



AT THE PRICE OF WHAT? Extracting copper from discarded electrical wires takes a couple of steps. The rubber of the outer layer is burned and the raw copper that's left is then washed and dried. At Dhaka's Kamrangirchar, a group of people bring sacks full of wires to this open area, burn them, and wash them in nearby water bodies. They get around Tk 300-350 for each kg of copper, but in the process end up doing a disproportionate amount of harm to the area's air and water. What's more, the workers don't even wear any protective gear to save themselves from the dark cloud of fumes they emit. These photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



OVERHAULING WATERWAY RESCUE OPERATION

'Diving' project drowns in mismanagement

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SUKANTA HALDER

In 2018, Bangladesh Fire Service and Civil Defense department initiated a three-year project to expand their "diving unit" to reduce the devastating number of deaths from drowning in the country.

However, although the project ended this year, there has only been 15 percent progress so far, according to a recent report of the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of the planning ministry.

The IMED report found that the authorities concerned did not acquire the major equipment needed for the unit yet. Moreover, the warranty of the ones they acquired are almost expiring.

IMED stated that even though only 16pc of the estimated capital expenditure was made, the budget allocated for transportation and office equipment was fully spent. The project director purchased a Tk 53.69 lakh inspection jeep in the first year of the project.

With so little progress on the project, with only 50 divers available countrywide, the fire service authorities are struggling to properly conduct rescue operations in waterway-related accidents.

On Friday evening, at least 22 people died when two sand-carrying vessels hit and capsized a boat in Brahmanbaria while two children drowned in a pond in Dhaka's Azimpur area the day before.

Forty-three percent of the total number of children's deaths in the country are caused by drowning, according to the World Health Organization (WHO). Besides, the number of deaths from drowning in Bangladesh is around 18,000 every year.

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

INITIATED: July 2018
ESTIMATED COST: **165.19cr**
DEADLINE: June 2021
REVISED DPP: Tk **63.4cr**
Extension sought for another year

PROJECT AIM

- Equipping divers with modern equipment
- Reducing deaths by drowning
- Improving response time
- Conducting rescue operations efficiently

IMED REPORT

- Project saw only 15pc progress
- No major equipment acquired
- Warranty of those purchased almost expiring
- Recruitment of divers stalled

In case of waterway accidents or flood, immediate response from fire service is vital, which could help save more lives. If they have proper equipment along with skilled divers, it would be of great help amid a crisis.

DR AMINUR RAHMAN, DEPUTY EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CIPRB



One of the newly-purchased rescue boats of the fire service.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

PROJECT DELAY

Tk 165.19 crore project, approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecnc) on November 4, 2018, was initiated to equip and familiarise

divers with modern rescue equipment and technology and, above all, to reduce deaths by drowning.

Under the project, seven fire stations -- in Ashulia, Narayanganj, Chattogram,

Chandpur, Khulna, Barishal and Rangpur -- were to be equipped with modern rescue equipment.

The equipment includes one salvage fire-fighting tug, seven pontoons and jetties, 14 heavy-duty boats, 14 light-duty boats, seven rescue vehicles, 42 diving apparatus sets, seven air compressor machines, seven light trucks for transporting rescue boats etc.

The IMED report, released in June, mentioned that during the implementation period, only 19.97 percent of purchase packages were placed for tender.

Sixty-eight percent of the estimated Development Project Proposal (DPP) was excluded from the project, it said.

The report showed that of the 45 items, 17 were excluded from the project along with the fire-fighting tug, pontoon and jetties for lack of space and proper maintenance.

Two items were in the tender process, 10 agreements were signed, nine items were not placed for tender and only seven items were supplied.

After excluding the items, the proposed revised DPP stood at Tk 63.4 crore.

The collected items were stored in the project director's office instead of being used in the project implementing areas. Meanwhile, most exceeded the warranty period, the IMED report said.

Most importantly, the recruitment process of divers was stalled for nine months, IMED said.

Contacted, project director Md Mosharraf Hossain cited the ongoing pandemic as the reason behind the delay.

He said that they have applied to the planning ministry with a revised DPP to extend the duration of the project for a year.

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'Reopen educational institutes from Sept'

Speakers demand at human chain

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A platform of students, teachers, and guardians yesterday demanded all educational institutes be reopened in September instead of October.

A meeting of ministries and stakeholders concerned decided on Thursday to extend closure of all kindergartens, and primary, secondary and higher-secondary schools until September 11. Universities, however, can start in-person classes after October 15.

Students-Teachers-Guardians Forum at a human chain at the capital's Jatiya Press Club also demanded immediate vaccination of all students and teachers.

Leaders of BNP, pro-BNP parties and different professional organisations joined the programme.

Speakers there said the government has declared to reopen institutions on condition of all students and teachers being vaccinated, which is not possible right now, as there are not enough vaccine doses.

The only reason behind closing institutions is that authorities are scared of any possible anti-government movement, they said.

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Website launched on life, ideals of Latifur Rahman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Latifur Rahman's extraordinary life was exemplified by hard work, humility and honesty. Overcoming untold challenges, he established a successful business group and created two independent reputable media outlets in the country.

On the 76th birth anniversary of late Latifur Rahman, the founding chairman of Transcom Group and Mediaster Limited, a website was launched after his name to document the journey of his illustrious life.

Latifur Rahman passed away on July 1, 2020.

The website, created at the initiative of Bangla daily Prothom Alo, was officially launched by Latifur Rahman's eldest daughter and Transcom Group CEO Simeen Rahman following a virtual programme yesterday.

"Documentation and preserving memories were very important to my father," she said.

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Vaccination of RMG workers begins in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Vaccination of workers under the Chattogram Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) and Karnaphuli EPZ have started from yesterday. Under the programme, around two lakh workers of the EPZs will get vaccinated in phases.

The programme was initiated by a Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) decision. On the first day, a total of 3,298 workers from eight factories were vaccinated.

The programme aims to vaccinate 2,20,000 workers from 70 factories.

Moshiuddin Bin Mesbha, general manager of CEPZ, told The Daily Star, "The programme has been arranged for workers who registered for the mass vaccination programme but could not get vaccinated."

"Along with health workers of the city corporation, health workers of the CEPZ are also participating in the programme which will run every day from 9am to 5pm."

Syed M Tanvir, director of NHT Fashion Ltd, one of the factories whose workers were vaccinated yesterday, said, "If we want to continue economic activities of the country, it's imperative to keep factories open during the pandemic. As a result, it's necessary to bring all workers under vaccination in the interest of the country's economy."



3,298 workers of 8 factories got inoculated yesterday
Target 2.20 lakh workers of 70 factories

Chattogram Civil Surgeon Shekh Fazle Rabbi said, "In the first phase, we will vaccinate 50,000 workers from the two EPZs in coordination with the Chittagong City Corporation. Although initial plans are to vaccinate 2,000 workers every day, we are looking to increase that number."

Nazma Binte Alamgir, general manager (public relations) of Bangladesh Export

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Bangabandhu's foreign policy still a guiding principle

Momen tells BIIS webinar

Bss, Dhaka

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, with his visionary leadership, had navigated the country's international relations in a direction that still works as a guiding principle for Bangladesh.

"[Bangabandhu's] Statement 'Friendship to all, malice towards none' is still believed to be an exemplary philosophical stand in terms of foreign policy of any country," he said.

The foreign minister was speaking as the chief guest at a webinar titled "Bangabandhu and Bangladesh: An Epic Nation's Emergence and Emancipation" organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BIIS) in the capital.

Momen said Bangabandhu nourished the innate Bangalee nationalism through his own political struggle against the oppressive state of Pakistan.

He said the primary goals of Bangabandhu's foreign policy were to be in a big-league of friendly countries, attain recognition for the newly independent country and ensure membership of international organisations.

He said the guiding principle of Bangladesh, newly-born Bangladesh's constitution, was written and adopted with the fundamental principles of Bangalee nationalism, democracy, secularism, and socialism.

Bangabandhu declared his strong position against war

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Migrant deaths go unexplained, ignored

Amnesty report documents the country's systemic failure to protect their lives

JAMIL MAHMUD

Mohammed Suman Miah died in Qatar on April 29, 2020 at the age of 34.

His death certificate, issued by the Qatari Ministry of Public Health four days later, described the cause of death as "acute heart failure [from] natural causes".

It provided no information on the underlying cause of death.

The death of the Bangladeshi migrant worker along with five others -- two from Bangladesh and three from Nepal -- are featured in detail in Amnesty International's recent report "In the Prime of Their Lives".

The report documented how Qatar routinely issued death certificates for migrant workers without conducting adequate investigations, instead attributing these deaths to "natural causes" or vaguely defined cardiac failures, Amnesty said.

In the course of the research, Amnesty identified cases of 18 deceased migrant workers in Bangladesh and Nepal, spoke with their family members and collected documentary evidence relating to their deaths in Qatar, including the death certificates issued by the Qatari Ministry of

The death certificates of 15 out of the 18 cases reviewed by Amnesty International provided no information about the underlying causes of death, attributing the cause of death to "acute cardio respiratory failure due to natural causes", "acute heart failure natural causes", "heart failure unspecified" and "acute respiratory failure due to natural causes".

Public Health, the report said.

In 13 cases, the cause of death was reported as "natural death", two cases related to cardiac diseases and three to other causes -- a road traffic accident, poisoning and cancer.

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