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Still haunted

MV Abdullah sailor shares the 33-day ordeal at the hands of Somali pirates

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, CTG

Having been a hostage by Somali pirates for 33 days was so terrifying for a young general steward of hijacked ship MV Abdullah that he is not only scared to travel back home on the same ship, but is also considering a break from the mariner's job.

The ordeal has shattered the self-esteem of Mohammad Noor Uddin, father of a young boy aged two and a half years, from Karnaphuli upazila in Chattogram. He took up the job in 2015.

"I am physically fine now, but I have become very weak mentally. I am constantly haunted by a fear that the ordeal may come back," Noor told The Daily Star in WhatsApp yesterday when the ship was approaching the UAE port of Al Hamriyah.

The ship, released by the pirates on April 14, reached the outer anchorage of the UAE port at 4:30pm yesterday.

Two of the 23 sailors, including Noor, want to sign off from the ship at the UAE port and want to come home by air. The rest 21 would travel back to Chattogram by the same ship, said officials of the ship's owning firm SR Shipping Ltd.

"The sea route to Bangladesh from UAE is also not out of danger as the Somali pirates are now so desperate that they are attacking ships much beyond the high-risk areas," said Noor.

"I think that I may not get back to the job anytime soon," he said, and shared their 33-day ordeal at the hands of the pirates starting from the capture of the ship.

DREADFUL MARCH 12

The pirates attacked MV Abdullah around 10:00am (Somali time) on March 12, when the vessel was around 600 nautical miles (about 1,111 km)

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Dhaka South City Corporation starts demolishing illegal structures on both sides of Culvert Road in Uttar Mugdapara yesterday. Before the drive, the occupants of the structures were asked to move their belongings elsewhere.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

SPORT



Bogura swimmers train in ponds

Bogura's swimming instructor Masud Rana trains swimmers from underprivileged background free of cost, but there are no proper facilities for him to run the training. With the only swimming pool of the district lying idle, Masud has to take his pupils from one pond to another to train.

STORY ON PAGE 11

Anu Muhammad's toes crushed under wheels of train

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former Jahangirnagar University Professor Anu Muhammad lost the toes of his left foot after falling on a rail line while disembarking from a train in the capital's Khilgaon yesterday morning.



It happened as the noted economist along with several others had just travelled to Dhaka by Ekota Express from Dinajpur.

"When the train stopped at Malibagh around 11:00am, we along with some other passengers got off the train. Anu Sir, who was the last one to get down, tripped and fell. I tried to pull him out, but the train started moving again," Mahtab Uddin Ahmed, a researcher and former student of the professor, told The Daily Star.

The 67-year-old, also known as an activist, has been admitted to the Casualty and Orthopaedic Department of Dhaka Medical College Hospital with injuries to both his feet.

Prof Bidhan Sarker, head of DMCH's Burn and Plastic Surgery Unit, said all the five toes of his left leg were crushed beyond repair. He also suffered damage to a toe of his right foot.

"Apart from these, his physical condition is stable."

Anu Muhammad will be shifted to Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in the morning today as per the directive of Health Minister

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Israel bombards Rafah after US 'green light'

13 of a family among dozens killed; Hamas says US's approval of military aid to Israel a signal for continued Gaza 'aggression'

AFP, Palestinian Territories

Israel carried out deadly strikes in Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah, first responders in the Palestinian territory said yesterday, as violence flared in the occupied West Bank.

The latest bombardments came as lawmakers in Israel's top ally, the United States, approved \$13 billion in new Israeli military aid even as global criticism mounts over the death toll and dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Israel welcomed the aid, while Hamas condemned it as a "green light" for continued Israeli "aggression".

Attention has turned back towards the offensive in Gaza, which Israel hit with several strikes overnight, according to the Palestinian territory's Civil Defence agency.

The bodies of 13 people, mostly children, were recovered after an Israeli strike hit the home of a family in Rafah, the agency said. Other people were believed to be under rubble.

A separate Israeli strike on a home in the Rafah area killed at least three people and wounded others, Civil Defence said. Resident Umm Hassan Kloub, 35, said her children screamed when they "woke up to a nightmare

of an explosion". "Every second we live in terror, even the sound of Israeli aircraft doesn't stop," she said. "We don't know whether we will live or die. This is not life."

Soon after the offensive began, Israel told Palestinians in northern Gaza to move to "safe zones" further south such as Rafah. Around 1.5 million of Gaza's 2.4 million people are now estimated to be sheltering in the city.

However, Israel has for two months threatened to invade the city in its mission to destroy Hamas.

At least 34,097 Palestinians have been killed and 76,980 others injured in Israel's ongoing military offensive on the Gaza Strip since October 7, Gaza's health ministry said yesterday. Some 48 Palestinians were killed and 79 others injured in the past 24 hours, the ministry added.

Gaza's civil defence said yesterday health workers had uncovered at least 50 bodies of people killed and buried by Israeli forces at Nasser Hospital compound in the southern city of Khan Yunis.

Violence has also flared in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, where a two-year surge

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2 Bangladeshi fishermen injured in BGP firing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Amid tensions along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, members of the Myanmar Border Guard Police (BGP) opened fire on a Bangladeshi fishing boat in Naf river of Teknaf upazila in Cox's Bazar, leaving two fishermen injured.

The unexpected development comes at a time when Bangladesh is sheltering 285 BGP members who fled an ongoing conflict between Myanmar's military junta and the Arakan Army in Rakhine state.

The incident occurred around 11:00am yesterday in the Naikhandia area of the Naf river estuary, three kilometres off the shore of Shah Porir Dwp, according to sources at Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB).

The injured are Faruq Mia, 37, of Dakkhin para, and Md Ismail, 19, of Majer Daiipara under Shah Porir Dwp union.

Faruq suffered critical bullet wounds to his hands and legs, the sources said.

The BGP opened fire on

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Spanish hospital enlists dogs to boost patients' morale

REUTERS, Barcelona

Joel Bueno shed tears of joy as his four-legged guests entered the intensive care unit where he had been admitted due to a blood clot.

Bueno, 34, said being showered with affection by therapy dogs Vida and Lu reminded him of his own dog back home.



"It's great to have someone that loves you more than anything else in the world," he told Reuters with a broad smile. "They give everything for you, no matter how you are with them."

The visit was part of a trial launched by the Hospital del Mar in Barcelona and the Affinity Foundation, which specialises in pet therapy, to

improve the emotional well-being of patients in intensive care units (ICU).

Patients in the programme receive two visits each week of 15 to 20 minutes each. "For now it's just a perception, but it seems to us that there's a benefit for patients," said Lucia Picazo, an ICU doctor.

The project will analyse saliva samples collected from patients before and after a therapy session, to check whether stress indicators like cortisol decrease while those related to wellbeing like oxytocin and serotonin increase, she said.

Patients aren't the only ones benefiting from the project: many members of staff in the emergency ward also enjoy having the canines around and bond with them, said Maribel Vida, who leads Affinity's animal therapy projects.

UPAZILA POLLS

2,055 aspirants file nominations in second phase

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 2,055 aspirants submitted nomination papers to contest in the second phase of upazila elections slated for May 21. In this phase, a total of 160 upazilas will go to polls.

Yesterday was the last day to submit the nomination papers.

A total of 730 aspirants have submitted nominations for chairman posts, 763 for vice chairman posts, and 562 for vice chairman posts reserved for women, Election Commission Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon.

Through upazila elections, voters elect public representatives for the positions of chairmen, vice chairmen, and vice chairmen (reserved for women).

As there is only one candidate each for the posts of chairman, vice chairman, and female vice chairman in the polls for Cumilla Adarsha Sadar upazila and Chattogram's Raozan upazila, if their nominations are approved after scrutiny, the EC will declare them winners unopposed without holding the elections.

Under the same circumstances, because of uncontested candidates, elections will also not be necessary for positions

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Relatives mourn next to the body of a Palestinian child killed in Israeli strikes in Rafah, in the southern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

BTEB chairman made OSD

DB finds 'proof' of his wife's involvement in forgery racket

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BTEB Chairman Ali Akbar Khan was made OSD yesterday after detectives found evidence of financial transactions between his wife Sehela Parveen and a gang involved in forging certificates.

Prof Md Mamun Ul Hoque, director (industry and training coordinator) of Bangladesh Technical Education Board (BTEB), who replaced Ali, confirmed the development to The Daily Star.

A team of Detective Branch of police arrested Sehela, 54, at her home in Uttara on Saturday, DB Chief Harun-Or-Rashid told a press briefing at the DMP Media Centre yesterday.

He said Sehela was involved in the racket that made fake certificates, marksheets, registration and admit cards of BTEB.

She was placed on a two-day remand yesterday.

"This gang has made millions by issuing over 5,000 fake certificates and marksheets over the last few years," he said.

The DB chief said Ali would be interrogated if needed.

Before the arrest of Sehela, five others

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