



23 Bangladeshis held hostage by 'Somali' pirates

Their ship hijacked in the Indian Ocean; crew safe, authorities trying to contact them, say reports

MD NAZRUL ISLAM and FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Suspected Somali pirates yesterday hijacked a Bangladesh-flagged cargo ship with 23 crew members in the Indian ocean, according to the company that owns the vessel.

The crew members of MV Abdullah have been held hostage, said Captain Mehrul Karim, chief executive officer of SR Shipping Limited, a concern of KSRM Group.

The ship was sailing from Maputo in Mozambique to Al Hamriyah in the UAE with 58,000 tonnes of coal, he told The Daily Star.

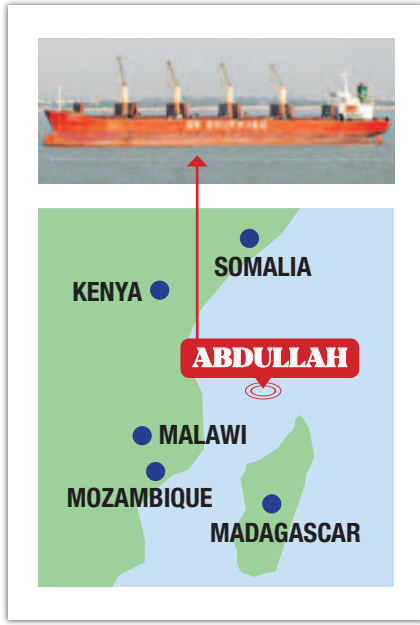
"The pirate attack took place around 500 nautical miles off the Somali coast," he said.

Mizanul Islam, media consultant of KSRM Group, said, "The captain of the ship, Abdur Rashid, informed the authorities that the pirates were in control of an Iranian fishing boat near the MV Abdullah. As they ran out of fuel and food, they attacked our ship and were taking fuel. The crew members are safe."

Captain Mehrul said, "When Rashid first informed us about the attack, we told him to resist the pirates at any cost. But 15 minutes later, the captain sent an email saying that the pirates managed to board the ship and took over its control. We assume Somali pirates hijacked our ship. We are trying to talk to the crew members."

Captain Anam Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Merchant Marine Officers' Association, said, "One of our men informed us in a

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During the month of Ramadan, the capital's Chawkbazar might as well be dubbed "the iftar street". Throughout the month, the sprawling market in the heart of old Dhaka sell a variety of iftar goodies, starting from peyajus and begunis to chicken parathas and lamb roasts. Customers from all parts of the city come to this spot almost every day to get their hands on their favourite items. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Schools to stay open in Ramadan

Apex court upholds government decision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld the government's decision to keep the primary and secondary schools open for the first 10 and 15 days respectively during Ramadan.

On the first day of the fasting month yesterday, schools in Dhaka city witnessed a significant drop in attendance in classes as there was confusion among the students, parents and teachers over the decision.

Visiting several schools, this newspaper found lower-than-usual attendance in classes.

Al Amin, a student of Rajdhani High School, said, "I have come to

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BB outlines tough measures for wilful defaulters

Borrowers to be barred from foreign travel, trade licence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Bank yesterday introduced strict measures for wilful defaulters as the authorities look to restore people's confidence in the banking sector in the face of escalating defaulted loans.

At the end of 2023, defaulted loans accounted for 9 percent of all outstanding loans at Tk 145,633 crore, up 20.7 percent year-on-year. This is more than four times the cost of Dhaka metro rail or Padma bridge.

The stern measures, which come as part of BB's roadmap to bring down defaulted loans to less than 8 percent by June 2026, were articulated in a detailed guideline, which outlined the criteria for identifying wilful defaulters.

Banks will be fined from Tk 50 lakh to Tk 1 crore if they violate the central bank guideline on wilful defaulters. If the violations continue, the central bank will impose a fine of Tk 1 lakh per day.

A separate unit called 'wilful defaulters

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REVISED ADP Education, health see huge cuts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has made major cuts in the education and health sectors in the annual development programme (ADP) budget for this fiscal year.

The National Economic Council yesterday revised the ADP and slashed this fiscal year's development budget by 6.84 percent from the original outlay. The decision came at an NEC meeting at its conference room in Dhaka's Agargaon, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

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