far been for show rather than a serious effort.”

Kalam also said large passenger launches (200-320 feet long) currently operating on routes between Dhaka and the southern and southwestern districts weigh about 1,000 to 1,500 tonnes each.

Saidur Rahman, owner of Sundarban Navigation Company and the central vice president of the Launch Owners Association, said, “Bangladesh Marine Transport Authority has approved the production and operation of vessels with carrying capacity of more than 3,000 tonnes. Unfortunately, it does not have the logistics to salvage launches or cargos of these approved size and weights.”

Director of Surovi Shipping Lines Rezin ul Kabir, said, “Vessels with a capacity of more than 2,000 tonnes are transporting goods on various routes. But the authorities do not have the capacity to rescue these ships in the event of an accident”.

BIWTA officials, when contacted, acknowledged their weakness.

“A decision has been made to purchase two rescue ships with the capacity of 1,500 and 2,000 tonnes to strengthen the rescue unit,” said Md Shahjahan, director of conservancy and pilotage at the BIWTA.

A team of experts from Buet has been given the responsibility of conducting a preliminary survey and feasibility test. They are working on it. Soon after receiving their report, the process of purchasing two new rescue vessels will begin, added Shahjahan.

Prof Riaz Hasan Khondokar, a member of the expert team, said they have submitted the report to the BIWTA on December 31.

Acknowledging their incapacity, BIWTA Chairman Commodore M Mahbub-ul Islam said, “We are increasing our capacity. To do that we will buy two salvage vessels with 1,500 tonnes lifting capacity each.”

“After that, we will also bring airbags to ease rescuing heavy vessels,” he added.

## Fewer running for city offices

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rules. The rule, however, was lifted this time around.

Professor Nurul Amin Bepari of the political science department of Dhaka University, however, said, “It is a reflection of people turning away from elections. Since 2014, by and large, a true election is not taking place. Many consider taking part in the election to be a waste of money.”

He also said there was a lack of trust in the Election Commission (EC) and that many believed the ruling party manufactures electoral results.

According to the DNCC returning office, for the three posts in this year’s January 30 elections, 470 aspirants submitted their nominations – seven for mayor, 374 for 54 general ward councillors and 89 for 18 reserved women councillors.

650 aspirants had submitted nominations in 2015.

Of them 21 ran for mayor, 494 for 36 general ward councillors and 135 for 12 reserved women councillor positions.

On the other hand, the DSCC returning office saw 569 aspirants submit nominations for the Jan 30 election. Of them, seven are in the running for mayor, 460 for 75 general ward councillor and 102 for 25 reserved women councillor posts.

In 2015, 811 aspirants collected nominations. Of them 26 were for the mayoral post, 632 for 57 general ward councillor and 153 for 19 reserved women councillor posts.

Sources within the EC said the number of ward councillor candidates dropped significantly as Awami League and BNP, the two major political parties, announced their

government organs was a shift in the political scene.

“Earlier, many local government aspirants became successful in these elections due to their own personal qualities. People, irrespective of party affiliations, used to elect those candidates who stood beside them in tough time,” he said.

“But now the election has become

of BNP-supported candidates in order to ensure a free and fair election.

He alleged that BNP supported councillor candidate Tajuddin Ahmed Taijul was arrested as part of the intimidation.

Tajuddin was arrested on Thursday in an old case filed against him for torching vehicles during the 2015 movement of BNP.

RO Abdul Baten said he had received the complaint and would take necessary steps after investigations.

Meanwhile, BNP mayoral candidate for DNCC Tabith Awal on the same day lodged a written complaint with returning office alleging that AL DNCC mayoral candidate Atiqul Islam breached electoral code of conduct.

Tabith alleged that Atiqul took part in the election campaign in Gulshan-1 area using loud speakers and setting up a stage.

He demanded exemplary punishment of Atiqul for breaching the electoral code of conduct.

According to the code of conduct, none will be allowed to carry out formal campaigning before allotment of the symbols.

Contacted, RO Abul Kashem said he had received the written complaint. “We will take actions in line with code of conduct after investigations,” he said.

## Military reservists called up

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expected to continue into the evening.

Several emergency warnings were issued yesterday, including one blaze southwest of Sydney that is feared could reach the city’s outskirts.

Sydney recorded its highest-ever temperature of 48.1 degrees Celsius (118.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in the western suburb of Penrith, and the nation’s capital Canberra hit 42.9 degrees Celsius, also an all-time record, a Bureau of Meteorology spokesman said.

Temperatures in both cities could rise further, he added.

Since late September, more than 20 people have died, more than 1,500 homes have been damaged and an area roughly twice the size of Belgium or Hawaii has burned.

The latest fatalities came on Kangaroo Island -- a tourist haven off the coast southwest of Adelaide -- when two people were trapped in a car

overrun by flames.

Fires there have “taken out much of the Flinders-Chase National Park”, according to South Australia premier Steven Marshall.

Ahead of the coming storm, an eerie calm settled over the smoke-shrouded town of Batemans Bay, a four-hour drive south of Sydney, where supermarkets, shops and the pub were all shuttered.

The only activity in the usually bustling tourist hotspot was at an evacuation centre, where hundreds of locals forced from their homes were sheltering on an open field in tents and caravans.

Mick Cummins, 57, and his wife fled to the evacuation centre when fire ripped through his rural town on New Year’s Eve.

“We said this is too tough for us, let’s get out. We went to the beach and then hellfire came over the hill,” he told AFP.

“I was here in the ‘94 fires. I thought that was bad. That was just a barbecue”

in comparison, he said.

The scale of Australia’s unprecedented months-long bushfire crisis has shocked not just locals but the world.

In the small town of Mallacoota, Australia’s navy was called in to evacuate around 1,000 people trapped by fire and forced to wait for days on the foreshore.

The first of two ships carrying families, pets and a few belongings arrived near Melbourne early yesterday.

Eloise Givney, 26, escaped from the blazes further up the coast with a police escort after she and a large group of family members spent four days isolated without power, phones or internet.

“The fire came within about 50 metres of us and we drove through fire, because there’s only one road in and one road out,” she told AFP, adding the flames soared 15 metres (50 feet) high on either side of the road.

## In bliss

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new books. But he was happy that he received the much expected books in time.

Tenth grader Imran said he wanted to pursue his higher studies in the institution as it offers him all the facilities he needs.

The school has a capacity of accommodating 110 students in total and currently has 60 students only. Shamsunnahar Begum, acting headmaster of the school, said the institution was established in 1964 on 4.30-acre land under Social Service Directorate, Barishal.

Only five specially trained teachers are appointed to teach visually impaired students up to fifth grade in this school, she added.

Sajjad Pervaz, Probationary Officer at Social Service Depart in Barishal, said around 586 visually impaired people are in Barishal and 40 percent of them are eligible to take education.

### TRUMP IMPEACHMENT TRIAL

# US Senate returns, no deal yet

AFP, Washington

The US Senate’s top Republican on Friday swatted aside Democratic demands related to the impeachment trial of President Donald Trump, as the warring sides failed to agree on a start date for the historic action.

Resuming work after a holiday break with no signs of a crack in the stalemate, Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell assailed House Democrats for having “botched” their own impeachment process last month.

And he said that without progress on deciding a timeline for the trial, his chamber would turn to ordinary business until Democrats “muster the courage” to transmit the articles of impeachment.

“Their turn is over, they’ve done enough damage,” McConnell said in a floor speech.

“It’s the Senate’s turn now to render sober judgment... but we can’t

hold a trial without the articles,” he added.

“So for now, we are content to continue the ordinary business of the Senate while House Democrats continue to flounder.”

In December, the House of Representatives impeached a US president for only the third time ever, charging Trump with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress related to his pressure on Ukraine to launch investigations that would help him politically.

Impeachment triggers a trial in the Senate, which is currently controlled by Republicans who are largely loyal to Trump and are widely expected to acquit him.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi has so far declined to transmit the articles of impeachment, as she seeks assurances that the trial would meet Democratic calls for fairness, including commitments to allow witnesses to testify.

## icddr,b finds

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and larger scale clinical trials are now underway at the icddr,b to see how well the supplement works to end malnutrition in the children,” Dr Tahmeed Ahmed, senior director, nutrition and clinical services at the icddr,b, told The Daily Star.

Dr Tahmeed is the lead investigator in the team that includes Prof Geoffrey Gordon of Washington University.

In Bangladesh, more than half the population suffers from malnutrition while severe acute malnutrition affects 450,000 children, and around two million children have moderate acute malnutrition, according to the icddr,b website.

A quarter of women are underweight while around 15 percent have short stature, which increases the risk of difficult childbirth and low-birth-weight infants.

Malnutrition is estimated to cost Bangladesh more than \$1bn every year in lost productivity, the website says.

Globally, more than two billion people suffer from malnutrition.

Asked how their work began, Dr Tahmeed said, “We started research on the concept: if particular microbiota are responsible for obesity, then there might be particular microbiota responsible for wasting.”

With this concept, the icddr,b team compared stomach/gut microbiota of two groups of children -- one of a Mirpur slum and another of severe malnourished children admitted to icddr,b.

The analysis showed the gut microbiota of the malnourished children are immature and less diverse than those of nourished children.

He said they chose children

## Royals reach

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as the home side suffered a 10th defeat in 11 matches, failing to defend a modest 143-run for six total.

Both the sides were however missing their regular captains. Sylhet skipper Mosaddek Hossain suffered a grade-2 tear just below his neck in their match against Rangpur Rangers on December 30 in Dhaka. The all-rounder, who missed the whole Sylhet-phase, returned to Dhaka yesterday [Saturday]. He is currently under the supervision of Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief physician Debashish Chowdhury and has been advised to rest for nearly a month, informed the Sylhet Thunder team management.

Meanwhile, Andre Russell, Rajshahi Royals’ regular skipper, also missed out yesterday’s game due to an injury that he picked up during the second Dhaka-phase. Going back to yesterday’s clash, chasing a modest 143 for six, Rajshahi

had a blistering start as Liton Das and Afif Hossain strung together a 59-run opening stand before Liton was dismissed for a 20-ball 36 in the sixth over. Afif, totally unfazed by his partner’s dismissal, continued to play a brilliant 30-ball 46. Although Afif fell to a run-out in the 11th over, stand-in skipper Shoaib Malik’s 22-ball 27 in the middle ensured Rajshahi coasted to victory with 29 balls to spare.

Earlier, after electing to bat, Sylhet had a rather slow start with stand-in skipper Andre Fletcher playing a slow-paced 33-ball 25 before falling to a run-out in the 13th over. However, thanks to a 38-ball 47 from Mohammad Mithun and another 11-ball 25 from Sherfane Rutherford in the middle, Sylhet were able to put up a modest total. Rajshahi employed as many as eight different bowlers on the day, perhaps trying to outfox the opposition with the variety in store.

## Canadian military

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Forces Base Kingston wrote.

“I will be completely honest in that I have not idea what that is,” he said in a message among the nearly 500 pages of military documents obtained by CBC under an access to information request.

At least three military police officers, at different bases across the country, were assigned to wander around army facilities with phones and notebooks in hand to search for virtual Pokemon infrastructure and characters.

“We should almost hire a 12-year-old to help us out with this,” wrote security expert David Levenick at CFB Borden in Ontario, 100 kilometers (60 miles) northwest of Toronto.

At the entrance to the base, one woman was caught playing Pokemon Go while her three children were climbing over tanks.

A man separately arrested at

CFB Borden explained he was just collecting points playing Pokemon Go and told officers: “I have to beat my kids.”

Shortly after the release of Pokemon Go, the armed forces even had to issue a public notice warning players not to venture onto military bases.

But some saw a positive side to the influx of Pokemon hunters.

“Maybe some extra people will visit the museum!,” wrote Major Alicia Saucier at CFB Petawawa, Ontario, where the garrison museum was a game hotspot.

### BCL leader

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abduction and another under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act -- filed with the police station in 2017.

He was out on bail in the cases, the officials said.