



The makeshift market of winter clothes has been illegally set up at a closer proximity to the busy rail line of Saidpur in Nilphamari posing the threat of fatal accidents anytime.

PHOTO: STAR

## Risky winter clothes' market near rail tracks

Low-income people rush to buy cheap warm clothes risking their lives as winter sets in

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

With the onset of winter, second-hand winter clothe traders have been making brisk business for the last one and a half months setting up makeshift shops on both sides of railway tracks near Saidpur Railway Station posing threats of fatal accidents anytime. In the meantime, a number of fatal accidents have taken place in the area in the last couple of months as intercity, mail and local trains, along with goods-laden wagons pass through the area 10-12 times a day. Saidpur Railway Workshop, the largest in the country, is situated just 500 metres away from the makeshift market where damaged rail compartments and wagons

are often brought for repairing also posing additional risks to the buyers of the market. Although concerned rail authorities have sent a letter to railway police to evict the illegal market for smooth movement of trains, no action has yet to be taken. As per railway law, no structure either permanent or makeshift can be built within 20 feet beside the rail tracks for safety but the law is being openly flouted as the market is situated only a little away from the rail tracks. Met office sources in Saidpur informed that temperature in the district is fluctuating between 13-14 degrees Celsius hindering normal life. To brace the severe cold, low and middle-income people are rushing to the second-hand winter cloth

market to buy warm clothes at a cheaper rate. Visiting the area on Wednesday (30 Nov), it was found that about two hundred vendors have set up makeshift shops using polythene sheets as roof and bamboo as pillars beside the rail tracks selling winter clothes like sweaters, jackets, etc. Every day in winter, thousands of people from 15 upazilas of Rangpur, Dinajpur, Nilphamari, Thakurgaon and Panchagarh come here to buy the clothes making the place crowded. A trader Hasmat Ullah said, "We know that doing business beside rail tracks is risky and illegal but we have no choice as we can only do business from November to January and the rest of the year we

remain unemployed." "Whenever trains come, the unauthorized traders and customers run to and fro with a bundle of clothes on shoulders looking for safer places risking lives," said Aktar Hossain Khan, president of small garments owners' association in Saidpur. Contacted, Shawkat Ali, the station master of Saidpur Railway Station, said that they have already sent a letter to Railway Police Station in Saidpur to evict the illegal market but no action has yet to be taken. Duty officer of Saidpur Railway Police Station Anisur Rahman said, "We launched drive a few days ago against the illegal traders but they came back sometime after we returned; our drives will continue."

## Brick kilns on farmland poses serious health risk

MINTU DESHWARA

Several brick kilns, set up on farmland or close to educational institution, destroying fertility of vast agricultural land in the district.

Moreover, toxic gas from the brick kilns are posing serious health risk to students of different schools close to the brick kilns as well as local residents.

Locals claimed that the brick kilns are continuing their operation without getting approval from the Department of Environment (DoE).

During a recent visit to Kamalganj upazila this correspondent saw a number of brickfields being set up on agricultural land, residential areas and even close to educational institutions.

According to Moulvibazar DoE, Ibrahim Brick Kilns, Safari Brick Kilns, MMB Brick Kilns in Kamalganj were not been given clearance of environment certificate while license of Mohsin Bricks has been cancelled.

Apart from the above four, two more brickfields have been set up on agricultural land adjacent to Katalati Government Primary School.

According to the existing environmental law, no brick kiln can be constructed within three kilometres of any educational institutions, hills, research institutes and localities.

Farmer Abdul Baten of Patanushar

village said a brick kiln set up next to his farmland releases toxic gas all the time.

Moreover, horrible sound of soil-carrying tractors can be heard from dawn till late at night, he added.

Denying the allegations, Ibrahim Mia, owner of Ibrahim Brick Kiln, said he is running the brickfield with proper approval.

Nahid Ahmed, director of MMB Bricks, said DoE has set June 30, 2022, as the deadline for clearance and shifting the brick kiln to another place.

Kamalganj Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Mahbulul Alam Bhuiyan said as a result of setting up brickfields near residential areas or educational institutions there is a possibility of getting infected with various diseases like allergies, cough, breathing problem and pneumonia.

Nurul Mohaimin Milton, general secretary of Bangladesh Environmental Journalists Association, said although the DoE has approval of 65 bricks kilns in Moulvibazar, hundreds of bricks kilns are running without legal permission.

Badrul Huda, assistant director at Moulvibazar DoE, said 18 out of the 65 brick kiln in Moulvibazar have not been given environmental renewal clearance this year.



A brick kiln runs its operation at Patanushar village in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

## Long screen time: How to care

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against the digital background, the glare, and flickering are hard on the eyes.

These may be the reasons behind one's eyes feeling dry, tired and vision being blurry by the end of the day.

It is advised to cut unnecessary screen-time to keep eyes healthy. But there are also ways to keep your eyes healthy even with all the essential staring at the screen.

Here's what we can do:

Make sure the computer screen

is at least an arm's length away from the face.

Follow the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes during working on a digital device, look at an object at least 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds.

After every two hours on your device, take a longer break of about 15 minutes.

Doctors sometimes advise use of artificial tears to refresh eyes when they feel dry. You can also try putting a humidifier in the room where you most often use a

computer or other devices.

Make sure the lighting in the room is bright enough so that your device is not brighter than the surroundings.

If you wear contact lenses, give your eyes a break by wearing glasses while using a digital screen.

As per doctor's advice you might use a different pair of glasses when working on the computer to keep your eyes safe from the damaging blue light of digital screens.

Get your eyes checked regularly.

## 2 killed in 'shootout' with Rab

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who were shot dead came to the area over the rivalry of two groups claiming ownership of the shrimp farm.

A businessman of Chattogram's Lohagara has long been farming shrimp in the area, they said, adding that a local group recently started trying to take over the farm.

The local group started bringing armed men from different areas to the farm from Sunday night, apparently to take over the farm.

Rab men arrived in the area early

in the morning and the "gunfight" took place.

Maj Sheikh Yusuf Ahmed, company commander of Rab-15, said Rab raided the area after being informed that a group of robbers had gathered there.

The armed men started shooting at the law enforcers, he said. The Rab men retaliated and two bullet-hit men were found at the scene after the gunfight.

The injured men were taken to Chakaria Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared them dead,

he added.

Three locally made guns, six bullets and several sharp weapons were recovered from the spot, he said.

Mohammed Osman Gani, officer-in-charge of Chakaria Police Station, said, "Police confirmed the identity of a man killed in the shootout and sent the bodies to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital Morgue for autopsy.

"Police neither received a first information report nor any accused from Rab," he said.

## Aung San Suu Kyi sentenced

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Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing later "pardoned" the sentences of both to "two years imprisonment", according to a statement read out on state TV.

They would serve their sentences under the house arrest they have been kept under in the capital of Naypyidaw, the statement said, without giving further details.

The incitement conviction related to statements Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party published shortly after the coup condemning the generals' takeover.

The Covid charge is linked to last year's election, which the NLD won in a landslide, but the details are not clear with the government imposing a gag order on the court proceedings.

Journalists have been barred from attending the special court hearings in Naypyidaw and Suu Kyi's lawyers were recently banned from speaking to the media.

In recent weeks, other senior members of the NLD have received long sentences.

A former chief minister was sentenced to 75 years in jail, while a close Suu Kyi aide was jailed for 20.

Suu Kyi also faces multiple corruption charges -- each of which carries a possible sentence of 15 years in prison.

Yesterday's verdict was on "the soft charges which the regime could have spared her, but chose not to," independent analyst Soe Myint Aung, told AFP.

'RETRIBUTION'

Amnesty International immediately condemned the original sentences against Suu Kyi.

UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet said the conviction "following a sham trial in secretive proceedings before a military-controlled court is nothing but politically-motivated."

UK foreign minister Liz Truss slammed the sentence, adding

"the arbitrary detention of elected politicians only risks further unrest."

"The Burmese military regime's unjust conviction of Aung San Suu Kyi and the repression of other democratically elected officials are yet further affronts to democracy and justice in Burma," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement.

International Crisis Group's Myanmar senior advisor Richard Horsey told AFP the sentences against Suu Kyi "were about retribution and a show of power by the military."

International pressure on the junta to restore democracy swiftly has shown no sign of knocking the generals off course, and bloody clashes with anti-coup protesters continue across the country.

On Sunday soldiers wounded at least three people after ramming a car into peaceful demonstrators in commercial hub Yangon, eyewitnesses said.

## India, Russia strike

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signed a contract with Indian Oil to supply up to 2 million tonnes of oil to India by the end of 2022, reports Reuters.

The countries also signed a memorandum of understanding for Russia to send an uninterrupted supply of coal to India to support its steel production, among other deals.

Putin and Modi also discussed the situation in Afghanistan, voicing their commitment to ensure that the country will never become a safe haven for international terrorism.

"Our Indian friends clearly explained that they are a sovereign country and that they will decide whose weapons to buy and who will be India's partner," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday. Putin's visit was "hugely symbolic", said Nandan Unnikrishnan from the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation think tank.

"There has been a lot of speculation about the nature of the India-Russia relationship and whether it is fraying because of Russia's closeness with China and India's with the US, but this visit puts all that to rest."

"Russia's influence in the region is very limited," said Tatiana Belousova of OP Jindal Global University in Haryana, "mostly because of its close ties with China and unwillingness to act in dissonance with the Chinese regional interests."

The two countries' foreign and defence ministers held talks yesterday ahead of Putin's arrival.

## Survey ship goes

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Fadilla, Audi Christian, Euler-2 Muhammad Agam Faye Zulfu, and Cook Joia Engelbert. The two Bangladeshis are: surveyors Saiduzzaman Emon and Sohanuzzaman Sumon.

Capt Sharifur said the incident happened after the ship developed a leak in the machine room during excavation work.

The crew members immediately sought help from a nearby fishing boat, which rescued them from the vessel. Later, tug boats from the Jan De Nul and the Payra Port authorities rushed to the spot and took the 12 people to safety.

Efforts were underway to salvage the survey ship, he added.

## Singapore tests

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information then they will obtain the found fluid and send to the lab for further testing," he said.

"So what we're trying to do is use our smart bandage to cut the number of hours or days to just a few minutes."

## General Assembly holds

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government, calling it an example of Indian "expansionism" and part of a plot by India to annex East Pakistan.

AMIN PRIME MINISTER, BHUTTO DEPUTY PM

With the war between Pakistan and India reaching a critical phase, Pak president Yahya Khan tonight appointed a civilian prime minister and deputy prime minister whose immediate task was to plead Pakistan's case before the United Nations. The real power would be retained by Yahya.

The Pak president named Nurul Amin, a Bangalee lawyer and the president of Pakistan Democratic Party (PDP), as prime minister. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, a former foreign minister, who was the leader Pakistan Peoples Party, was named deputy prime minister.

BREZHNEV'S LETTER TO NIXON

In a reply to US president Nixon's letter, Soviet general secretary Brezhnev today said, "The Soviet Union applies and will continue to apply most determined efforts in order to stop the bloodshed and to turn the course of events towards political settlement. We trust this is possible."

"The thing to do now," Brezhnev continued, "is to stop the war already underway. This requires a ceasefire. But the question arises -- what is the best way to achieve it? It seems to us that proceeding from the situation which developed from the very start, effective can be such a ceasefire which would be connected with a simultaneous decision for a political settlement, based on the recognition of the will of the East Pakistani population.

Otherwise it is impossible to ensure the respect for the lawful rights and interests of the people of East Pakistan and to create conditions for the return of the millions of refugees. Without it a ceasefire will not be stable."

Kissinger briefed Nixon on Brezhnev's letter less than two hours after he received it. Characterising it as "old proposals", he commented, "It is a very conciliatory letter, which is in itself unacceptable." Kissinger proposed the following response: "If this negotiation is within the framework of the united Pakistan, with maximum autonomy for the east, we are willing to discuss it with them. That will separate them to some extent from the Indians. And secondly, it will get us a ceasefire in the west, which we've got to have if the West Pakistanis aren't to be smashed."

ON THE WAR FRONT

Indian Army's Eastern Command reported tonight that Jashore, a division headquarters and the military linchpin of the western half of East Pakistan, had been taken in a fierce 24-hour battle. Pakistani troops said to be fleeing in disarray to the south.

At about 6:30pm, just after Jashore had fallen, the Indian Army chief of staff, General SHFJ Manekshaw, issued a message to be broadcast to the 70,000 Pakistani troops in East [Pakistan]: "Officers and jawans [soldiers] of the Pakistan Army, lay down your arms before it is too late. Time is running out. Indian forces have encircled you. Your fate is sealed."

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## Accused send testimonies

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fixed December 6 to 8 for recording statements of the accused.

A total of 65 prosecution witnesses have given their depositions before the District and Sessions Judge's Court in eight phases since August 23 when the court began the case's formal trial through recording testimony of Sinha's sister and complainant of the case Sharmin Shahriar Ferdous.

According to the charge sheet, 83 people are witnesses to the incident. But the prosecution now says testimonies of 65 witnesses are enough.

So, the prosecution filed a petition with the court citing that testimonies of the remaining prosecution witnesses are not necessary, said Public Prosecutor Faridul Alam.

After completion of recording testimonies of defence witnesses, the prosecution and defence counsellors will place the closing arguments before the

court, he said.

On June 27, the court framed charges against the 15 accused. Of them, 12 are police personnel, including former officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station Pradeep, police inspector Liaqat Ali, sub-inspector Md Shahjahan, and assistant sub-inspector Liton Mia, who were all suspended from their posts.

Sinha, 36, had been making travel documentaries for a YouTube channel called "Just Go". He was returning to Cox's Bazar from Teknaf.

He was killed in a police firing at a checkpoint of Armed Police Battalion (APBn) at Teknaf's Shamlapur area on July 31 last year.

Police claimed that they tried to search the vehicle, and Sinha aimed his pistol at them, prompting them to shoot back in self-defence. They also claimed that they seized drugs from the vehicle.

On August 5, Sinha's elder sister Sharmin filed the murder case.