



Staffers at Chattogram General Hospital cook food for patients using firewood yesterday. The hospital's gas line was disconnected on Monday by Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company, due to unpaid utility bills of over Tk 4 lakh.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

Land surveyor held, Tk 93 lakh recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday detained a surveyor of Cox's Bazar district administration, and seized around Tk 93 lakh in "bribe money" from his possession and from houses of two other surveyors in different areas of the town.

Md Wasim, a surveyor of district administration's land acquisition branch, was detained from a house in Taraboniachara area. Tk 16 lakh, cheques of different banks and government papers were recovered from the spot.

Other surveyors -- Farid and Ferdous -- managed to escape but Rab recovered Tk 60 lakh from Farid's house and Tk 17 lakh from Ferdous' residence, in Baharchara area.

Maj Mehedi Hasan, Ramu Company Commander of Rab-15, said works of around 50 development projects of the government are going on in Cox's Bazar, and land acquisition for those projects are also ongoing.

There are long-standing allegations that a vested quarter is realising huge sums of money from land owners centring land

acquisition, and several victims have already given written complaints, he said. Based on that, a Rab team conducted raids in different parts of town, detained one and recovered the money and other documents.

A case was filed against Wasim with Cox's Bazar Model Police Station.

Several victims alleged that not only these three, but also many other surveyors and staff of land office of the district are involved with the quarter, who hold land owners at hostage. Victims do not get remedy as several top officials allegedly get share of the money, they said, adding that land owners are forced to take help from surveyors and brokers in exchange of 20 to 50 percent commissions, they added.

A former deputy commissioner of Cox's Bazar and ADC were arrested earlier for their alleged involvement in bribery centering a mega project.

DC Kamal Hossain told reporters that he came know about the development, but said it was Wasim's personal offences and legal and departmental action would be taken against him.

He, however, rejected other allegations.

Blogger Rasel Parvez no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Writer and blogger Rasel Parvez died of cancer at a city hospital yesterday morning. He was 49.

Rasel breathed his last around 11:30am at Apollo Hospital, said a duty manager of the hospital.

The physics teacher had completed his masters in the United States, and went to Japan to pursue PhD. He recently returned home after being diagnosed with cancer, his fellow bloggers wrote in Facebook posts.

Blogger Subrata Shuvo on Facebook wrote Rasel had nearly 2,000 blog posts.

Hasan Murshed and Kungo Thang, among his fellow writers, paid tributes to Rasel on social media, as one of the brightest minds among those who had started blogging in Bangla in the mid-2000s.

RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION

Payloader driver loses control, kills one and injures four

OUR CORRESPONDENT

The operator of a payloader lost control of the equipment yesterday in Cumilla and rammed it into two battery-run auto-rickshaws, and two stationary rickshaw vans. One person was killed in the accident while four were injured.

The equipment was being used at Akhaura-Laksm double-line railway expansion project, and the accident occurred near Akhaura railway crossing.

The deceased was identified as Shahida Begum (55). She was buying vegetables from the roadside van.

The vegetable vendor and his wife, one of their customers, and one auto-rickshaw passenger were injured in the accident that happened around 9:45am.

Nurul Islam, in-charge of Kandirpar police outpost said, "The driver was arrested

and the payloader was seized. The body has been sent to Cumilla Medical College Hospital for autopsy."

The construction work is being supervised by Max Railway Constructions Ltd.

The arrested driver, Md Shamir (30), said, "I have been working with this company since 2017. The brake has not been functioning smoothly for a year. I had notified my supervisor about it, but to no avail."

Max Railway Constructions Ltd's officials could not be reached despite repeated attempts.

Meanwhile, Ram Narayan Dhar, deputy assistant engineer of Cumilla regional railway office, said this construction work is being done under a separate project and the regional office is not responsible for it.

CTG MAYORAL ELECTION

AL candidate gets warm reception

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League leaders gave a warm reception to mayoral candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury at Chattogram railway station yesterday, as he reached there from Dhaka after receiving the party's nomination for the mayoral election to Chattogram City Corporation.

Rezaul, senior joint general secretary of Chittagong city unit AL, received by a large contingent of leaders and activists of AL and its associate organisations.

AL's city unit general secretary and incumbent mayor AJM Nasir, however, was not present.

Speaking at the programme, Rezaul said ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury served Chattogram City Corporation (as mayor) for 17 years, then a BNP-backed mayor took office. "The city returned to our hands in 2015. AJM Nasir built a citizen-friendly city, and I want to continue in that direction," he said.

"If I am elected mayor, I will build a planned and modern city, protecting the hills and rivers. I will perform the responsibility the Prime Minister has given me," he added.

Pinpoint crab breeding season to protect industry

Speakers say at roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A group of Khulna University scientists yesterday said the government should properly identify the peak breeding season of mud crabs based on scientific evidence, to protect mother crabs and halt the industry's decline.

At present, harvesting crabs from the Sundarbans, a prime natural source for catching the crustaceans, is banned in January and February, they said at a roundtable discussion at The Daily Star Centre.

However, March-April is the peak breeding season of mud crabs at the location, they said, referring to their study report.

Abundance of fully mature mother crabs can be seen from late February to late April. Alongside March and April, February should also be included in peak breeding season to protect mother crabs, they added.

CARE Bangladesh and The Daily Star, with support of Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, arranged the roundtable on "Prospect and Challenges of Crab Cultivation: Policy Perspective".

In 2017-18 fiscal, Bangladesh exported about 11,000 metric tonnes of crabs and earned around Tk 217 crore in foreign currency. Some three to four lakh people are directly and indirectly involved in the crab industry, from harvest to export, according to the report.

Prof Yousuf Ali of Khulna University's fisheries and marine resource technology discipline said in 2013, 32,000 metric

tonnes of crabs were caught from natural sources. That number dropped to 25,000 metric tonnes in 2016.

Placing a ban on catching crabs during peak breeding season is an effective way to ensure appropriate spawning and migration of mud crabs, he added.

Prof Abdur Rouf, head of the discipline, said understanding crab's life cycle is important for the industry to flourish.

"If we harvest mother crabs, it will be a big loss," he said.

Jahidul Kabir, conservator of forests of the Department of Forests, said the findings can be an authentic document based on which the department can undertake initiatives to change existing policies on crab export.

Demand of crab in foreign countries -- especially in China -- remains high during the year's beginning, said Gazi Abul Kashem, chairperson of Bangladesh Live and Chilled Food Exporters Association.

The price also stays high at that time, he said.

Belayet Hossen -- divisional forest officer of Sundarbans East Division, Bagerhat -- said some 242 crab farms have been registered in the area since 2001. However, only 64 of those are operational now.

Sundarbans West Division Forest Officer Bashirul-Al-Mamun said crab harvesting from natural sources have increased since 2017.

The coronavirus outbreak has reduced crab export from the Sundarbans significantly, said SM Mahbub Alam, coordinator of NGO-based initiative Nowabanki Gonomukhi Foundation.



Scientists of Khulna University and officials of different organisations at the roundtable at The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform the public at large that our client, Mrs. Ruba Ahmed, Founder and General Secretary of **Abinta Kabir Foundation** of Elegant Heights (14th Floor), 30/2, 30/3, Progoti Sharani, Shahjadpur, Dhaka-1212, Bangladesh is the mother of **Late Abinta Kabir**, one of the victims who lost her life during the heinous **Holey Artisan Attack** on 01.07.2016. Since Abinta's tragic demise, some media personnel have approached Mrs. Ahmed with the proposition of making motion pictures etc. on the incident of the attack and her account of the event to which our client has clearly objected and did not at all give her consent.

Ms. Abinta Kabir was the only child of our client and after her tragic demise, our client's regular life has been seriously affected and she has been devastated mentally and emotionally. To have the precise story made in the public domain would further excavate the tragic memories of the catastrophic day, which she and her family struggle to forget each passing day.

Accordingly, our client, Mrs. Ahmed hereby demands that all producers, directors, actors, media companies, media distributors, author, script-writer etc. shall strictly refrain from producing, directing, distributing, authoring etc. of any film, short-film, tele-film, drama, novel, story, short-story, fiction or any other form of media production, whether visual or print, depicting any character or incident which has any direct or indirect resemblance with Ms. Abinta Kabir. In the event of failure to comply with the said demand, we have clear instruction from our client to initiate appropriate legal proceedings against each of the individual violators to the fullest extent of the laws in Bangladesh and other applicable jurisdictions.

In case if anyone has any query or concern, you are requested to directly contact the undersigned.

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The unrecognisable

FROM PAGE 3

A BAG FULL OF PROMISES

On February 17, Brig Gen AKM Nasir Uddin, director of DMCH, said, "Amtala is an important part of the country's history. Though it is not under our jurisdiction, we try our best to keep it clean."

"Every year before February 21, we spruce up the area and will start doing so soon," he added.

The director continued, "We took initiatives before but vendors keep occupying the place. It is under Dhaka South City Corporation's jurisdiction. We have already asked the city corporation and the cultural affairs ministry to erect a permanent monument to preserve the historic spot."

Dr Abu Hena Mostafa Kamal, secretary to the ministry of cultural affairs, did not respond to calls and text messages.

The area falls under ward-20 of DSCC. Contacted on February 18, councillor Farid Uddin Ahmed Ratan said, "I will send a letter to the city corporation officials immediately, so that they can initiate an eviction drive there."

When asked why such initiative did not take place earlier, he could not provide an appropriate answer.

DSCC Executive Officer (Zone 1) Mizanur Rahman said, "Amtala is part of history. Unfortunately, whenever we evict hawkers, they occupy the place again. This is the reality."

Asked if they have any plan to preserve it, he said, "Right now, we are focusing on eviction drives to free up the place. In future, we will pay more attention to it."

Getting more out

FROM PAGE 3

through an augmented reality app for children in order to feed their curious minds.

Augmented reality is a technology that superimposes a computer-generated image on a user's view of the real world.

Microtech Interactive Limited developed the app -- Bino. Once the app is downloaded and activated, a camera will pop up. If anyone moves the camera over the pages of the book, the content comes to life on the screen.

"It is a nice combination of book and technology. I wasn't expecting such an item at the book fair," said Shahabuddin, a visitor at the stall. His daughter, Zinat, was holding a book with large pictures of animals.

As soon as she placed a cellphone over the book and looked through the display, a dinosaur sprang to life and started moving around. When the salesperson touched the screen, it made a deep bellowing sound similar to a horn.

The father and daughter started laughing. Zulfikar, a stall attendee, said, "We are offering the app for free. But it requires our books, priced at Tk 120 to Tk 400."

Besides, there are stalls at the fair selling audiobooks. At stall-10, volunteers were showcasing "Boighar", an app which boasts more than 8,000 audiobooks.

In front of Burdwan House, a stall of the government's a2i programme is promoting a website called "Kishor Batayan", where children can learn, play and share creative ideas.

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