

## Arrest big fish

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last year till March this year.

After months of drifting in the sea, at least 5,354 boatpeople landed in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand in May-June this year. Of them, 1,568 were identified as Bangladeshis and are being repatriated, IOM chief of mission Sharat Das told the dialogue.

Lack of jobs at home, limited opportunities for regular migration, weak law enforcement and existence of pervasive smuggling and trafficking networks were identified as major factors behind human trafficking through sea.

Speakers said law enforcement must be strengthened to prevent this.

Rapid Action Battalion Director General Benazir Ahmed said Bangladesh has a very comprehensive law against human trafficking. Some 600 to 700 cases are filed every year, but only 40 to 50 are settled. Some cases go on for years.

Some lawmakers requested the chief justice to look into why many cases are stayed by the High Court. In response, the CJ said police investigation and prosecution system remained quite faulty, which is why many cases were stayed.

He also said partisan people were often employed as public prosecutors, who had limited knowledge of laws and could not speak in court. "Lawyers concentrate more on money, not the law."

Referring to the Human Trafficking Deterrence and Suppression Act 2012, he said the law talked about special tribunals, but the judiciary was not consulted about it.

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Dr Mizanur Rahman said Bangladesh's overseas labour market was controlled by the "political syndicate," and the government seemed to be failing in checking irregularities in the private sector. As a result, other countries like India, Nepal and the Philippines are taking over Bangladesh's overseas labour market, he observed.

TIM Zahid Hossain of Partners in Population and Development said people from Bangladesh were going abroad not only for poverty. So, a full hearing on the issue at parliament was needed and experts could be invited to share their insights.

AKM Musa, Bangladesh country director of Concern Worldwide, said people from certain pockets -- haors, chars, river erosion-hit areas and coastal areas -- seem to take the risky sea voyage in large numbers. Special attention should be given to these areas.

Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmud Ali said human traffickers were taking advantage of the Rohingya problems and some Bangladeshis were also falling victim.

Job creations at home by increasing investment, among other things, can help prevent human trafficking, he added.

Deputy Speaker Fazle Rabbi Mia chaired the dialogue while Dipu Moni, former foreign minister and also chairperson of APPG on Human Rights, moderated it.

## WW2 tank

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Along with the 1943 Panther tank, a torpedo and assorted other weaponry not specified by the police was found.

The hoard was found on Wednesday, but by Thursday, police were still working to remove the 45 tonne, 22-foot tank from the property, using another tank designed to haul disabled tanks off the battlefield.

The Süddeutsche Zeitung reported that the villa owner's lawyer claimed that the tank could no longer fire its weapons and thus was not breaking any law.

The Zeitung also spoke to the mayor of the small suburb of Heikendorf, Alexander Orth, who was not surprised by the discovery of military hardware.

"He was chugging around in that thing during the snow catastrophe in 1978", the mayor said.

As well as laws against owning weapons of war, it is illegal to collect or trade in Nazi memorabilia in Germany unless it is for scholarly or museum purposes.

However, there is no evidence that the man has broken this law.

## Court directs

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said Kazi Muttaki Ibne Minan, additional deputy commissioner (prosecution) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police.

It also directed the CPA to take measures like installing sufficient CCTV cameras and not keeping goods near the seized items, said Assistant Commissioner Md Kamruzzaman, the investigation officer.

The liquid cocaine was found in a barrel that arrived at Chittagong Port on May 8 along with 106 more barrels of sunflower oil from Bolivia via Uruguay. On June 27, a case was filed. Four people were arrested in this regard.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at a programme organised by the President Guards Regiment at Dhaka Cantonment marking its 40th founding anniversary yesterday.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

## Saudi saw

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the political crisis in Bangladesh.

Several confidential cables hint that some quarters within the Saudi government think that the ruling party was "politically motivated" in conducting the war crimes trial.

Abdullah Bin Naser Al Busairi served as the Saudi ambassador to Bangladesh from 2008 to November 2014.

A Bangladeshi politician, who knew him, said he (Al Busairi) used to speak excellent English and was very friendly.

A BNP standing committee member said Busairi was quite open with his critical views of Bangladesh politics.

On May 10, 2012 (19 Jamadi-us Sani 1433), Saudi ambassador Al Busairi in his diplomatic cable informed the Saudi foreign ministry in Riyadh, "I think Bangladesh is gaining increased attention from the United States and the United Kingdom. On top of that, Bangladesh is making steady economic progress. As a result, the country will attain a significant position both politically and economically in near future but it depends on political stability. The current Bangladesh government led by Sheikh Hasina enjoys continued support from the US and India, which has given it strength to keep the opposition under pressure with arrests and tortures. And the government is trying to establish one-party politics."

In a diplomatic cable sent from Dhaka just three months before sending the previous one, the then Saudi foreign minister Saud Al Faisal was told: "The main objective of the Bangladesh government in conducting the war crimes trial is to make political gains and to take revenge against some important persons."

The full copy of this cable was not available. When contacted, the executive director of Transparency International, Bangladesh, Dr Iftekharuzzaman, and the secretary of Citizens for Good Governance, Badiul Alam Majumder, agreed with the Saudi assessment about AL's desire to establish "one-party politics" but both of them disagreed with Saudi Arabia that the war crimes trial was "revenge".

Iftekharuzzaman observed that bundling the crackdown on opposition parties and the war crimes trial process together does not show professional diplomatic wisdom of the Saudi embassy. Dr Badiul Alam Majumder said that the accused are undergoing trials in a regular process and the crimes will have to come under trial. However, the Saudi government made the correct judgement by not interfering in the process.

BNP standing committee member Abdul Moyeen Khan did not make any comments on the Saudi cables. About the "AL's desire to establish one-party politics", the BNP leader, however, told of the attacks by the ruling party men on his iftar programme at Narsingdi on Saturday and said, "It is evident from such regular incidents across the country that multi-party democracy exists no more."

Badiul Alam Majumder said that by approving the 15th amendment to the constitution in 2011, the process to change power through elections has been effectively shut off, thus the path is wide open to one-party rule. AL presidium member Kazi Zafarullah said that he did not want to comment on the issue, as countries have their own opinions. "Some see the glass as either half full or half empty. But the reality is different from the presumed notion of one-party politics."

Busairi in his one-page cable wrote, "Though the government has encountered multi-pronged agitation and instability this time, a BNP leader has already been abducted." It was possible to identify the blue initials of Al Busairi on the cable sent on 10 May 2012 in the wake of the

abduction of BNP leader Ilias Ali on 17 April 2012.

It was seen in different cables that Saudi Arabia was keeping watch on the visits of different US secretaries of state and officials to Bangladesh.

Busairi had attached the list of officials including the US foreign secretary who visited Bangladesh in early 2012 with his cable.

Another cable whose date could not be found gives a hint of Dhaka Saudi embassy's feelings over the trial of war crimes.

It is assumed that the message might have been written sometime between 2010 and 2012.

The Saudi embassy told Riyadh's foreign ministry through an official note, "The incumbent government, through all its diplomatic efforts, was able to get the support of the United Nations, the US and the European Union for the trial of war crimes committed in 1971. However, the international community stressed that the trial must be held following international standards and it should be transparent."

The message adds, "Most of those arrested for war crimes represent the opposition including Jamaat-e-Islami and BNP. None of the arrested, so far, belongs to the ruling party or any of its alliance parties, which proves the main intention of the trial is political, and the opposition is protesting the trial. The people are unhappy over the deterioration of country's security and economy."

The first charge sheet in a war crimes case was submitted to the International Crimes Tribunal in 2010 and by 2012 a total of nine Jamaat and two BNP leaders were charge-sheeted.

The cable says that Saudi foreign minister Saud Al-Faisal informed late King Abdullah, "The embassy [in Dhaka] thinks the government may hesitate to conduct the trial as it fears clashes between different political parties and supporters of the government. There is apprehension in the government about that it might cause anarchy and insecurity. The final outcome of the trial will be punishing the accused by hanging and this might throw the country into an abyss."

*This is an abridged version of the story published in the Prothom Alo by Mizanur Rahman Khan on Sunday.*

## Mangroves

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"I feel happy seeing the lush greenery on the riverside. But at the same time, many of our ancestral lands have been eroded by the river moving eastward," he said, stressing the need for steps to stop river erosion in the locality.

Talking to the news agency, newly appointed Divisional Forest Officer of the Sundarbans East Zone Md Saidul Islam said he has learned about it from various sources.

He also noted that the area was controlled by the district administration and he would take steps to conserve the new vegetation holding discussions with the deputy commissioner first.

Prof Mahmud Hossain of Khulna University's forestry and wood technology said he recently recorded 12 mangrove species on the banks.

"The seeds have been reaching the area with the tidal waves and giving birth to the vegetation. Further studies over the plants could be illuminating," he said.

Prof Md Shah Alam Faizi, chairman of botany department, Bagerhat Government PC College, said the mangroves have been thriving because of some favourable conditions -- tidal flows, intrusion of saline water and increase of salinity in the soil.

Bagerhat Deputy Commissioner Md Jahangir Alam said he has been informed about the mangroves and would take necessary steps to protect it after consultation with Bangladesh Forest Department officials.

## Review body

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The draft law was prepared by Prof Zulfikar Ahmed of Rajshahi University's Law department.

In the meeting, Mostafa Jabbar, former president of Bangladesh Computer Samity, termed the draft "incomplete" and said it had many scope for misuse.

He claimed that many parts of the draft law could also be criticised from the perspective of human rights.

According to the draft, law enforcers are entitled to seize any electronic device from anywhere if they suspect that was used in a cyber crime, which many see as a violation of human rights.

The draft act has a provision for maximum 20 years of imprisonment for committing "cyber terrorism", and arrest of suspects without any warrant.

According to the draft, a crime committed online with its effect in another country would be considered cyber terrorism.

A person guilty of cyber crime committed in Bangladesh affecting Bangladesh could be sentenced up to 14 years' imprisonment or fined up to Tk 1 crore, or both, reads the draft.

In yesterday's meeting, state minister Palak said currently no public meeting with hundreds of participants was needed for unleashing "terrorism".

Anyone could do such crimes using the internet and cause severe damages, he added.

Prof Mohammad Kaykobad of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology said, "... we need to formulate such a law which will protect our people and give them a secured cyber world."

Several speakers opined that the country needed a "meaningful" cyber security act.

In response, Palak said the government had a plan to complete all the work on the draft law before August.

"...for securing the banking and other financial sectors, we need to formulate this act without any delay," he added.

Rezaur Rahman Lenin, a non-government organisation worker, said, human rights and freedom of speech also need to be ensured while opinions are expressed online.

Experts in the meeting said there were many repetitions between the draft law and the Information Technology and Communication Act, 2006. They called for amending the act.

The ICT state minister agreed to the issue.

Later, the experts claimed to have found the draft nothing but a compilation of different other existing laws in the country and said the law, once enacted, should follow international standards.

The draft law also has a provision for setting up a "National Internet (Cyber) Security Organisation" for protecting Bangladesh's sovereignty, security and integrity, and friendship with foreign countries and others.

The draft suggested a minimum five years of jail for those who erase or distort someone else's data or send electronic messages with false information to deceive a person.

Taking photographs of others secretly and publishing them without permission would be considered a cyber crime with a provision for imprisonment of up to 10 years, according to the draft.

Legal and industry experts earlier said they were very critical of the draft. According to them, the government wants to formulate the act only to control social networks and the bloggers.

They said the draft does not bring anything new to the table, apart from increasing the punishment for cyber crime.

They even went on to say that the government could not secure people's data but

wants to control people's voices.

## Disparities remain

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remarkable progress made in Bangladesh over the last few years in improving conditions for children, but it also highlights important disparities that need to be addressed."

Emphasising the importance of education, the planning minister said the government has taken various development programmes to reduce disparities.

With support from Unicef, the BBS survey was carried out in 64 districts from December 2012 to April 2013, based on data collected from 51,895 households and covering a total of 79 social indicators, of which 16 are Millennium Development Goal indicators.

In its survey, the BBS finds that early initiation of breastfeeding is still at a low rate.

Early breastfeeding is more common in home births than those at public and private healthcare facilities, and it is higher among poorest households at 63 percent than richest ones at 48 percent, says the study.

According to the survey, 43.5 percent births are attended by skilled health professionals in the country. However, mothers from poorest households get the services in only 26.5 percent cases compared to 72.8 percent of mothers from richest households. Khulna division has the highest rate of providing skilled birth attendants while Sylhet has the lowest.

On education, the study finds that net attendance of primary school-going kids has dropped among both boys and girls between the year 2006

and 2012-13. But completion rate of primary education has risen for both the sexes in the same period.

However, one in four kids still remains out of primary schools and the proportion is higher among boys than girls, according to the study.

More than half of the women aged between 20-24 years get married before the age of 18 years and some 18 percent before 15 years.

24.8 percent of the population have drinking water with arsenic above the World Health Organisation guideline value of 10 parts per billion (ppb) and 12.4 percent of the population have drinking water that exceeds the Bangladesh Standard of 50 ppb, the study says.

More than half of the source water in Sylhet division is contaminated with arsenic. Drinking water in Barisal division has the lowest amount of arsenic, it points out.

It also finds that 41.7 percent of the population have source water with detectable Escherichia coli or E. coli bacteria although many countries including Bangladesh have set a standard that no E. coli should be found in a 100 ml sample of drinking water.

The BBS survey shows that there has been progress in access to improved sanitation from 39 percent in 2006 to 77 percent in 2013. The rate of open defecation has also reduced in the same period.

However, significant differences lie in the use of improved sanitation facilities between rich and poor households, according to the survey.

## Be careful while making

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executive, it said.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha said the judiciary was not so limited in power that it would tolerate such unnecessary comments.

According to UNB, BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia on Saturday at a programme of pro-BNP lawyers had said, "The judiciary has been separated, but it hasn't become independent. The independence of the judiciary has been snatched. In fact, it's now more controlled."

"From the Supreme Court premises, I want to say there's no rule of law. The law is not equal for all. We see the trial is not the same for the ruling party men and the opposition and common people. It can't be allowed to continue," Khaleda had told the lawyers.

She claimed that the ruling party men were not being arrested and punished even after committing serious crimes, while the opposition men were sent to jail and punished for committing no crime.

Yesterday, Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's lawyer Khandker Mahbub Hossain told the SC that the lower courts were not really independent, although they were independent on paper. He said it was not possible for the chief justice to monitor the performance of all lower court judges due to the lack of a digitalised system.

Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha told Khandker Mahbub that since taking office, his office had taken appropriate action whenever he received allegations against any judge.

Khandker Mahbub then said the situation regarding the judiciary had changed after the chief justice took charge and that they have become optimistic at the chief justice's statements.

But the history of the judiciary was not good, since it had not applied its inherent powers in protecting democracy, he claimed.

The SC then told Khandker Mahbub that it could take action against him if he went on making such

comments.

The apex court said lawyers like Khandker Mahbub and Moudud Ahmed could appear and place arguments before the courts, since the judiciary was independent.

The lawyer then said he was hopeful that the changes would continue.

Attorney General Mahbubey Alam, who opposed the High Court orders of bail to Fakhrul, told reporters that the SC had expressed serious dissatisfaction with the statements of some politicians.

After concluding the hearing, the apex court asked the authorities concerned of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University to form a four-member medical board to examine the health of Fakhrul and to submit a medical report to it by July 8.

It fixed July 8 for passing orders on the government's petitions against the HC orders that granted bail to Fakhrul in three cases filed under the Explosive Substances Act.

The SC would decide whether it would grant bail to Fakhrul after seeing the medical report, Sagor Hossain Leon, a lawyer for the BNP leader, told The Daily Star.

## Wheat from Brazil

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After accepting the report, the HC bench of Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque and Justice Abu Taher Md Saifur Rahman yesterday fixed July 8 for a hearing, and passing orders on the matter.

Petitioner's lawyer AM Mahbub Uddin Khokon told reporters that the wheat from Brazil was not fit for human consumption as it had insects, as per "other laboratory reports".

Pabel Mia, a lawyer at the Dhaka Judges' Court, moved the petition on June 29, seeking an HC order on the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to launch an enquiry into the import of wheat.

The government has reportedly imported around two lakh tonnes of "substandard" wheat from Brazil, he said in the plea.

## Railway prepares

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5,000 more passengers. But the total capacity is still very insufficient compared to the demand, the officials admit.

Outside Dhaka, two special trains will ply between Chittagong and Chandpur, one between Bhairab and Kishoreganj and another between Mymensingh and Kishoreganj.

A statement of the railway ministry claims around 1.8 lakh people travel by trains across the country every day. However, the railway's daily capacity will increase to around 2.5 lakh because of the additional arrangements, it adds.

The railway authorities will start selling advance tickets on July 9. Advance tickets of July 13-17 will be sold on July 9-13 correspondingly.

Tickets will be sold at Kamalapur Rail Station in Dhaka and Chittagong Station. One can buy maximum four tickets.

Similarly, return tickets of July 20-24 will be sold on July 16-20 at Rajshahi, Khulna, Rangpur, Dinajpur and Lalmonirhat.

Speaking anonymously, an official

told The Daily Star that many coaches had become outdated and inactive while travelling round the year. These coaches were sent to two workshops -- one in Pahartali of Chittagong and another in Syedpur of Nilphamari.

Ahead of Eid, these coaches were taken back in operation after renovation, the official added.

Carriage and Wagon Repair Workshop of Bangladesh Railway's East Zone, located at Pahartali, have been abuzz with repair and renovation works of old and damaged coaches, reports our Chittagong correspondent.

Workers of the workshop are passing busy time with repair and renovation of the coaches. Although per day outturn of carriages from the workshop is one, they are now making ready about two coaches daily.

During a visit to the workshop, worker Nurul Islam said they were doing extra job to repair the old and damaged coaches.

Around 48 coaches have already been ready for service and the rest around 40 coaches would be fit by July 14.