

# 14 'Bangladeshis' stranded in India for three months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kolkata

Fourteen fishermen, who claim to be Bangladeshi, have been stranded for around three months in Purba Medinipur of West Bengal, India.

They were travelling on a Bangladeshi trawler named Champa Akhter. Caught in bad weather, the engine of the boat shut down on November 7 last year. After floating on the Bay of Bengal for 20 days, it entered Indian territory, the fishermen said.

Fishermen of Shankarpur in Purba Medinipur rescued the "Bangladeshi" fishermen and took them to Digha sea beach on November 27, before taking them to the district administration. The "Bangladeshis" have not been arrested, but are now under the custody of local district and police administration.

The fishermen claim that they are all from Bhandaria thana in Pirojpur district. Since their nationalities have not yet been confirmed, local authori-

ties are unable to free them, reported our correspondent in Kolkata.

One of the fishermen on the Bangladeshi trawler, Zakir Hossain said his team included Romik Miah, Siam Sarder, Mohammad Babul, Mohammad Selim and 9 others. He said he and the others have been living on the assistance of the Indian administration. Although, after facing a shortage of warm clothes many of them have fallen ill.

As per government rules, the responsibility of confirming the nationalities of the stranded fishermen lies with the Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh in Kolkata. Contacted, BM Jamal Hossain, consul (political) at the Deputy High Commission, said, "We haven't yet been notified about the matter by the authorities concerned in India. Once they inform us, we will confirm their [the fishermen] nationalities and send them back as soon as possible."

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



The 14 rescued "Bangladeshi" fishermen soaking in the sun on a boat near Digha sea beach in West Bengal's Purba Medinipur recently. They had been stranded at the beach since November 27 after their trawler's engine failed amid bad weather.

PHOTO: SUBRATA ACHARYA

# Inmates slide down from India jail using bed sheets

AFP, Kolkata

Three inmates have made a daring escape from a high-security jail in eastern India using bed sheets laced with sedatives and bed sheets to abseil down the walls, a prison official said yesterday.

The trio of Bangladeshis incarcerated at Alipore Jail in Kolkata remain at large after pulling off the audacious prison break over the weekend.

West Bengal state's prison director Arun Gupta said the runaways made their dash after drugging their jail guards and fellow inmates with spiked dessert.

"The trio mixed sedatives in the sweets brought from the jail canteen, and served these to inmates and some prison guards on Saturday night," said Gupta.

They then cut through the bars on their cell window and used bed sheets knotted into a length to descend the six-metre (20 feet) walls to the ground below.

Their absence was not detected until prison wardens conducted the morning head count, Gupta said.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

# Red Crescent team member withdrawn

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The team leader of the Red Crescent temporary hospital in Ghumdhum was withdrawn yesterday for allegedly refusing to provide information to government officials and behaving discourteously with two upazila nirbahi officers.

A letter signed by Md Shoyeb Abdullah, assistant secretary of the UN Refugee Agency, said team leader Nuran Henry was dismissed and asked to leave the country.

On the night of January 11, wife and three children of Rohingya refugee Abdur Rahim were injured in a fire at his tent at Kutupalong transit camp in Ukhaia of Cox's Bazar.

The four were rushed to the Red Crescent hospital. They died at the hospital that night.

As UNOs SM Sarwar Kamal of Naikhangchhari and Mohammad Nikaruzaman of Ukhaia went to the hospital on January 13 to enquire about the incident, the team leader allegedly misbehaved with them.

This correspondent reached some Red Crescent officials in Cox's Bazar over phone, but they refused to for comment on the withdrawal of Nuran Henry.

# Cold to rattle

FROM PAGE 1

Meanwhile, heavy fog disrupted flight operations from Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital for the seventh consecutive day yesterday.

Visibility around the HSIA and its runways was so poor during the last week that airport authorities had to suspend flight operations between 1:00am to 11:00am almost every day, said AKM Rezaul Karim, a spokesperson for Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh.

As a result, Biman Bangladesh Airlines and other airlines were forced to reschedule many of their flights.

"Saudi Arabian Airlines operates 25 flights weekly. We have already changed the timetable of some of these flights to avoid the mornings," Omar Khayyam, acting sales manager, Saudia, told The Daily Star.

On Sunday night, a Biman flight from Singapore was forced to land at Hazrat Shah Amanat Airport in Chittagong instead of HSIA, the CAAB spokesperson said. It was able to fly to HSIA several hours later.

Two other international flights had to circle in the sky for around an hour before landing at the Chittagong airport due to the dense fog, a CAAB official said. At least 25 domestic and international flights were delayed between one to three hours.

ARM Sadat, manager of airport operation and customer service of

Novo Air, said delays were creating additional problems. "In case of one or two hours delay, we are now required to provide food and other services to our passengers," he said.

Heavy fog also disrupted ferry services on the two major routes - Shimulia-Kathalbari and Paturia-Daulatdia.

Ferry services came to a complete halt on the Shimulia-Kathalbari route from 2:00am Monday, our Munshiganj correspondent reports. It resumed at 10:00am.

Six ferries were stranded with thousands of passengers in the middle of the river in this severe weather, Shah Khaled Newaz, assistant general manager of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTA) said.

On the Paturia-Daulatdia route ferry services resumed after seven hours of disruption. "Services suspended from 3:30am due to poor visibility and resumed at 10:30am," Shafikul Islam, manager of BIWTC Daulatdia office said.

Four ferries were stuck in the middle of the river while seven ferries were stranded at Paturia and five at the Daulatdia ghat. This resulted in a long queue of vehicles stranded on both sides of the river.

Three people who had been injured while trying to warm themselves lighting fires died of their wounds yesterday at different places in the country.

# 'New gas field' found in Bhola

FROM PAGE 1

specifying any details.

Certain geological tests must be done first to be able to say for sure if it is a new gas field and to ascertain the reserve volume.

When asked whether all required tests had been carried out to reach the conclusion about the discovery, the cabinet secretary replied in the affirmative.

Prof Syed Humayun Akhter of Dhaka University's geology department, however, told The Daily Star, "I don't know whether required tests have already been done. But I know from my connections that it's almost certainly a new gas field."

Quizzically though, state-run explorer Bapex (Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Ltd) and its parent organisation Petrobangla remained tight-lipped on details.

Sources in the Bapex, however, confided that it was likely to be a new gas field but had been disclosed prematurely.

Initial tests suggest that the gas field looked to be the most promising in Bangladesh. The gas pressure was found to be at 5,600 PSI (pound per square inch) which is the highest among all gas fields in the country, they said.

But the disclosure should have been

made after doing the DST (drilling steam test, a method to determine extractable reserve) and perforation test (a method to determine the flow pressure of the gas field), they added.

"It will take a week or so for Bapex to conduct those tests and reconfirm the announcement," a top Bapex official said opting not to be named.

Traditionally, the news of any discovery would come from either explorer Bapex or its parent organisation Petrobangla. This is the second time such news has been disclosed to the nation after a cabinet meeting at the secretariat.

Over two months ago, the government prematurely disclosed that a new gas field was discovered in Bhola without having certain geological tests done. Later, geological tests confirmed that the "new gas field" was in fact an extension of the existing Shabbazpur Gas Field structure, which has 700 billion cubic feet of reserves.

According to Bapex, the country has about 11-12 trillion cubic feet of gas reserves with an annual consumption of about one trillion cubic feet.

The gas field in Bhola has the potential to become the largest reserve of natural gas in the country, surpassing Titas in Brahmanbaria. But the rest of the country might not be able to use the new-found gas because of Bhola's geographical isolation.

Like now, the gas would be used in power generation and in industries of the region. Pipelines through rivers to the national gas grid would be way too expensive.

Bhola has two power plants with the capacity to generate 225 megawatts and 30.5MW. They use gas from Shabbazpur.

The construction of another 225MW plant is underway.

The government plans to set up a special economic zone in the district.

# The lure

FROM PAGE 16

There are no other potential buyers for the palm.

"There are enough plantations in the district to supply the raw material required by the factory," says the factory's managing director, Ali Akbar. "But we didn't have the most efficient machinery. We hope that next year we can re-establish the factory using more modern technology."

"If palm oil trees were properly cultivated and the right processing facilities made available, it would be profitable," says Tarun Bhattacharya, deputy director of the department of agricultural extension in Khagrachhari.

Oil palm plantations currently cover 137 hectares in the district.

# HC delivers split order

FROM PAGE 1

Under article 70, lawmakers lose their seats in parliament if they vote in the House against the party that nominated them.

The judges will now send the writ petition along with their split order to Justice Abdul Wahhab Miah, who is performing the functions of the chief justice, for a decision.

Justice Wahhab will then assign another HC bench for its hearing and disposal, Deputy Attorney General Motaher Hossain Sazu told The Daily Star.

In his order, Justice Moyeenul said members of parliament could not discharge their duties properly as they could not express their opinions independently because of article 70.

The MPs are not independent as they could not vote against their party decisions and that is why they are subservient to their parties, he noted.

Political parties, not the people, are the source of all powers under article 70, although the people are the source of all powers under article 7 of the constitution, Justice Moyeenul said.

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court has accepted the HC observation regarding article 70 in the judgment of the 16th amendment case, he said in his order.

The SC has upheld the HC verdict that scrapped the 16th amendment which had empowered parliament to remove the SC judges for incapacity or misconduct.

In its verdict in the case, the top court had said, "By reason of article 70 of our constitution and its impact on members of Parliament leads to the irresistible conclusion that this new mechanism cannot be expected to function independently and neutrally if a judge attracts displeasure from the political party in power, he may be subjected to removal by parliament."

In his order yesterday, Justice Moyeenul said it was mandatory for the HC Division to abide by the Appellate Division verdict.

There are elements for issuing a rule in response to this writ petition that challenged article 70, he said.

The HC judgment on the 16th amendment case, Justice Moyeenul and his colleague Justice Quazi Reza-Ul Hoque had observed, "Keeping article 70 of Bangladesh constitution as it is, the members of parliament must toe the party line in case of removal of any judge of the Supreme Court. Consequently, the Judge will be left at the mercy of the party high com-

mand.

"As regards article 70 of the constitution of Bangladesh, we must say that this article has fettered the members of parliament. It has imposed a tight rein on them. Members of parliament cannot go against their party line or position on any issue in the parliament. They have no freedom to question their party's stance in parliament, even if it is incorrect. They cannot vote against their party's decision. They are, indeed, hostages in the hands of their party high command, said the two judges."

Rejecting the petition, Justice Ashraful Kamal yesterday said that though the Appellate Division accepted the High Court Division observation regarding article 70, 16th amendment case was related to the judiciary and the Supreme Judicial Council over the removal of SC judges.

Article 70 was incorporated in the constitution in 1972 and since then no question has arisen in parliament or the government over the justification of this article, and people did not raise any question on this issue, he said.

There is no precedence of any misuse of the article in the country, he added.

Justice Ashraful said that HC could

not formulate the constitution or the law.

This court can only rule whether the law made by parliament is contrary to the constitution or not and, for this reason, the SC has scrapped the fifth and 13th amendments to the constitution, he said.

Also, the writ petitioner did not specifically say in the petition which articles of the constitution are contrary to article 70, he added.

However, in his writ petition submitted in April last year, SC lawyer Eunos Ali challenged the legality of article 70 of the constitution, saying that the article is against democracy and articles 7, 19, 26, 27, 44, 31 and 119 of the constitution.

Justice Ashraful also said members of parliament are elected representative of people and, therefore, the court cannot force them to formulate any law and cannot raise any question on what purpose they formulated the law.

Justice Ashraful had disagreed also with Justice Moyeenul and Justice Quazi Reza-Ul in the 16th amendment verdict.

In the 16th amendment verdict, he said the said amendment mad the constitution free from a "black spot and reestablished the real independence of the judiciary".

# Clinical Tigers brush

FROM PAGE 1

Bangladesh's fielding was otherwise brilliant as all 11 players seemed focused on the job at hand. While Sikandar Raza resisted with 52 off 99 balls, Bangladesh's bowling--which comprised three specialist seamers and two left-arm spinners--was consistently tight and denied the Zimbabweans a chance to put up a fighting total.

Shakib took the new ball and removed Solomon Mire and Craig Ervine in the first over. Mire was brilliantly stumped off a wide down the leg side by Mushfiqur Rahim while Ervine chipped a catch to short midwicket. Hamilton Masakadza and Brendon Taylor then nicked off Mashrafe and Mustafizur to the wicketkeeper, leaving the side at 51 for four, a state from which Zimbabwe could not recover despite Raza's steady knock.

Zimbabwe's bowlers, on the other hand, struggled with their lines and lengths as Tamim and Shakib cashed in with 78 runs for the second wicket after opener Anamul Haque departed after playing a few eye-catching shots. Shakib was trapped in front by Raza for 37 but Tamim and Mushfiqur completed the chase in style with an unbroken 63-run stand for the third wicket.

With this match ODI cricket returned to the country after a 15-month break, but there was not a great amount of enthusiasm at Mirpur which saw a low turnout but the outcome was pleasing enough, with Mashrafe saying: "It's very important to get the first win. Hopefully we can continue."

Bangladesh ODI skipper Mashrafe however had another reason to smile as left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman seemed to have recaptured some of his old form, enough for Shakib to express his satisfaction over the young man's bowling during the post-match briefing.

Zimbabwe skipper Graeme Cremer described it best: "He bowled really well actually. His slower balls are difficult to pick up as you have to wait for a long time. There is a huge difference between his normal stock delivery and his slower ball and he bowled good areas today. I know he is coming from an injury so it was a good effort from him. It is tough facing him as he is a world-class bowler."

Despite Malcolm Waller being dropped

t w i c e ,

# 1,000 cartons recalled, 7000 consumed

FROM PAGE 16

baby milk. Rest of it has been consumed," Zawadul Haque, a partner of the company, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"To the best of our knowledge, there is no more baby milk [in the stores] that is suspected of being contaminated by Salmonella," he said. The products were marketed in July last year, he added.

Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) Director SM Amirul Islam, however, said a portion of the products may still be in stores but they were being taken down.

The withdrawal move comes after Lactalis recalled more than 12 million boxes of powdered baby milk in 83 countries, including Bangladesh, as Salmonella bacteria was discovered at a factory in France, reports BBC.

Salmonella can cause severe diar-

rhoea, stomach cramps, vomiting, and severe dehydration. It can be life-threatening, especially in young children.

So far, 35 cases have been reported in France and another one has been confirmed in Spain.

Another possible case is being investigated in Greece, French authorities said on Friday.

Alarmed by the discovery, the BFSA asked JES International on December 15 to withdraw the baby milk in question - Babycare-1 and Babycare-2 [batch numbers - 17C0012388, 17C0012668, 17C0012380, 17C0012435, 17C0012991, 17C0012669, 17C0012993 and 17C0013570] - from the stores across the country.

JES International then sent samples from these batches to the Bangladesh

Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) on December 26. The bacteria, however, was not found in those samples, according to the test report obtained by The Daily Star

"We have still withdrawn the products based on suspicion. There are, however, no doubts about Salmonella contamination regarding the batches of the same products manufactured in 2016. Those are absolutely safe," he added.

BFSA Director Amirul Islam told this correspondent at his office that they formed a committee on December 31 to oversee the issue of baby milk contamination.

The authorities sealed off two go-downs of JES International - one in Mitford area and the other one in Chankharpool area - on January 1 and 2 respectively, he told this correspondent. Together, there were 11,616

cartons of the milk.

"We also instructed our food safety inspectors to closely monitor the food stores across the country," Amirul said.

Any negligence on part of the importer in withdrawing the suspected milk would lead to legal actions, he said, warning that the issue was a serious public health concern and people too should not buy from the batches of the baby milk in question.

He, however, noted that there has not yet been any report of illness linked to the baby milk consumption.

Visiting several superstores, drug stores, and grocery shops in Badda, Rampura, Khilgaon, Dhanmondi, and Farmgate areas, The Daily Star did not see any milk from the batches in question but there was milk from other batches produced in 2016.

**Australian Education Event**

18<sup>th</sup> JANUARY THURSDAY | 10AM - 5PM

LAKE SHORE HOTEL, DHAKA

Gulshan 2, Dhaka (Near Banani Bridge)

MEET university representatives GET Spot Admissions & Scholarships APPLY for 2018 intakes FREE ENTRY

CoUniversity | Deakin University | La Trobe University | Macquarie University | Monash College & University | The University of Adelaide | The University of Newcastle | The University of New South Wales | The University of Sydney | UTS | The University of Wollongong | ICMS | Blue Mountains Int'l Hotel Mgt. School | UTS: INSEARCH

9885846, 01711037811 01962547066, 01719601519

Register online www.globalreach.in/bangladeshexpo GLOBAL REACH