

18 Teknaf fishermen still missing

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Eighteen fishermen, who went missing from the Naf river in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf upazila on Tuesday, remained traceless till last night.

According to their family members, they were detained by the Border Guard Police (BGP) of Myanmar, a claim that could not be verified.

A local fisherman, who claimed to be a witness, said the fishermen were returning to Shah Porir Dwip after catching fish. A BGP speedboat chased them in Naikyandia area and took them away at gunpoint.

Abdus Salam, a member of ward-9 in the upazila's Sabrang union, also confirmed that the fishermen went missing.

Contacted, Teknaf Upazila Nirbahi Officer Parvez Chowdhury said the matter was reported to Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

Also, the local administration distributed food and gave financial assistance to the victims' family members, he added.

Talking to this newspaper, BGB-2 Commander Lt Col Sheikh Khalid Mohammad Iftikhar said they sent a letter to the BGP asking if they detained the Bangladeshi fishermen.

However, they have not received any response as of 10:00pm.

Jubo League activists beat up two cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A group of Jubo League activists beat two policemen near Natore district Awami League office yesterday noon.

The victims are constables Hasib Uddin and Selim Hossain.

Hasib was admitted to Natore Sadar Hospital and Selim to Rajshahi Medical College and Hospital, said police, adding Selim's condition was critical.

Liton Kumar Saha, superintendent of Natore police, said four men -- Nadeem, Zakir, Moin, and Sagar -- were detained in connection with the incident.

According to the police official, Hasib and Selim went to Natore town by motorcycle from the police lines.

On the way, their vehicle collided with Nadeem's motorcycle in Kandivita area. Later, they got involved in a scuffle.

At one point, Nadeem called his associates and a group of eight to 10 attacked the constables.

"A case would be filed against the four and they would be shown arrested," he added.

Contacted, Natore Jubo League General Secretary Ruhul Amin Biplob claimed that the accused were no longer with the organisation.

"The attackers have been handed over to the police and I demand action against them after investigation," he said.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina places a floral wreath at the portrait of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman on Dhanmondi Road-32 to mark the birth anniversary of the father of the nation yesterday.

PHOTO: PID

PM vows to build a beautiful future for kids

UNB, Tungipara

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said her government has long-term plans to make the future beautiful for the children.

"We want to build a beautiful future for the children. I have also formulated long-term plans for this," she said.

The premier was addressing a programme titled "Tungipara: Hridoye Pitribhumi" at the Bangabandhu Mausoleum Complex in Gopalganj's Tungipara yesterday.

The event was organised marking the 102nd birth anniversary of Father of Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the National Children's Day-2022.

This year, the theme of the Day was: "Bangabandhu Janmadiner Ongikar, Sokol Shishur Soman Odhikar".

Hasina said Bangladesh today attained the status of a developing country. "We will definitely make Bangladesh developed and prosperous Sonar Bangla. It is our commitment."

In this context, she mentioned her government's Vision 2041 and Delta Plan-2100. "I've prepared a plan on how Bangladesh would develop till 2100."

She reiterated that her government's

plans focus on making the future of children bright and decent. "Our goal is that our children would remain safe and get a beautiful life."

Hasina said though there had been a reign of killers, war criminals, Al-Badr and Razakars (collaborators of Pakistani forces) in the country after the assassination of her family members, she returned home to fulfill the dream of his father.

"Our goal is that our children would remain safe and get a beautiful life."

She said she returned home to ensure that children would not live with the pain of losing family members like she did, rather they would have a nice and improved life.

The PM said following the footsteps of Bangabandhu, her government took various steps for the welfare of the children, including establishment of schools in every area and taking measures to protect them from the social menaces like terrorism and militancy.

"Returning to power after the 2008

election, we've done a lot more for the welfare of the children," said Hasina.

She said Awami League and its associated bodies will arrange programmes in Tungipara from March 18 to 26 to mark the Mujib Year.

The premier inaugurated the six-day Mujib Borsha Folk Fair to be held on the premises of Government Sheikh Mujibur Rahman College in Tungipara from March 21-26.

An audio-visual presentation titled "Tungipara: Hridoye Pitribhumi" (Father's Land in Heart) was screened.

The National Implementation Committee for Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Birth Centenary Celebration, in collaboration with the women and children affairs ministry, arranged the programme.

AL leaders Sheikh Fazlul Karim Selim, Muhammad Faruk Khan and State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Fazilatun Nessa Indira, among others, spoke at the function.

Bangabandhu's grandsons PM's ICT Affairs Adviser Sajeeb Wazed Joy and Radwan Mujib Siddiq were present at the programme along with cabinet members, lawmakers and central AL leaders.

Belarus slammed at UN for abuses, invasion role

AFP, Geneva

Diplomats at the United Nations yesterday voiced outrage over Belarus's widespread human rights violations at home, and also for "enabling" Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

At the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, a wide range of countries decried Minsk's role in supporting Moscow's war against its pro-Western neighbour, which began on February 24.

US Ambassador Michele Taylor called out authoritarian Belarus leader Alexander Lukashenko for the "enabling of Russia's unprovoked war".

"The Belarus authorities' facilitation of Russian aggression has contributed to an unconscionable humanitarian toll on the people of Ukraine... and to a dangerous crisis which could irrevocably harm global security and that of every sovereign state," she told the council.

Hike on despite

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Md Hasan Ali, a retailer at Shukrabad Bazar, said they did not hear anything about the price reduction from wholesalers yet. He, however, said both the sales and supply have come down a lot recently.

About 4.5 lakh tonnes of crude soybean oil and 6.3 lakh tonnes of palm oil were imported in the first eight months of the fiscal year, according to the National Board of Revenue. Among them, about 4.2 lakh tonnes of edible oil were imported ahead of Ramadan.

The edible oil prices came down after the government cut duty but the prices increased as the millers choked the supply, said Rafiqul Islam, a wholesaler.

The millers have reduced the sale of SO (Supply Order) as they are forced to write the price of the product on SO slip in compliance

with the directive given by the commerce ministry recently.

As a result, the price has increased by Tk 5 per kg in the last one day, Islam added.

Meanwhile, consumers have been paying Tk 26-Tk 30 VAT per litre on bottled soybean oil at the government-fixed price of Tk 168 per litre, according to refiners.

It is strange that the government has reduced VAT to give some relief to consumers but did not adjust the price it had fixed earlier, said Kazi Rafiq, a consumer at Karwan Bazar. "It will take some time to get the benefit of tax exemption," said Ghulam Rahman, president of the Consumers' Association of Bangladesh.

The government should revise the edible oil price in line with the tax exemption, he added.

OMS can't keep up with queues

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"We had to wait for long hours under the open sky and there is often chaos whenever the truck finally arrives. If you are at the end of the long queue you might end up finding little left to buy as the demand is far greater than the supply," said Iftikhar Arefin Belal, a resident of Kazipara.

Belal, who earns a living renting out spaces of a small four-storey building he jointly owns with his brother, said that he felt embarrassed to purchase goods from the OMS truck.

"But I don't have any other choice," he said, adding that his earning was not enough to buy essential

cooking items from the local kitchen market.

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE

As mismanagement and manipulation keep on rising with the growing demand at different OMS centres, many have suggested reintroduction of ration cards so that they can get round-the-year support hassle-free.

Abdus Slam, a betel leaf shop owner, said until the early 80s, his family would get essentials like rice, sugar, wheat and oil through ration cards at subsidised prices every week.

"If the government reintroduces it, no one will be able to buy more than

once. So those in need won't be deprived," he said. SM Nazer Hossain, vice president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said the association had earlier suggested the government provide ration cards to the poor.

"If the government distributes food through ration cards, they would be able to maintain discipline which is not seen now. There are reports of chaos at different OMS points as more and more people are standing in the queue," he said. Hossain said that a noticeable section of the middle-class people are lining up for OMS support

to strike a balance between their income and the soaring prices.

"If this trend continues, the upper-middle-class people might also start purchasing the goods from the OMS programme. Our suggestion would be to issue ration cards."

He also suggested that the government import OMS food items instead of purchasing them locally.

Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue, said the government could consider expanding the OMS system. Ensuring the availability of the essentials is more important than anything

else, he added.

The government can also give cash support to the vulnerable people as it did during the lockdown, he said.

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder said the authorities have already increased the coverage area of OMS programme.

"We will not increase it further as the same person will take the product three or four times," he said.

About ration cards, he said, "There are different kinds of ration cards like Vulnerable Group Feeding Card and Vulnerable Group Development Cards. We also have plans to issue OMS cards."

launched the Vulnerable Group Feeding (VGF) in partnership with WFP in the aftermath of the 1974 famine to support the most food insecure upazilas of the country. Eligible households then received wheat through representatives of the local government and the programme continued through annual allocations.

The government also introduced other food support programmes to bring people out of poverty as well as build income generation activities.

While VGF marked the beginning of a new reorientation process, it also led to the gradual move-away from ration programmes, considered to be "used to favour the urban middle classes at the expense of the rural poor" by the donors.

He said the initiative to cancel the rationing system, which was very effective in controlling food price hikes, started in the late 1970s with the prescription of USAID and World Bank, and finally it was abolished at the beginning of the 1990s. The government

BCL man stabbed to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

A Chhatra League leader was stabbed to death by a group of unidentified criminals in Rangamati town on early yesterday.

Joy Tripura was attacked just as he walked out of Rangamati General Hospital in Debashish Nagar after visiting a patient around 2:00am, said Kabir Hossain, OC of Rangamati Kotwali Police Station.

The attackers stabbed him in front of the hospital gate and fled. He was immediately taken back inside the hospital, where emergency doctors declared him dead, he said, adding that an investigation was underway.

Prakash Chakma, general secretary of Rangamati BCL, said Joy was the unit's deputy publicity secretary.

He added that they have given names of some suspects to the police.

Seen with fugitive, OC withdrawn

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

The officer-in-charge of Chakaria Police Station was withdrawn and attached to Cox's Bazar police lines yesterday on charges of celebrating his birthday with a fugitive accused in an attempted murder case.

The district administration withdrew OC Mohammad Osman Gani after a number of media, including The Daily Star, on Wednesday published photos, which show the officer cutting his birthday cake with the fugitive inside the station.

Md Hasanuzzaman, Cox's Bazar superintendent of police, said measures will probe the allegations brought against the OC.

Man found alive inside sack dumped in river

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A man was found alive inside a sack in the Sati River in Lalmonirhat's Sadar upazila yesterday morning.

Shaha Alam, OC of Sadar Police Station, said they were yet to find out why Jahid was stuffed inside a sack with his hands and legs tied and left to die.

Eyewitness Kartik

Kumar Acharya, assistant head teacher of Saral Khan High School, told the Daily Star, that he was on his morning walk when he noticed a full sack in the now shallow river.

He and other locals caught hold of the sack, found Jahid unconscious inside and immediately contacted police, who sent the victim to hospital.

Dr Kamrul Hasan Prince, resident medical officer of Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital, said Jahid was possibly anaesthetised when he was found. "He is healthy now, but it will take time for him to recover completely."

OC Shaha said police are now waiting for Jahid to get better so that they can talk to him and further investigate the incident.



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'Tear down'

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central Europe between freedom and bondage and this Wall is growing bigger with every bomb."

US President Joe Biden called Putin a "war criminal", triggering fury in the Kremlin, as the Russian leader also lashed out at "traitors" at home who he said were undermining the war effort.

British military intelligence said in an update yesterday that the invasion had "largely stalled on all fronts", and Russian forces were suffering heavy losses from a staunch and well-coordinated Ukrainian resistance, reports Reuters.

Nato members, meanwhile, resisted Zelensky's pleas for direct involvement through a no-fly zone over Ukraine, warning it could lead to World War III against nuclear-armed Russia.

More than three million Ukrainians have fled across the border, mostly women and children, with 103 children killed in the war, authorities said.

With stop-start peace talks ongoing, officials in Kyiv said Russia had agreed to nine humanitarian corridors yesterday for fleeing refugees, including one out of Mariupol.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov had said a "compromise" outcome in the talks would centre on Ukraine becoming a neutral state comparable to Sweden and Austria -- an idea roundly rejected by Kyiv.