

A backbreaking profession

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DHAKA VIBE

Despite back pain, 30-year-old Bellal Hossain toil away at Jurain graveyard to support his family. Below, a chart mentioning names of the grave diggers.

PHOTO: STAR

Thirty-year-old Bellal Hossain could not dig any grave in the last three months as he has been indisposed with lower back pain -- due to digging work for the last 10 years at Jurain graveyard.

Bellal, who started working at the graveyard with help of his father, is now involved in lighter work like cleaning as doctor advised him not to do any digging work.

"I have been out of work for the last three months. I reckon I have to resume digging graves soon despite the back pain as otherwise I won't be able to support my family," a tensed Bellal said.

Many in the grave digging profession develop health issues like lower back pain and weakened bones over the years. Some continue the laborious work, though they know there is a chance of becoming paralysed.

There are 19 grave diggers working at Jurain graveyard. A chart put up in front of a shed for diggers -- located near the

second gate of the graveyard -- mention their names.

"I'm going to doctors and taking physiotherapy as well," said Bellal, who was feeling a tad better after therapy.

He said they are not considered Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) workers and hence, are not entitled to medical benefits. They supposedly do not receive any help from the contractors who get the charge from DSCC through bids either.

"Relatives of the dead give us money willingly after burial, and we share that amongst ourselves," he said.

"We get Tk 10,000-12,000 per month on an average," Bellal said.

An old digger of the graveyard, Mohammad Hajrat Ali, endured lower back pain and eventually became paralysed. He passed away around one month back after suffering for a year, said Bellal.

"He couldn't afford to buy medicine, and some of his

১	কুদ্দুস পাতোয়ারী	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১
২	কামেশ্বর	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১
৩	জাকি	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১
৪	মাসুদ	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১
৫	আব্দুল (খোটা)	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১
৬	মাসুদ	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১
৭	জাহাঙ্গীর	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১
৮	মাসুদ	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১
৯	মাসুদ	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১
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২০	মাসুদ	কর বেতক	০১৯১৫১১১১১

coworkers gave him money for treatment," he said.

Abdul Quddus Patowari, 48, who has been working at Jurain graveyard for the last 30 years, said during dry season before digging a grave they soften the soil with water, otherwise it is very difficult for them to dig.

"Sometimes one person alone can dig a grave and at others, it requires a few diggers.

It takes two to two and a half hours to complete the work," said Quddus, who has also developed lower back pain but continues to work using waist support belt.

Initially, most diggers have to work through their fears. "I used to be quite terrified initially; I did not want to touch corpses brought to the graveyard by Anjuman Mufidul Islam, as most of them would be decomposed," said Bellal.

Anjuman Mufidul Islam is a major welfare organisation and one of its important works is arranging burial of unclaimed Muslim dead bodies.

"You tell yourself that you'll die one day too, and our work requires us to be brave," Bellal quoted his seniors who gave him courage during his early days.

Janaza of the unclaimed bodies would be conducted by the imams at the graveyard and then they would be buried, Bellal said.

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'Aiming to popularise crystal meth in Bangladesh'

Nigerian national held with over 500gm of the drug

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The parcel came all the way from Uganda -- containing a strong stimulant drug known as "crystal meth" or "ice" a week ago -- worth around Tk 35 lakh, to a Nigerian national living in Dhaka.

He wanted to sell it at a cheaper rate to popularise the drug in the country. But his luck ran out as he got caught by Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) on Thursday.

The arrestee, Ajah Anayochukwa Onyeamwusi, 38, was held in Khilkhet, Mosaddeque Hossain Reza, additional director (intelligence) of DNC, told a press briefing at its headquarters in Dhaka's Tejgaon.

Tipped-off, a DNC team arrested Ajah with 50 grams of ice during a drive in the area. After further interrogation, they searched his residence at Bashundhara and recovered another 472 grams early yesterday, the official added.

Crystal meth or crystal methamphetamine, dubbed as the most potent form of methamphetamine, is a strong and highly addictive drug that affects the central nervous system.

It usually comes in small chunky clear crystals that look like ice. It can also come as white or brownish crystal-like powder with a strong smell and bitter taste, according to Alcohol and Drug Foundation.

The DNC official said Ajah came to Bangladesh as a student two years ago and got admitted to a private university in Shyamoli. After getting his undergraduate degree in pharmacy, he started a garment business.

He was making small profits from the business. However, Ajah was earning a lot of money on the side from selling drugs, Mosaddeque added.

Ajah joined the trade in Bangladesh through "Darknet". He frequently travelled to Thailand, Malaysia, India, Uganda, Kenya and Singapore -- mostly under the guise of a businessman -- to buy ice from there.

According to the DNC official, Ajah admitted to being a dealer and supplier of crystal meth in seven to eight countries other than Bangladesh.

"This drug is stronger than yaba. One gram of meth is equivalent to 10 yaba pills. SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

'Losing honour of world heritage site will be shameful'

Sultana Kamal says about 'in danger' Sundarbans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Eminent environmentalist and rights activist Sultana Kamal yesterday claimed that the establishment of Rampal power plant close to the Sundarbans was illegal and anti-constitutional.

"People are the owners of all assets of the state, and they don't want the power plant. The government alone cannot take any decision, going against people's choice," said Sultana at a press conference in Dhaka.

"If this decision [establishment of Rampal power plant] is taken ignoring the objections of people, then I will say it has been done anti-constitutionally and it is illegal," she added.

The National Committee to Protect the Sundarbans organised the conference at Jatiya Press Club, following a recent declaration of Unesco to put the Sundarbans in the list of world heritage sites that are "in danger".

Early this month, the World Heritage Centre of Unesco took the decision as it was not happy with the coal-based Rampal power plant and other development projects being implemented in the ecologically critical area (ECA).

The Heritage Centre also requested the Bangladesh SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Post-deprived BCL faction starts hunger strike

No response from central committee yet

DU CORRESPONDENT

A faction of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) -- who failed to get posts in its new committee -- yesterday began a hunger strike demanding the drop of controversial figures from the student wing and reconstruction of the central committee.

Post-deprived BCL leader Saif Babu said that they began the strike as no one from BCL's central committee contacted them within their one-day ultimatum earlier.

He further said that they will continue the strike until their demands are met.

Earlier, the post-deprived BCL leaders staged sit-ins at the base of Raju Memorial Sculpture in SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Oikyafront slammed for failing to launch movement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Leaders of different social and political platforms at a discussion yesterday slammed Jatiya Oikyafront for failing to launch any movement against the government.

They said the platform's leading party, BNP, has neglected to give instructions on carrying the movement forward, although six months have already passed after a SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

ANTIBIOTICS AND DETERGENT IN MILK DU pharmacy dept refuses to take responsibility of findings

DU CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University's pharmacy department has said that it would not take any responsibility of the research findings that claimed antibiotics and detergent were found in milk.

Three days after the research report was published, the pharmacy department yesterday issued a press statement claiming that the report was not done by the department, rather it was a personal research.

"The pharmacy department is not taking any responsibility of the research result published in the media, as the result was prepared based on personal research and the department has no involvement with it," said the press statement signed by the department chairperson.

After completing a study that began in May last year, the DU pharmacy faculty and Biomedical Research Centre on Tuesday revealed that the researchers have found detergent and antibiotics in packaged milk available at kitchen markets and grocery shops.

The antibiotics include levofloxacin, ciprofloxacin and azithromycin that are used mainly to treat bacterial infections. Contacted, pharmacy department Chairperson Prof Sitesh Chandra Bachar SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



People from all strata of life paid their last respects to Gandhian activist Jharna Dhara Chowdhury at Central Shaheed Minar yesterday. Sammilita Sangskritik Jote organised the befitting national tribute, where Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader and CPD Distinguished Fellow Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya were present among others. The eminent social worker passed away on Thursday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

DHAKA TODAY

COMMEMORATION
Remembering Country's Writers, Poets & Artists
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Segun Bagicha
Time: 6pm

THEATRE
Hamlet
Venue: Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Segun Bagicha
Time: 7pm

DISCUSSION
Artist Talk: Grits & Grains
Venue: Alliance Francaise De Dhaka, Mirpur Road
Time: 5pm

STAGE DRAMA
Michael Madhusudan Dutt
Venue: Bangladesh Mahila Samity, Baily Road
Time: 7pm

CONFERENCE
Article 35 of the Constitution: Towards Better Protection of Rights of the Accused
Venue: Bangladesh Institute of Law & International Affairs, Dhanmondi
Time: 9:30am

FILM SCREENING
Short films from Bangladesh, Poland, Spain & Argentina
Venue: Jatra Biroti, Banani
Time: 7:30pm

SESSION
Discussion on Economist Nurul Islam
Organiser: Banglar Pathshala
Venue: RC Majumdar Arts Auditorium, University of Dhaka
Time: 4pm

SEMINAR
Marriage: In Conversation with Dr Mehtab Khanam
Venue: Global Platform Bangladesh, Gulshan-1
Time: 3pm

WORKSHOP
Creative Writing (Bangla)
Venue: Shobdokolpodrum, Kuril School Road, Vatara
Time: 9:30am

LECTURE
Introductory Lecture Series on American Play & Playwrights
Venue: EMK Center, Dhanmondi
Time: 3pm



একটি ব্র্যাক সোশ্যাল এন্টারপ্রাইজ

চুক্তিবদ্ধ খামার থেকে সরাসরি সংগৃহীত দুধ প্রক্রিয়াজাত করে বিএসটিআই এবং অন্যান্য মান নিয়ন্ত্রক সংস্থার প্রত্যক্ষ তত্ত্বাবধানে কঠোর মান নিয়ন্ত্রণের মাধ্যমে উৎপাদিত হয় আড়ং ডেইরি'র সকল পণ্য

আপনার ও আপনার পরিবারের প্রতিদিনের পুষ্টি চাহিদা পূরণ আমাদের পণ্যের সাথে হোক নিশ্চিত