

Luck drying

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However, ever since the pandemic started, export has completely dried up, traders said.

In Naogaon's Atrai upazila -- one of the largest sources of dried fish in the northern region, thanks to the Atrai river -- a large part of the population earns their living in the dried fish trade. But what used to be a good life has lucked out since the pandemic.

Mirat village's Rahim Uddin said dried fish cannot be stocked for more than six months. "You just wouldn't get that fresh taste anymore," he said. But without buyers, the six months rolled on before the traders can do anything about it.

Mominul Islam, of Bhar-Tetulia under Atrai upazila, said though the anglers of the upazila caught a massive volume of fish from the river, the lack of buyers meant they had to be sold at a peanut's price.

"Business has turned horrific over these months," said Mominul, a dried fish trader himself. "On one hand, we don't have enough buyers. On the other, big traders are cutting down price."

"The labour that goes in is the same, but the price it fetches has almost halved," lamented Mominul. Whereas each kg of smaller dried fish used to sell for Tk 300, the price has come down to Tk 150 to 200, he told this correspondent.

"It has become extremely difficult to even meet our day to day costs," said Sopan Kumar Das, a wholesale trader at Teestabazar in Lalmonirhat Sadar Upazila. According to him, the market has 20 traders like him, who together employ around 100 staff.

"At this rate of sales, it's becoming impossible for us to pay our staffers' daily wages," he said.

The dried fish traders have urged the government to provide them with cash support, saying otherwise, the sector will not survive the pandemic.

Mamata moves

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matter for next Thursday (June 24).

"Let the matter be listed next Thursday. In the meantime, the (High Court) Registrar shall file a report before this court as to whether the petition has been filed in conformity with the Representation of People Act (of 1951)," the Calcutta HC directed in its order yesterday.

Even though Mamata lost in Nandigram, she was sworn in as Chief Minister for a third consecutive term on May 5, three days after West Bengal poll results were declared.

Under Indian law, Mamata has to get elected to the state assembly within six months of her assumption of office of Chief Minister.

Mamata, in her petition, has sought that Suvendu Adhikari's election be set aside on three grounds --alleged corrupt practices, promotion of hatred and enmity, seeking votes on the basis of religion and booth capture and alleged discrepancies in the vote-counting procedure.

Mamata's petition also questioned the decision of the Election Commission to reject her plea for a recount of votes.

Trinamool Congress (TMC) returned to power in the recent assembly poll for a third consecutive five-year term but Mamata lost to her former aide Suvendu Adhikari, who is now the leader of the opposition in the state legislature, by a margin of 1,956 votes.

The defeat in Nandigram was Mamata's first loss in an election in over three decades.

Provide Covid

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impacts of the pandemic, the 109th International Labour Conference (ILC) yesterday made the global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the crisis.

The resolution particularly called for reducing the health risk of the health workers as well as ensuring payment of salaries and allowances of all workers during the pandemic, according to a statement from the Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the UN in Geneva.

It also urged the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to play a more effective role in raising support to states to address the increasing inequality between developed and developing countries.

Besides, the resolution emphasised on the expansion of the social safety net for the recovery from the pandemic with a special focus on women, older persons and migrants.

At the same time, it underscored the need for a gender-balanced, sustainable and people-centred post-pandemic recovery plan.

The global call to action was adopted after an intense negotiation in the Covid Response Committee of the ILC.

Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh in Geneva Md Mustafizur Rahman chaired the committee.

Bangladesh also led the Asia and Pacific Group in the negotiation as the coordinator and stressed the need for addressing the specific challenges of the region.



A Palestinian man tries to leave Al-Aqsa mosque as Israeli security force members aim their weapons during clashes with Palestinians at the compound known to Muslims as Noble Sanctuary and to Jews as Temple Mount, in Jerusalem's Old City yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

They defrauded

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evidence against Ahsan and Mahbub's real name and address could not be confirmed.

The Daily Star has recently obtained a copy of the charge sheet.

Soon after the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) and Regent Hospital on March 21 last year, two teams of the hospital started preparing fake reports and supplying those to suspected Covid patients. They did the job as per instructions given by Shahed, the IO said in his probe report.

Four accused -- Sumon, Polish, Torikul Shibli and Amit Banik -- collected some 200 samples in a day

and 50 of those were sent to National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (Nipsom) for testing. About 150 fake reports were prepared against the rest of the samples, the charge sheet said.

Mahbub, Shimul Parvez and Saikat prepared fake reports, scanning the signatures of the technicians at Nipsom's pathology and lab, it added.

The investigator said the accused supplied Covid positive reports to those who showed symptoms of high body temperature, cold, cough and throat pain. However, Covid negative reports were issued to those who showed no such symptoms.

Although the MoU stressed treating patients for free, Shahed collected Tk 3,500-Tk 4,000 from each person.

Thus, the hospital chairman in collusion with other accused pocketed about Tk 3 to 4 crore defrauding some 6,000 patients, said the charge sheet.

On February 4 last year, Shahed appointed one Mizanur Rahman to Uttara branch of Regent Hospital. Mizanur and other accused, in line with Shahed's instructions, carried out illegal activities, causing harm to public health.

Shahed on June 1 last year filed an application with the DGHS, showing his free treatment expenditure of Tk 1.96 crore. He did not return various diagnostic instruments to the government, the charge sheet said.

The hospital chairman is a very cunning, greedy and cruel man. He did not bother about life and death

of patients when it came to pocketing money, the IO said.

In the charge sheet, 40 people have been named as prosecution witnesses.

On July 7 last year, the case was filed against Shahed and 15 others over issuing fake Covid test reports and charging people unfairly for testing and treatment.

Shahed was arrested in Satkhira on July 15 when he was trying to leave the country by a boat.

He was sentenced to life imprisonment in an arms case on September 28 last year.

On August 18, 2010, he was sentenced to six month's imprisonment and fined Tk 53 lakh by a court in absentia in a cheque dishonour case.

Six more lives lost to road crashes

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Police seized the bus and arrested the driver, he added.

In a separate accident in Chattogram, two people were killed and at least 10 others were injured as two passenger buses collided heads on in the AJ Chowdhury College Bazar area of the city.

One of the dead is Nurul Afsar, 48, of Maliara village of Patiya upazila. The identity of another deceased, who is around 26-years old, could not be known immediately, said police.

All the dead and injured persons

were passengers of both the buses.

The accident occurred when a BRIC bus, heading towards Gachbaria of Chandanaish upazila, collided heads on with another bus heading towards the city at around 3:30pm, said Dulal Mahmud, officer-in-charge of Karnaphuli Police Station.

The collision took place after the BRIC bus driver lost his control over the steering to save a CNG-run autorickshaw, the OC said.

On information, police rushed to the spot, rescued the injured people,

and took them to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), he added.

Of them, two succumbed to their injuries around an hour later.

Jahirul Islam, in charge of CMCH Police Camp, said at least five of the injured persons were in a critical state.

Meanwhile, in Brahmanbaria, a police officer succumbed to his injuries early yesterday, after he was hit by a pick-up van on Cumilla-Sylhet highway in the district's Kasba upazila.

The dead is Gulam Mustafa, 57,

sub-inspector of Kasba Police Station. He hailed from Fulgazi upazila of Feni.

Police said Mustafa, along with some other policemen, set up a temporary check post in the area and were discharging duties.

Suddenly, a speedy pick-up van hit him and fled around 10:20am on Thursday.

Mohammad Alamgir Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Kasba Police Station, said Mustafa was rushed to a local health complex but succumbed to his injuries.

Dhaka calls for a long-term package

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of the Republic of Malwai, and the chair of the Global Coordination Bureau of the LDCs, also delivered a keynote speech at the event, says a press release of the Permanent Mission of Bangladesh to the UN.

Among the other high-level speakers were Achim Steiner, UNDP administrator; Liu Zhenmin, under-secretary-general, UNDESA; Fekitamooloa Katoa 'Utoikamanu, under-secretary-general; Taffere Tesfachew, chair of the committee for Development Subgroup on LDCs, permanent representatives of Qatar and Nepal, and deputy permanent representative of Turkey.

Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Rabab Fatima made opening remarks while the

Canadian Permanent Representative Ambassador Robert Rae made closing remarks at the event.

They are the co-chairs of the Preparatory Committee of the 5th UN conference on LDCs.

Identifying political vision as the key to a LDC's development trajectory towards graduation, Momen said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina led Bangladesh's graduation journey from the front, the release said.

He said the recommendation by the UN Committee for Development Policy for graduation of Bangladesh was a momentous occasion for the entire nation. It coincided with the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence and the birth centenary of the Father of the Nation. Highlighting the multidimensional challenges faced

by the graduating and graduated countries, the foreign minister identified access to safe and affordable Covid-19 vaccines as the top priority for the LDCs now.

He said the most effective solution of this issue will be to utilise TRIPS' (WTO agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) waiver to transfer technology and know-how to LDCs that have the capacity to produce vaccines, the release said.

He urged upon the development partners and vaccines manufacturers to extend support in this regard.

Momen said most of the LDCs have limited fiscal buffer and absence of ex-ante insurance schemes against shocks, which make their graduation trajectory highly challenging.

India braces for Covid 3rd wave by Oct

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be much less because more vaccinations would have been rolled out and there would be some degree of natural immunity from the second-wave," said Dr Randeep Guleria, director at All India Institute Of Medical Sciences (AIIMS).

Meanwhile, Indian Prime Minister

Narendra Modi yesterday said the country needs to be prepared to meet the future challenges of pandemic amidst the third wave reports, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Addressing the virtual launch of a crash course for preparing a one lakh-strong frontline workers, Modi said this launch is an important next

step in the fight against Covid-19, cautioning that "the virus is present and possibility of mutation is there."

So far, India has only fully vaccinated about 5% of its estimated 950 million eligible population, leaving many millions vulnerable to infections and deaths.

While a majority of healthcare

experts predicted the vaccination drive would pick up significantly this year, they cautioned against an early removal of restrictions, as some states have done.

When asked if children and those under 18 years would be most at risk in a potential third wave, nearly two-thirds of experts, or 26 of 40, said yes.

Fossils

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the Linxia Basin in Gansu Province, China, among deposits pertaining to the Late Oligocene period 34 to 23 million years ago.

They also found associated fossilised body parts of the rhino, including the atlas bone that connects the skull to the spine, as well as three vertebrae from another individual in the site at the northeastern border of the Tibetan Plateau.

Based on the analysis, the researchers found that the fossil remains belonged to an entirely new species different from other known giant rhinos.

Deeper assessment of the atlas bone and the axis bone, the second vertebra going down from the top of the spine, revealed clues that the rhino possessed a long and flexible neck.

The scientists also found evidence from genetic analysis of the samples that Paraceratherium linxiaense was related to another giant rhino species from western Pakistan, indicating that the genus was widespread across Asia, including in the Indian subcontinent.

During this prehistoric time period, the researchers believe the giant rhino could "disperse freely" from the Mongolian Plateau to South Asia along the eastern coast of the Tethys Ocean -- a prehistoric sea that has now become incorporated into mountain ranges that stretch from northern Turkey through northern Iran, Afghanistan, Tibet and Indochina due to tectonic plate movement.

"The Tibetan region likely hosted some areas with low elevation, possibly under 2,000m during Oligocene, and the lineage of giant rhinos could have dispersed freely along the eastern coast of the Tethys Ocean and perhaps through some lowlands of this region," the scientists wrote in the study.

One killed, dozen injured in US drive-by shooting spree

AFP, Los Angeles

One person was killed and a dozen injured in a drive-by shooting spree Thursday as a gunman roamed the streets in the southwestern US state of Arizona, police said.

Over the course of one-and-a-half hours, a suspect opened fire in at least eight sites around communities outside Phoenix, apparently at random, before he was taken into custody at a traffic stop.

As well as the fatality, three other people were shot while another nine suffered minor injuries including from broken glass. None of the injuries were thought to be life-threatening.

"We don't know what the motive was, we don't have an idea of what this person was thinking when he went out and did this," said Peoria police spokesman Brandon Sheffert.

"Obviously we want to figure that out, because there's a lot of scared people -- a lot of people who this affected," he told a press conference held indoors due to sweltering heat wave temperatures of up to 118F (48C) in Phoenix.

The suspect was stopped after firefighters spotted a vehicle matching the description of multiple reports, and he did not resist arrest. One weapon was recovered from the vehicle.

The incident follows recent mass shootings in the nearby states of California, where a rail yard employee killed nine people last month, and Colorado, where ten died at a grocery store in March.

There were more than 43,000 gun-related deaths in the United States last year, including suicides, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

Former Japan justice minister jailed for vote-buying

AFP, Tokyo

A former Japanese justice minister received a three-year jail term yesterday for vote-buying in an attempt to get his wife elected to a national office, local media said.

Katsuyuki Kawai, 58, was found guilty of charges that he distributed 29 million yen (\$260,000 at today's rates) to about 100 people in 2019, to help secure an upper house seat for his wife Anri, national broadcaster NHK said.

He was fined 1.3 million yen (\$11,800) in addition to the jail term, local media added.

Officials at the Tokyo District Court could not immediately confirm the reports.

Katsuyuki, a close confidant of former prime minister Shinzo Abe, had reversed his earlier claims of innocence and broadly conceded the allegations against him.

Anri, who won her seat in the July 2019 election, has already been found guilty over her role in the scheme and received a suspended sentence of 16 months earlier this year.

Katsuyuki's sentence is not suspended, meaning he faces jail time. But the Yomiuri Shimbun daily reported that he appealed.

'Sovereign Bangla only political solution'

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Rahman. Earlier, all five leaders had been tried by a special military court in Dhaka in absentia for failure to appear before the martial law authorities and were sentenced to 14 years rigorous imprisonment each and confiscation of 50 percent of their property.

Under the new charge they could be sentenced to life imprisonment. EAST PAKISTAN REOPENED TO NEWSMEN

The Pakistani government announced today that foreign newsmen, who had been barred from East Pakistan since March 25 except as participants in government-conducted tours, were to be readmitted without restrictions.

The announcement said "foreign correspondents can visit East Pakistan on their own completely unescorted

and unattended in view of the fact that the law and order situation is now fully under control in that wing".

On March 26, 1971 about 40 foreign newsmen covering non-cooperation movement in East Pakistan were expelled by martial law authorities. All their notes, film, manuscripts and personal papers were confiscated by authorities.

Since then, one group of six correspondents and another of 10 had been permitted five-day tours of East Pakistan accompanied by military authorities.

Two weeks ago, the government announced that all foreigners were to be permitted to travel in East Pakistan but that journalists remained barred. Travellers were required to sign affidavits that they are not journalists.

OCCUPATION OF EVACUEE PROPERTY IN BANGLADESH

The Government of India addressed a letter to the Pakistani high commissioner in New Delhi protesting the occupation of houses and destruction of land records of those of the evacuees of Bangladesh who had crossed over to Indian territory. India had pointed out that such acts by the Pakistanis in Bangladesh would be obstacles to the return of these evacuees from India to their homeland.

Secondly, once they found that their homes and lands were taken away, they would again turn their face to India, thereby creating another humanitarian problem of a vast dimension. Thus, the ensuing unrest and discontent were bound to have

repercussions on India's border states, the letter pointed out.

PAKISTAN CLAIMS SAUDI SUPPORT Pakistan today claimed Saudi Arabia's support for its stand on the East Pakistan issue. Radio Pakistan in a broadcast said Saudi Arabian Ambassador to Pakistan Abdullah-el-Mutliq had said that the people of Pakistan could depend on the moral and material support of the Saudi Arabian people and the government to safeguard the integrity of the country. In a statement, in Islamabad, he said the happenings in East Pakistan were an internal affair of Pakistan and no foreign power had any right to interfere, the radio said.

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