

SAINT MARTIN'S ISLAND Govt mulls seaplanes, cruise ships for tourists

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Operation of seaplanes and cruise ships will be introduced for tourists to access St Martin's Island round the year, said Chairman of Cox's Bazar Development Authority (CDA) Commodore Mohammad Nurul Abshar yesterday.



However, the launching date has yet to be finalised.

Works have started to implement the new master plan to develop Cox's Bazar as an eco-friendly tourism hub, he said. There will be restrictions on the construction of commercial buildings here and there on the island. At the same time, the arrival of tourists to the island will be controlled from this year, he added.

Experts fear that serious damage has already been done to the environment in Saint Martin's Island, the chairman said, adding that this island should be protected.

"Development plan of Saint Martin's Island has been taken up based on the model of various tourist centers in Maldives, Thailand and Vietnam. If necessary, the opinion of the tourism experts of those countries will be taken," he said.

CDA chairman also said plans have already been made to introduce a cable car from Cox's Bazar to Moheshkhali island and Cox's Bazar to Teknaf.

A huge under-sea aquarium at Sabrang Tourism Park, Circular Bus Terminal, Marina Bay Resort, Khuruskul Smart City, Theme Park, Eco Resort, Riverrain Tourism at Chowfaldandi and plying of sea-plane from Cox's Bazar to St Martin's have been undertaken, he added.



Fish breeders are taking large pots full of hatchlings from their farm in Khulna to Bagerhat. Depending on the variety and species, each kg sells for up to Tk 12,000. The photo was taken yesterday in the Arrang Ghata area of Khulna.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Ukraine troops retake village near Bakhmut

Kyiv orders civilian evacuation in Kherson region regularly hit by Russian shelling

REUTERS, Kyiv

Ukraine said yesterday it had recaptured the devastated eastern village of Andriivka, setting the stage for further advances on the southern flank of Bakhmut, the city that fell into Russian hands in May after months of heavy fighting.

Kyiv's troops were securing their foothold in the area, while Russian forces suffered significant casualties and lost equipment, the Ukrainian General Staff said in a morning report. There was no immediate comment from Russia.

The village of Andriivka lies south of Bakhmut, the site of the fiercest and longest battle since the invasion by Russia in February last year. The General Staff reported "partial success" near Klishchiivka, a village also south of Bakhmut.

"Capturing and holding Andriivka - is our path to a breakthrough on the right flank of Bakhmut and the key to the success of the entire further offensive," said the Third Assault Brigade, which took part in the push.

In a separate development, Ukrainian officials ordered the evacuation of civilians from the southern Kherson region, partly controlled by Russian forces and regularly hit by shelling.

"The Regional Defence Counsel of Kherson decided to compulsorily evacuate families with children from areas subject to constant enemy fire," governor Oleksandr Prokudin said on Telegram.

Russian troops control areas in the Kherson region south of the Dniepr river, following their withdrawal last year from the city of Kherson, the regional capital,

which they regularly shell.

Meanwhile, a ship has left port in Ukraine's Odesa, lawmaker Oleksiy Honcharenko said yesterday, posting photographs on the Telegram messaging app of the vessel in the water.

"A few minutes ago, the Cayman Islands-flagged Puma vessel left the port of Odesa into the Black Sea," Honcharenko said on Telegram.

LSEG interactive map data showed the Puma had departed Odesa and was about 25 km from shore and underway just before 10:00 am.

If the Puma successfully leaves Odesa, it would be the fifth to do so since Moscow withdrew from the UN brokered Black Sea grain export deal in July and threatened to treat all vessels as potential military targets.

Free Adilur, Elan at once

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human rights activists from doing their jobs," said the statement.

"We demand the immediate release of Adilur Rahman Khan and ASM Nasiruddin Elan. We also demand full protection and an end to the harassment of human rights defenders."

A Dhaka court convicted them of spreading "a distorted report and doctored images" about the May 5-6, 2013, police action on a Hefajat-e-Islam rally in Motijheel.

The signatories to the statement include Hossain Zillur Rahman, Dr Hameeda Hossain, Ali Imam Majumder, Dr Iftekharuzzaman, Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya, Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, Professor Anu Muhammad, Professor CR Abrar, Shahdeen Malik, Shahidul Alam, Dr Asif Nazrul, Sara Hossain, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, Sanjeeb Drong, Jyotirmoy Barua, and Dr Mohammad Tanzimuddin Khan.

In another statement, 39 Bangladeshi academicians and professionals working abroad condemned the prison sentence to Adilur and Elan.

The statement also expressed concerns over "continuous harassment" of rights activists, Nobel Laureate Dr Muhammad Yunus, civil society members, and opposition party leaders and activists through the judiciary.

The statement said, "We demand that the government refrain from instrumentalising the judiciary to silence its critics and that the judiciary remain impartial, as the Constitution demands it to be."

The signatories to the statement include Sultan Mohammad Zakaria, former country specialist of Pakistan and Bangladesh at Amnesty International; Dr Hasan Mahmud, assistant professor, Northwestern University in Qatar; Dr Mohammad Al-Amin, postdoctoral fellow, University of Colorado, Denver, USA; Dr Jamal Uddin, lecturer at Cornell University, Ithaca, New York.

Meanwhile, the National Committee against Fascism and Imperialism demanded unconditional and immediate release of Adilur and Elan in an official statement.

The statement said there are sufficient reasons to believe that this verdict has been issued to create barriers to their activism and to intimidate other human rights organisations of this country.

The committee, in its statement, also demanded cancellation of the recently passed Cyber Security Act.

Study finds high level of microplastics in salt

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of the country. It is an essential part of our diet and an inevitable mineral for the human body.

Experts believe the increased presence of microplastics in salt may pose threats to public health.

The contamination in raw salt is caused mostly by toiletries products like soap, facewash, cleanser, and different kinds of packaging and single-use plastics, according to researchers.

Sultan Al Nahian, scientific officer of BORI and a part of the research team that conducted the 2021 study, told The Daily Star that the findings of the recent study suggested an alarming development.

"As the recent study has found more microplastics in salt than ours, I find it alarming that our sea is now more polluted given its exposure to transboundary and domestic plastic waste. We should take urgent action to rein in the microplastic pollution," he said.

The 2023 study has found the highest concentration of microplastics in Kutubdia, an offshore island. For each kg salt, the pan in South Kutubdia had 1,253 particles while North Kutubdia had 1,026 particles, reads the study.

24 percent of the particles were black followed by 17 percent transparent and 15 percent yellow. Dominance of black perhaps is explained by black threads and ropes used by the fishermen and also by black plastic cover, which farmers use to preserve salt, according to the study.

The size of the plastic particles ranges from 0.3 to 1.5 micrometres, most of which are fibres and foams, the researchers have found.

The 12 sites that were chosen for collecting samples for the study were

Napitkhali, Maheshkhali, Badarkhali, Chanua, Ilshia, Darbeskhata, South Kutubdia, North Kutubdia, Rajakhali, Puichari, and Gurakhali from Cox's Bazar; and the only salt pan from Chattogram district was selected from Dulahazara.

Concentration of microplastics in salt pans varies from one place to another depending on the level of pollution of sea waters.

The average of microplastics found in Bangladesh is 803 per kg of salt while it is 1,690 in Sri Lanka, 1,500 in China, 1,200 in Korea, 900 in Vietnam, and 700 in Thailand, says the study.

In India, the average of microplastics is 35 to 575 per kg of sea salt, according to a study jointly conducted by the Centre for Environmental Science and Engineering and the Indian Institute of Technology.

Mohammad Abdul Momin Siddique, assistant professor of the department of oceanography at NSTU, told The Daily Star that their study suggests surface seawater in the south-eastern coast of Bangladesh is highly contaminated by microplastics.

He said the study demonstrates that the coastal waters of Bangladesh have been polluted with plastic particles, and that the sites which are located offshore have higher concentration of microplastics.

"Filtering out seawater at the mouth of the dyke, through which the seawater flows into the salt pans, can reduce the presence of plastic particles including microplastics," he said.

A study done by the department of environmental sciences at Jahangirnagar University (JU) last year confirmed the presence of microplastics in commercial salt. They collected several packets of salt manufactured/produced by

about Tk 40 lakh.

"All my hard work went up in smoke," he said, standing before piles of ashes.

He said different government authorities and market committees have been enlisting names of victims, but there have been no immediate aid and relief.

Mizanur Rahman, owner of Asia Garments, had been doing business in the market since its opening in 1997. He said his losses amounted to around Tk 30 lakh.

"How will we manage the capital now?" he said.

Visiting the fire-ravaged market yesterday, Agriculture Minister Abdur Razzaque said the prime

minister is aware of the fire incident, and that the government will try its best to help the traders.

Razzaque, also an Awami League presidium member, said arrangements will be made so that traders can take bank loans.

Abdur Rahman, relief and rehabilitation officer at the Department of Disaster Management in Dhaka, said they have been enlisting the fire victims.

So far 268 owners and traders, and 569 salesmen have been enlisted.

"The list will be sent to the disaster management ministry and the Prime Minister's Office. They will decide on the relief and financial aid," Rahman added.

Govt move to check prices falls flat

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Faisal Hossain, manager of the Shevrapara outlet of supermarket chain Swapno, said his company was selling eggs at the government-set price, and the prices of onions and potatoes may be lowered in the future.

Many have said they knew that the price cap would not make life any easier for those struggling to make ends meet.

Abid Reza, a shopper in Mohammadpur, said, "Setting the prices and not monitoring the kitchen market is farcical."

However, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi told reporters at an event in Rangpur yesterday that officials were actively monitoring the

Govt oblivious

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Referring to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent statement that all elections held under the AL government were transparent and peaceful, Fakhrul said, "This is the best joke of the year."

Senior BNP leaders also addressed the rally, with Dhaka South City BNP Convener Abdus Salam in the chair.

Earlier in the morning, Fakhrul at a press briefing at the party office demanded immediate release of rights body Odhikar Secretary Adilur Rahman Khan and Director Nasiruddin Elan.

"He [Adilur] had been vocal about enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings in Bangladesh. He raised these issues internationally.

Foreigners get 'false' reports

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Bangladesh are under threat and they have no right to speak.

"You speak to them. If one or two percent of them say that the Awami League has not ensured their security ... then we will not stay in power."

He also asked the AL activists to be ready to foil conspiracies by BNP-Jamaat.

Addressing the event, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbub ul Alam Hanif said a plot is being hatched over the sentencing of Adilur.

He mentioned that Odhikar had said 61 people died in a police action on the Hefajat rally in Motijheel on May 5-6, 2013. A case was filed for this misinformation, he added.

"Why is Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir [BNP secretary general] said

20-year-old stabbed to death in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A 20-year-old man was stabbed to death in Chattogram city's Khulshi yesterday.

Police have taken one person into custody for interrogation in this connection but did not disclose his name.

The victim, Abdur Rahman Sujon, of Senbagh area of Noakhali, used to live in Segunbagan area of the port city, said Sub-Inspector Nurul Alam, in charge of Chattogram Medical College Hospital police outpost.

When his friends brought him to CMCH from Khulshi with stab wounds, duty doctors declared him dead around 7:00pm, said the police official.

Quoting locals, Rubel Hawlader, officer-in-charge of Khulshi Police Station, said the attackers and the victim knew each other. Around 6:30pm, they stabbed Sujon in the stomach during an altercation in Segunbagan area.

Md Moklesur Rahman, additional police commissioner of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP), told The Daily Star, "Primarily, we suspect that he was killed over a personal enmity. However, the real motive will be clear after investigation."

Man killed as truck hits bike

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jamalpur

A man was killed after a truck hit a motorcycle on Dewanganj-Jamalpur road in Jamalpur's Melandah upazila yesterday.

The victim is Abdullah, 27, of Majhipara in the upazila, police said.

Quoting locals, Delawar Hossain, officer-in-charge of Melandah Police Station, said when Abdullah was going to Dewanganj from Jamalpur, a goods-laden truck hit his bike near Shyampur market in the afternoon, leaving him critically injured.

Locals took him to Melandah Upazila Health Complex where doctors declared him dead, said the OC.

The body was handed over to family members without an autopsy as no complaint was filed, he said. The truck was seized but its driver managed to flee, the OC added.

4 militant suspects arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Four members of the banned militant organisation Ansar al-Islam have been arrested by Rab from Dinaipur and Thakurgaon.

The arrestees were Ansar al-Islam's northern region Da'wahti branch chief Muntasir Billah and his accomplices Yasin, Abdul Malek and Sabbir, Rab-Spokesperson Khandaker Al-Moin told a press conference at Rab-13 battalion office in Rangpur yesterday.