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# BANGLADESH Dumping ground for toxic ships

ZYMA ISLAM

Out of 446 ships scrapped worldwide, 170 ended up in Chattogram beaches, making Bangladesh the biggest dumping yard for end-of-life vessels in the world last year.

Of them 159 were built before 2002, the year the International Maritime Organisation banned the use of cancer-causing material asbestos on ships. It is highly likely that these ships had asbestos in them as the mineral was widely used in ships for insulation.

Among the ships scrapped, 59 were owned by Chinese shipping companies while companies based in Thailand and Hong Kong sent 15 each, according to a list of ships dismantled worldwide released by NGO Shipbreaking Platform.

Japanese and South Korean companies sent eight ships each while the UAE, Greek, Singaporean, Russian, and Indonesian companies sent six each.

None of these ships carried flags of the country where these companies are based. Instead, they carried "flags of convenience", a practice whereby owners register a ship with a country other than that of the ship's owners for certain benefits or to avoid tax or reduce operating costs. This conceals the actual owner.

They had flags of St Kitts & Nevis, Sierra Leone, Comoros, Liberia, Panama, Gabon and other countries.



Visitors browsing books at a stall at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela at the Suhrawardy Udyan after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the month-long fair yesterday. The Bangla Academy is organising the fair.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## SAGAR-RUNI MURDER If probe needs 50yrs, it will have to be given 50yrs

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said that if the investigation needs 50 years to find the killers of journalists Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi, it will have to be given 50 years.

"If police cannot complete the investigation in this case, will it be right to forcibly complete it and submit a final report or charge sheet? They [police] should be given as much time as their investigation may require to find the murderers. If the probe takes 50 years, it will have to be given 50 years."

The minister said this in response to a question from reporters about the Sagar-Runi murder case trial at a press conference

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## SCRAPPED SHIPS

YEAR	BANGLADESH	GLOBALLY
2023	170	446
2022	122	443
2021	254	763
2020	144	630



European Union Ship Recycling Regulation mandates that vessels carrying EU flags can only be scrapped in yards approved by the EU. The scrap yards in Chattogram are not EU approved.

The six Greek ships that were scrapped in Chattogram carried the flags of Comoros, Bahamas, and Liberia.

Japan is a signatory to the Hong Kong Convention, a United Nations treaty by the International Maritime Organisation that mandates ships are not recycled in ways that harm human lives and the environment. Bangladesh has also been a signatory since last year.

The eight Japanese ships also carried flags of convenience, namely St Kitts & Nevis, Mongolia, Panama and Nauru.

The NGO platform said, "Almost half of the ships beached in 2023 (globally) changed their original flag to a grey-or-black-listed flag registry just weeks before hitting the beach."

By "grey-or-black-listed", the platform meant countries that were classified as non-compliant by the Paris MoU on Port State Control, an administrative body governing standards in the coasts of Europe and North America.

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## FIGHTING NEAR MYANMAR BORDER Gripped by fear, many leave their Ghumdhum homes

MOKAMMEL SHUVO, back from Tambru

Hundreds of people who live near the zero line along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border in Ghumdhum of Bandarban's Naikhongchhari have been staying elsewhere out of fear.

The fight between the Myanmar military and rebel group Arakan Army has worsened along the border.

Hundreds of gunshots and mortar shell explosions are being heard every night and sometimes even during the day, said Shafiqul Islam, a member of No 1 Ghumdhum Union.

"There was a heavy gunfight from 3:00am to 6:00am today [yesterday], he said, adding that a shell of mortar was found in a cropland near Tambru border in the afternoon.

Members of Border Guard Bangladesh recovered the unexploded shell.

Shifu Dhar, who lives within 150 yards of the zero line at Hindupara of Tambru, said she felt as if it was an earthquake when the mortar shells started exploding early in the morning.

"We are frightened, but we have nowhere to go. We have been living in constant fear for the last few weeks," she said.

Noor Mohammad, of Konapara, very close to the border, said he left his house several days ago when the fighting in Myanmar began.

There are around 30 families in Konapara and many of them have taken shelter at their

relative's houses.

"We visit and stay at our houses during the daytime and many of us move elsewhere in the evening," Noor said.

"My parents don't want to move from our house in bordering Ghonapara village so I cannot leave," said Syed Karim.



Tambru Bazar is almost devoid of people.

"Whenever mortar shells explode and gun battles start, we take shelter on the foot of hills." Mir Ahmed of Madhyam Para said he moved to another house inside Ghumdhum.

"Who wants to spoil their sleep at nights due to the sound of shelling after working hard all day. So, I have moved to a safer place," he said.

Risking lives, many still stay in their homes along the border, he said.

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## RHD reluctant to give up ferries to shipping ministry

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Two agencies of the shipping ministry want to take control of ferries currently operated by the Roads and Highways Department, as per a decision made at an inter-ministerial meeting, but the RHD is reluctant to relinquish control.

The BIWTC and BIWTA of the shipping ministry said the decision to take over the 52 ferry routes from the hands of the RHD was made in November 2022 to "provide better services".

But the RHD, an agency under the road transport and bridges ministry, said ferry service is an integral part of its job and there is no scope for handing the job over to another agency overnight.

Even the road transport ministry was not formally informed about any such move, officials said.

Given this situation, the shipping ministry has convened an inter-ministerial meeting on February 11 to discuss the issue, they said.

Transport expert Prof Hadiuzzaman, however, said the initiative can create problems in transport service.

"The RHD operates the ferries on narrow rivers to ensure communication by roads it has built and maintained over the years. So, giving the responsibility to operate ferries to another agency will create a coordination issue," he told this correspondent yesterday.

Hadiuzzaman, a professor of Buet's civil engineering department, said as per the RHD's masterplan, it would gradually build bridges over the rivers where ferries are operated. So, it is pointless tasking a new agency with ferry services for only a few years.

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## Fakhrul denied bail again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday denied bail to BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir in a case filed over vandalism at the chief justice's residence on October 28 last year.

With this, Fakhrul's bail plea has been rejected four times by the High Court and lower courts.



D h a k a Metropolitan Magistrate Farzana Shakila Sumu Chowdhury passed the order after Fakhrul's lawyer submitted a petition seeking bail, said court sources.

One of his lawyers told the court that Fakhrul was suffering from various ailments including cardiac issues and as the prosecutors did not mention his involvement specifically, he should be granted bail.

A prosecutor then said BNP leaders and activists attacked the chief justice's residence at Fakhrul's order.

Fakhrul was arrested on October 29.



Pedestrians climb over steel fences on the central reservation of a road near the north gate of the Baitul Mukarram national mosque yesterday to go across, putting themselves and the other road users in harm's way. A footbridge is only a few yards away.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Wedding joy gives way to funeral gloom Groom, his brother die in bike crash hours after Gaye Holud

A CORRESPONDENT, Rajbari

A family's wedding festivities have ended in tragedy as the groom and his brother died in a road accident about an hour after his 'Gaye Holud' programme.

Saiful Islam, 27, the groom, and his elder brother Monirul Islam, 32, died in the early hours of yesterday when a soil-laden truck hit their motorcycle on the Dhaka-Khulna highway's Nobuosimuddinpara area under Rajbari's Goalanda upazila.

Both of them fell off the motorbike.

Monirul died on the spot, while a critically injured Saiful, who used to work on a project for the Department of Youth Development in Rajbari, was taken to Goalanda Upazila Health Complex where on-duty doctors declared him dead.

"The accident has destroyed our family. My brother was supposed to wear the groom's attire tomorrow [Friday] - his body is now wrapped in a shroud," said their grief-stricken brother Shamiul, whose own wedding was supposed to take place yesterday.

Shamiul and Saiful's 'Gaye Holud' programmes were held jointly on Wednesday evening at the yard of their family home in Khankanapur village under Rajbari sadar upazila.

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