

A ‘curious’ phone call

Activities of customs official, who was ‘threatened’ over seized liquor, raise questions

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

The activities of assistant revenue officer (ARO) of Chattogram Custom House, who allegedly received a death threat from abroad for disclosing information about liquor consignments, were “questionable”, according to police.

Police noticed this during investigation to find clues centring ARO Rashedur Rahman’s general diary (GD), which was lodged with port city’s EPZ Police Station on July 24.

Rashedur had given police printouts of his call history. The Daily Star has obtained copies of them.

They show that the ARO was the one who first called the number from which the threat was given. He made a WhatsApp call at 10:48am on July 23 and talked for 46 seconds. At 10:51am, the “intimidator” called back and talked to Rashedur for 50 seconds. At 10:58am, Rashedur missed a call from the number.

Interestingly, during filling the GD, the ARO claimed that he does not know the intimidators, but according to the screenshots, the number was saved in his mobile as “GK Trading”.

When police asked about GK Trading, Rashedur said he did not know how the name was saved to his mobile, and claimed that he received the threatening call after a missed call.

Contacted, Rashedur told the Daily Star, “I have informed the matter to my senior officials now. Without their consent, I don’t talk to the media freely.”

Meanwhile, the ARO has submitted a written complaint against Sub-inspector Rana Pratap Banik of the station, who is the investigation officer (IO), to Director General of Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (CIID) Mohammad Fokhrul Alam, claiming that the IO is trying to divert the issue.

However, the DG verbally ordered Rashedur to submit the application to Chattogram customs commissioner through proper channels, as the commissioner is the supervising authority of the ARO.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the complaint against the IO. It reads that Rashedur had submitted printouts of screenshots of his Whatsapp call history to the IO. SI Rana received it to forward the documents to the court without thinking twice. The ARO mentioned that police are trying to deliberately divert the issue to prove him to be guilty.

Police, however, said they are unaware of the ARO’s written complaint.

Contacted, Deputy Commissioner (West) Abdul Waris said, “We do not know anything about the complaint. We are just investigating his allegation.”

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With great attention to details, an artisan paints on a clay pot on the occasion of Manasa Puja this Wednesday, resembling the image of the goddess. Pal artisans are spending busy days making these pots at Barishal’s Jhalokathi, selling each for Tk 70 to Tk 220, depending on the size. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

‘Why can’t we place flowers at his grave?’

Man jumps off of Padma Bridge after being stopped from visiting Tungipara

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
Munshiganj

Md Nuruzzaman Khan (38), an RMG worker, started his day aiming to place a wreath and pay his respects at the mausoleum of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Gopalganj’s Tungipara on his 47th death anniversary and National Mourning Day.

However, he was not allowed to enter the mausoleum as he did not have a permit card with him.

While returning with a broken heart, when the car carrying him was on the Padma Bridge, he opened the door and jumped.

The incident took place around 2:30pm yesterday at the bridge’s Mawa end in Munshiganj.

A search party was initiated, but he could not be traced till 7:00pm, confirmed Mawa River Police Station OC Arif Hossain.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman belongs to everyone. Why can’t we place flowers at his grave?

Md Nuruzzaman Khan

Before jumping off of the bridge, he made a video on his mobile phone. “Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman belongs to everyone. Why can’t we place flowers at his grave?” he was heard saying in the recording.

“I was in the front seat with the driver and Nuruzzaman was alone in the back seat. While the car was passing through the bridge, he asked for the car to stop but we did not listen to him.”

“He opened the door without saying anything and jumped off the bridge,” said Omar Faruk, his co-passenger. “The river police came to aid when we called 999,” he added.

Omar also said he has known Nuruzzaman for four years. “He is not associated with any political party. However, he loved Bangabandhu very much.”

PRAYER TIMING
AUGUST 16

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:25	12:45	4:45	6:38	8:00
JAMAT 5:00	1:15	5:00	6:41	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Bridging the fragmented forests

Canopy bridges offering safe passage for primates, arboreal mammals in Satchhari, Lawachhara

MINTU DESHWARA

Due to the Dhaka-Sylhet railway and Srimangal-Bhanugach road running through the reserve forest of Lawachhara, many of the critically endangered species have died in accidents while crossing them.

Data collected between 2015 and 2017 show 14 primates died while crossing the road in Satchhari forest, and 13 died in the same manner in Lawachhara.

The same situation prevailed at Satchhari National Park.

This raised alarm among researchers as many of the mammals, including Phayre’s leaf monkey, capped langur and slow loris, that died were either vulnerable or endangered.

It was the casualties that gave birth to the idea of an artificial aerial rope bridge connecting the two sides of the forest.

At least six canopy bridges were set up at different points in Satchhari forest connecting the two sides that have been created by man-made interventions, while five were built in Lawachhara.

Wildlife researchers and conservationists Hassan Al-Razi Chayan and Marjan Maria hired help at Tk 1,500 a day (for a few days) to set up aerial rope bridges and connect two fragmented sides of Satchhari forest in November 2020 -- the first of its kind in the country.

Following their footsteps, canopy bridges were constructed by a team of researchers from Jagannath University throughout the Lawachhara forest



A squirrel crosses from one side of Satchhari forest to another using one of the rope bridges installed to facilitate safe movement for primates and arboreal mammals.

PHOTO: COURTESY

AT A GLANCE

- 6 canopy bridges set up at Satchhari in 2020
- 5 in Lawachhara in 2021

- Camera traps installed to monitor animal movement

EQUIPMENT CRISIS

- Thousands of animals including various species of monkeys, slow lorises and squirrels crossed structures at Satchhari already as per camera captures
- Nothing meaningful could be retrieved from pictures of Lawachhara canopy bridges due to poor quality

in September 2021.

A NEED FOR BETTER CAMERAS

The teams also set up camera traps to monitor whether any of the intended animals actually used their bridges.

After analysing the photos sent by the cameras set at the bridges in Satchhari forest, researchers said thousands of animals, including various species of monkeys, slow lorises and squirrels, have crossed the structures since its inception.

Official data suggest that there were 12 deaths per year on an average due to road accidents before the construction of the aerial bridges. But no monkeys or other endangered species were reported dead after those became operational.

There are seven species of monkeys in Satchhara.

Apart from these apes and Assamese monkeys, all other species of monkeys have come and gone through the bridges, said the authorities.

However, researchers say it will take more time for an ape to use such a bridge as they are careful species.

Marjan Maria, chief researcher of the canopy project in Satchhari, said, “The project is a success. We got expected results.”

Meanwhile, nothing meaningful could be retrieved from the pictures stored in the cameras of Lawachhara canopy bridges due to poor quality.

“Due to poor quality, we could not get good quality pictures or identify the animals,” said Habibun Nahar, an associate professor in the Department of Zoology at Jagannath University, who was involved in the project.

She said her team has obtained clear images of only two primates and some squirrels crossing the bridge. The researcher believes the number of species crossing is way more than what has been recorded by the cameras.

“Since there is no record, it is difficult to say for sure,” she noted.

Her team has asked the forest department for high quality cameras.

According to a 2019 survey, there are 40 to 41 primates in Lawachhara National Park. Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, divisional forest officer, said, “Animals, including monkeys are using the canopy in Satchhari. The cameras are recording their movement clearly.”

About the researchers request for better cameras at Lawachhara, he said he will look into the issue.

KHULNA, JASHORE

Over half of level crossings unprotected

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

Over half of the level crossings at different regions of Khulna and Jashore don’t have a gateman. Some of these crossings are registered under the ministry, while others remain unregistered.

These unregistered crossings are where the highest risk of accidents lies.

Locals allege that authorities haven’t taken any initiatives to resolve this issue.

Surprisingly, even legal or registered gates are not manned at times. Some gates do have a guard, but they are negligent in their duties, alleged locals. As a result, accidents a regular occurrence there.

According to Khulna-Jashore railway sources, there are a total of 171 level crossings in the region. Of these, 73 are registered and 88 unregistered.



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

All unregistered level crossings are unprotected, while 10 legally registered ones remain unmanned. Summing up, 98 level crossings in the region are unprotected.

Visiting Khulna’s Mujgunni, Daulatpur, Phulbarigate, Phultala and Jashore, and Jashore’s Nowapara and Bashundia, it was seen that at least 10 gates were unmanned. Locals were crossing the rail line carelessly. Many were walking on the line while some were sitting on it.

One unregistered gate spotted between Khulna city’s Mujgunni and Khalishpur areas had a warning on a signboard set up by a local organisation. Locals go through this gate to use the Khulna-Jashore highway.

“This is the easiest way to reach the highway even though there’s risk involved,” said Sohel Biswas while crossing the gate.

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With much difficulty and risk, passenger-carrying boats push through the rough currents of the Kirtankhola, triggered by the low pressure in the Bay of Bengal. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

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