

Foreign pirates reign over Bay of Bengal

SHAHIDUL ISLAM

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The pirates mostly from Myanmar and Thailand have long been engaged in looting the marine fisheries of the Bay of Bengal, as the authorities concerned are indifferent to the problem.

Their activities are alarmingly increasing in the absence of a strict law to protect the marine resources of Bangladesh, including checking smuggling and piracy and controlling the water territory, sources said.

A task force, formed to deter piracy in 1999, is yet to start its task.

According to traders dealing with the business, the pirates loot marine fisheries from the Bay of Bengal worth no less than Tk 80 to 100 crore a year.

"For lack of security and authority's sluggishness, more than 200 trawler owners have lost all their belongings at the hands of pirates," said Jahangir Alam, a trawler owner.

About 3,000-sq.kms of Bangladesh's water territory in the Bay of Bengal and along the coastal belt remains unprotected, giving an added advantage to the pirates to rule the roost at their will, sources said.

Exploiting the laxity, the alien pirates on board modern trawl-

ers used to enter the Bangladesh territory and loot marine fisheries without any resistance.

Bangladesh's water territory is an excellent ground for marine fisheries especially 15 types of prawn and the pirates plunder about 30 per cent of this resource, sources said.

The government in 1974 earmarked the country's water territory stretching 200 miles out to the deep sea, but mentioned nothing regarding a 'conservation zone' and 'continental shelf.'

None of the successive governments could control and protect the country's water territory properly, fisheries

sources said.

The pirates sometimes even kidnap the Bangladeshi fishermen at gunpoint and held them hostage, they said.

The government, at an inter-ministerial meeting in 1999, formed a 10-member taskforce headed by the port chairman to restrain the pirates and prevent smuggling in the sea. But the task force is yet to start its function.

Traders said that a strong and effective regulatory body and modern patrolling system in the water territory were needed to protect the marine resources from extinction at the hands of a few criminals.



Flocks of flying heron are a rare scene now-a-days due to illegal poaching which has put these white birds as well as some other species on the verge of extinction. Yet, by turning Wazedia near Oxygen intersection into a sanctuary for rare birds, bird loving people have made it possible for onlookers to witness this scene everyday.

Repair work of Shah Amanat Bridge to begin soon

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD

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The repair work to replace the worn-out and risky decks of Shah Amanat Bridge on the river Karnaphuli will begin soon.

The project, costing Tk 6 crore, was undertaken to make the bridge usable for light vehicles.

The high quality wood for decking and strengthening the bridge will arrive from Africa soon, sources said.

R&H Engineer Feroz Iqbal said the work will be completed within 180 days.

The Ministry of Communication at a meeting with Communication Minister Nazmul Huda in the chair on April 4 decided to repair the bridge with its own fund as the deck had developed at least 15 holes, threatening frequent accidents.

After completion of the repair work, the bridge will ensure smooth movement of light vehicles for at least five more years, sources said.



The Shah Amanat Bridge on the river Karnaphuli, left; vehicles run on the worn-out decks risking the life of passengers, centre; and Communication Minister Nazmul Huda, right; visits the bridge on April 8 to see its condition for himself.



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Under the project, a weighing machine and a toll plaza will be set up at the bridge to prohibit plying of heavy vehicles, as well as to realise revenue, sources

said.

Shah Amanat Bridge, popularly known as Karnaphuli bridge, was constructed on Arakan Sarak (Chittagong-Cox's

Bazar) in 1990. It linked south Chittagong, Cox's Bazar and Bandarban with other parts of the country, bringing about a remarkable change in road

communications in the region.

But within ten years of opening, the bridge was declared closed for heavy vehicles as its wooden deck developed cracks

and became worn out at many points.

Meanwhile, Communication Minister Nazmul Huda at a meeting with the lawyers at the

Chittagong court building on Wednesday said that construction of the proposed Third Karnaphuli Bridge would start this year.

Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Abdullah Al Noman at the Patiya Samity meeting at Muslim Institute on Saturday said that everything is set for starting construction of the bridge by September or October.

But an alternative means for maintaining the road communication was advised as construction of the proposed 3rd bridge was unlikely within the next three years.

Engineer Subhash Barua said construction of the proposed third bridge on the Karnaphuli is vitally needed to facilitate the plying of heavy transports. But it was essential to devise an alternative to the present crisis until the bridge was constructed.

"As an interim-service-provider, Shah Amanat Bridge can be used," Barua said. "If the decking helps Shah Amanat Bridge provide interim service and allow light vehicles, it would certainly be of some use," he said.

the week that was

Golden jubilee of St. Mary's School celebrated

A two-day golden jubilee of Saint Mary's School, a reputed educational institution in the port city, was celebrated amid festivity and grandeur on Friday and Saturday.

Aminur Kabir Chowdhury, a judge of the Supreme Court, in his inaugural speech said that there was no alternative to education to help a burdened country like ours raise head high. The country needs patriotic and well-learned students to enrich her in future.

Reverend Michael Rozario, DD Archbishop of Dhaka, was the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony while Father L. Lecavalier, the Azadi Editor Abdul Malek, Chittagong College Principal Fatema Nargis and Golam Mostafa Kanchon were special guests.

Reverend Patrick D' Rozario, CSC Archbishop of Chittagong, presided over the ceremony. Sister Mary Petra, headmistress of St. Mary's School, made the address of welcome.

JCI Bangladesh Ctg centre opens

The local chapter of Junior Chamber International (JCI) Bangladesh,

Chittagong Central started its journey in the port city on Friday under the leadership of its national president Safina Rahman.

With a "start-up" group of 18 members, Chittagong Central aims at providing the young professionals in Chittagong with opportunities to develop leadership skills, social responsibility, entrepreneurship and fellowship for positive change.

On the occasion of the launching of Chittagong Central, a press conference was held at a local hotel in the evening.

ICI Bangladesh National President Safina Rahman at the conference expressed interest to work with Chittagong chamber as ICI Bangladesh did with Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Bangladesh Chamber of

Commerce.

Mishu Rahman, Maqsd Khan Golam Rahman and JCI Jilani were also present.

Construction of kidney dialysis centre

Construction of a kidney dialysis centre was started on Friday at city's Zakir Hossain Road. Noted industrialist MA Jamal inaugurated the work as chief guest.

The centre is being built with financial assistance from Bangladesh Kidney Foundation.

Jamal assured the centre authorities of all-out cooperation.

Foundation President Professor Dr Mahbub Kamal Chowdhury presided. Shamsul Haq, Dr Mamunur Rashid Sarker, Dr Mahmud A Chowdhury Arzoo, Dr Entesamul Haq and Abul Kashem also spoke.

Firingi Bazar school sports held

Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Abdullah Al Noman said the government would do everything to improve the quality of education.

He said this while he was speaking as chief guest at the prize giving cere-

mony of annual sports of Firingi Bazar Girls School on Sunday.

School managing committee president MA Halim presided.

BNP leader MA Sabur, education officer Tahmina Begum, social activists Afazullah Khan, Maqsd Ahmad Sarker, Shafique Sardar and Mohiuddin Chowdhury also spoke.

Later, Noman gave away prizes among the winners.

Trains to increase to carry containers Chittagong Port Authority (CPA) and Bangladesh Railway at a meeting here on Thursday decided to increase trains to carry containers from Chittagong port to Dhaka until the introduction of "dedicated trains".

The meeting took the decision to resolve the problem of transportation of

containers on an emergency basis.

CPA Chairman AMM Shahadat Hossain chaired the meeting. Bangladesh Railway (East) General Manager Sultan Ahmed Talukder and other high officials were present.

The meeting also discussed setting up of railway tracks at the New Mooring Container Terminal.

World Health Day observed

The World Health Day was observed with a call for taking care of mother and child's health first here on Thursday.

Different government, non-government and socio-cultural organi-

sations held discussion meetings and rallies.

Divisional Information office of the Department of Mass Communication organised a discussion meeting at the Civil Surgeon's office.

Speakers at the discussion meeting emphasised creating mass awareness regarding health and disseminating information in this regard. They also underscored the need for bringing down the death rate of mothers and children.

Chittagong District Health Administration brought out a procession from in front of Chittagong Press Club. Civil Surgeon Dr Khurshid Jamil Chowdhury inaugurated the procession. The physicians, nurses and people from all walks of life participated in the procession.



The opposition Awami League-backed Chittagong Nagorik Committee, left, along with its mayoral candidate ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and ruling BNP-backed four-part alliance, right, along with its mayoral candidate Mir Mohammad Nasir Uddin took out processions on Monday before submitting their nomination papers for the Chittagong City Corporation elections.



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