

Crocodiles to earn forex!

A farm in Bhaluka hopes to earn 50 million US dollars a year: 75 billion dollar global export market

AMINUL ISLAM, *Mymensingh*

A private company here has launched an unusual venture—raising crocodile for export.

The Reptiles Farm Ltd (RFL) has started commercial raising of crocodile at Hatiber village in Uthura union in Bhaluka upazila to export their meat, skin and bones.

It imported 75 adult crocodiles from Malaysia last month. Of these, 60 are female and 15 male. One male crocodile died during import, sources in the company said.

It has bought 13 acres of land and dug 14 ponds in four acres, where the crocodiles have been kept. The ponds have been dug in three steps with curving banks for easy and natural movement of the crocodiles.

It would take at least six years to start export, RFL Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Mushtaq Ahmed told this correspondent during a visit to the farm on Saturday.

"We launched the project after a survey and have already spent Tk 1.25 crore."

Mushtaq said the climate and environment of Bangladesh is very much suitable for crocodile farming.

"It can earn a huge amount of foreign exchange like other vital sectors like garments and frozen food."

"Crocodile has a 75 billion US dollar market in the world and our country can easily have a big slice of it every year" he said.

Rearing a crocodile for three years after hatching will cost Tk 20,000 to 25,000 and its meat, skin and bones will be sold at around Tk 50,000 after processing, he said.

There are good markets in Australia, Vietnam, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Japan and Singapore. These countries now meet demands through import.

"Crocodile may open a new horizon in export earning", he said. Mushtaq said he got the idea

from one Rommo Rahim in 2002 and was later inspired by Anisuzzaman Khan of International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

"We have plenty of salt water crocodiles, which have highest skin value among 23 species", Mushtaq said.

He said the 60 female crocodiles are expected to lay 1800 eggs next year. Three months will be needed for hatching the eggs through artificial process at RFL.

Dr SMA Rashid, Director and Chief Scientific Officer (CSF) of RFL said they have a plan to export over 5000 crocodiles annually to earn around 50 million US dollars. Another mission of the farm is to support conservation by breeding endangered species of crocodiles. A research wing will also be added soon, he said.

The farm will also be a recreation spot for visitors, they hoped.

Megbahul Haqul, Chairman of the company, said RFL would also provide training to interested persons on crocodile rearing, which will expand the business in the country and earn foreign exchange and create jobs.

Twenty-five people including seven technical hands are now working in the farm.

Shetol Kumar Nath and Hasan Zahid Chowdhury of the company said the crocodiles are given 300kg feed two days a week. These include poultry birds, fish and meat. Water of the ponds are replaced timely.

The RFL has also a plan to start snake farming. Snake venom and skin are very costly and have good export potential, they said.

RFL Consultant Prof. Abdur Razzaq said crocodile farming has created great enthusiasm in the area and people are extending all out cooperation.

Shah Bazlur Rahman, Chairman of the local Union Parishad, said he

is giving all out support to the new venture. This will create jobs.

Md Shams Sadik Roman, a computer graduate from Bangalore in India, said this will ultimately

contribute to development of his village. Young businessman Liton Chowdhury at Uthura Bazar was equally enthusiastic.



Crocodiles being reared by Reptiles Farm Ltd at its project ponds in Bhaluka.

PHOTO: STAR

UP leaders leave meeting protesting Kibria's killing

Shyamnagar UNO meet adjourned

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

The monthly meeting of Shyamnagar Upazila Development Co-ordination Committee on Monday was adjourned as seven Union Parishad chairmen left the meeting protesting the killing of the former finance minister Shah A M S Kibria in Habiganj.

The seven UP chairmen who walked left the meeting are Bakhtiar Ahmed of Noor Nagar UP, SM Jaglul Haider of Shyam Nagar Sadar, Abdul Kader of Atulia, Safiul Azam Lenin of Gabura, Asim Kumar Mridha of Munshiganj, Gazi Anisuzzaman of Kashmiri and Asim Kumar Zoarder of Burigoalini UP.

The chairmen who are also members of the committee left soon after the meeting began at the office of Shyam Nagar Upazila Nirbahi Officer, said Jaglul Haider who is also president of Shyam Nagar Upazila Awami League (AL).

Later the chairmen in a joint statement said the BNP-Jamaat government is killing popular leaders and activists of AL as part of its conspiracy to eliminate progressive and pro democratic forces.

They condemned the killing and demanded arrest of the culprits.

Former BCC commissioner held in BCL leader murder case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

The Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) nabbed Bazlul Huq Chisti Kayes, former Barisal municipal commissioner, from his house at Amanatganj in the city on Monday.

Kayes, who was elected commissioner twice, is younger brother of Ebaiful Huq Chan, president of Barisal Chamber of Commerce and Industries (BCCI) and former secretary of Barisal district BNP.

After arrest, Kayes was interrogated in a Rab camp for four hours and then handed over to Barisal Kotwali police in injured condition. There was no specific case against him, police said.

He was then rushed to Barisal Sadar Hospital and after treatment was produced before court under Section 54.

Then Detective Branch named him an accused in a case, filed three years back, for murder of Saidur Rahman Faruk, ex-VP of Government Barisal College Students Union and vice-president of Chhatra League.

The court refused his bail prayer and sent him to jail. Faruk was murdered in February 7, 2002.

Goat skins seized while being smuggled out

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Satkhira*

A joint team, comprising BDR and customs officials seized 72 pieces of goat skin on Monday from a boat at Burigoalini on Chunkuri river in Shyam Nagar while those were allegedly being smuggled to India.

Two alleged smugglers were also arrested. They are Khokon Gazi and Devbrata Das of Banshipur village in the upazila.

A case has been filed with Shyam Nagar thana.

RU teachers demand govt's resignation

Procession on campus protesting Habiganj killing, lawyers hold rally in Rajshahi city

RU CORRESPONDENT

The Progressive Teachers Association (PTA) at Rajshahi University (RU) yesterday brought out a mourning procession and held a rally on the campus protesting Thursday's grisly grenade attack on Awami League rally in Habiganj that killed former finance minister and AL leader Shah AMS Kibria and four party activists.

The procession started from in front of Senate building and paraded campus streets.

The rally, held in front of Senate building was presided over by PTA Convener Prof Muhammad Nurullah.

The speakers expressed their deep anguish at the killings and demanded arrest and punishment of the killers.

They held the four-party alliance government responsible for the incident, saying such horrific incidents are taking place one after another as the government failed to bring the culprits to book.

They demanded resignation of the BNP-Jamaat government for its

failure to ensure security of people's life and property.

The teachers said a section of ruling party men are sheltering criminals and Islamic militant group Bangla Bhai to liquidate their political opponents.

They said that several grenade attacks were made on AL central leaders in Sylhet during the regime of the present alliance government, but the government could not nab the culprits.

They demanded investigation into Kibria's killing by an independent international body.

The meeting was addressed by, among others, former RU VC Prof Siadur Rahman Khan, Prof Entajul Haque, Prof Anando Kumar Shah, Prof. Zanatul Ferdus and Prof Hasibul Alam Prodhon.

The Rajshahi Ainjibi Somity and the Bangabandhu Ainjibi Parishad jointly organized a meeting in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office on Monday protesting the killings.

Speakers there expressed deep shock at the incident and demanded trial of the killers.

They demanded the govern-

ment's resignation for its failure to ensure security of people's life and property.

They alleged that incidents of killing, terrorism and repression increased after the government took over in 2001, which has tarnished the image of the country abroad.

The speakers included Rajshahi Advocate Bar Association General Secretary Ibrahim Hossain, its Organization Secretary Anial kumar, Awami Ainjibi Somity President Mojaffar Hossain, Bangabandhu Ainjibi Parishad Vice President Ayesur Rahman, its General Secretary Abdul Wahab and Awami Ainjibi Parishad General Secretary Israfil Mallik.

The Rajshahi University Teachers Association (Ruta) in a condolence message on Monday expressed deep shock and anguish at the killings in Habiganj.

They also demanded an impartial investigation in to all incidents of grenade and bomb attacks.

They also expressed sympathy with Kibria bereaved family members.

60-HOUR HARTAL

44 Barisal AL men sued for 'vandalism'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

Forty-four leaders and activists of Awami League and its front organizations have been sued under the Speedy Trial Act for allegedly ransacking vehicles in Barisal city during the hartal that ended on Monday.

Police so far arrested three of the accused. Awami League denied the allegation of ransacking transports.

Police and other sources said, Zamal Hussein, a leaders of Autotempo Workers Union, lodged a case against 19 AL leaders and activists for torching an autotempo on the Sadar Road Monday morn-

ing. Soheli, an activist of AL's student front Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL), was arrested from Amtala in the city in connection with the case.

Md. Khalilur Rahman, publicity secretary of Autotempo Workers Union, lodged another case against 25 AL leaders and workers for ransacking an autotempo on the Hospital Road Saturday.

Police arrested two persons in this case but declined to disclose their identity.

Police said they are trying to nab others accused in the two cases.

Other sources said the accused included Kazi Tarek and Samar Das, convenors of Barisal district and city units of BCL, Debashish, Nayon, Rubel and other prominent AL and BCL activists.

Talukder Md. Yunus, Office Secretary of district AL, denying the allegation said the hartal was spontaneous and there was no need for picketing or ransacking vehicles.

He alleged that to harass and nab opposition leaders and workers, ruling party activists staged the drama of ransacking transports and vehicles and lodged false cases.

Bogra people enthused, call to keep gas tariff within reach

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Bogra*

People of Bogra are enthused that work for pipeline gas supply in the town is progressing fast, but are worried about what the tariffs would be.

The work started on January 5

and is scheduled to be completed by June.

But sources in Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) which is laying the pipeline said they would be able to complete the project much ahead of the scheduled date.

Housewife Shakhia Sultana is very happy, expecting gas connection to the kitchen soon. But she is worried whether pipeline gas would be costlier than LPG cylinders she uses now.

Now she spends about Tk 500 a month on LPG.

Her husband ABM Abu Haider, Lecturer of Geography Department at Government Shah Sultan College, said he is ready to spend the same amount for pipeline gas supply.

Many people including government officials this correspondent talked to said the monthly bill should be not more than Tk 500 for a double burner.

Most of the political leaders in the district including those of BNP said, the bill should be around Tk 400 for single burner and Tk 500 for double burner and connection charge should not exceed Tk 3000.

The government is yet to fix the tariff. The Bogra town gas supply project will cost Tk 184 crore.

Bogra district BNP Secretary Fazlur Bari Talukder Balal said he is happy over gas supply in the town because this will fulfill an election pledge of his party to the people of Bogra.

He said monthly billing and connection charge for domestic and commercial lines should be matching with those in other district towns and cities.

He suggested that prepaid meter

system should be introduced to avoid misuse of gas.

Some senior officials of public and private sector banks said they are expecting at least Tk 200 crore investments on gas-based industries in Bogra town and adjoining areas within two and a half years after completion of the project.

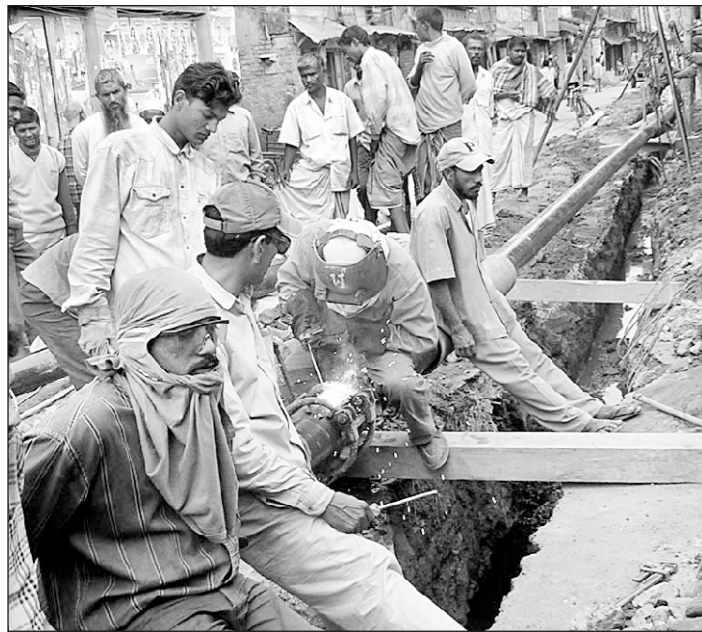
Senior Assistant Vice President and Seals and Service Manager Towfique NK Lodi of Eastern Bank Limited (EBL) said, a group of companies including Mostafa Group has purchased land beside the Bogra-Dhaka highway to set up industries.

Some industrialists including Amjad Hosain Tajma, Managing Director of Tajma Ceramic, has already submitted a Project Proposal (PP) to bank for financial support.

Bogra Chamber of Commerce and Industries President Fazlur Rahman Paiker said owner of the some closed industries including those ran earlier on furnace oil will start production again by December this year.

He said he will start his furnace oil-based industry --North Bengal Auto Bricks--soon if gas is supplied. "I am also thinking about a Compact Natural Gas (CNG) filling station".

Some other companies are preparing project papers for setting up fertiliser factory, dying industry, leather complex and other gas-based industries.



Laying of gas pipeline was started in Borogola area in Bogra town on Monday and completed yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

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5x2

SNAPS

Doctor charged with 'forgery' sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Barisal*

The doctor handed over to police by the Barisal Deputy Commissioner on Sunday for allegedly forging the signature of State Minister for Education Ehsanul Hoq Milton was sent to jail on Monday as a court refused his bail prayer. A K M Siddiqueer Rahman, Sub-assistant Community Medical Officer at Charkawa, was accused in a case for forging the signature of the State Minister in a recommendation letter for admission of his daughter to Barisal Government Girls High School. Ajita Rani Samadder, headmistress of the school, filed a forgery case against Siddiqueer Rahman with Barisal Kotwali thana.

20 injured in Patuakhali clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Patuakhali*

At least 20 villagers were injured, six of them seriously, in a clash over land at Char Anda, about 100-kilometre southeast of Galachipa upazila headquarters on Thursday. About 150 musclemen allegedly engaged by influential persons attacked 50 farmers in an attempt to grab and turn 700 acres of croplands into shrimp enclosures. Six of them were admitted to hospital.

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