

DHAKA AIRPORT Two Chinese nationals arrested with 46 gold bars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate officials seized 46 gold bars, weighing over five kilograms, and arrested two Chinese nationals at Dhaka airport yesterday.

The gold was concealed inside the batteries of three charger lights, according to a press release signed by Sabrina Amin, assistant commissioner of CIID.

The two Chinese nationals — Zhongliang and Chen Geng — were detained for carrying the gold, it added.

The value of the gold bars is estimated to be around Tk 5 crore.

The two came from Dubai on a flight that landed at the airport around 7:00am.

"Tipped off, the officials seized the three charger lights from their possession. The gold was found inside the batteries," the official added.



If you observe closely, you will see a demarcation pillar set up by Bangladesh Inland Water Transportation Authority, which clearly states the place is part of the Turag river. However, there is no sign of water as an illegal establishment, fenced off with barbed wires, has encroached upon the river land. The photo was taken in the Gabtoli area of Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Democracy, election the way forward

Says CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal yesterday said the country needs to move forward with democracy and election so that it can fulfill the expectations of 30 lakh martyrs who made the ultimate sacrifice during the Liberation War in 1971.

At an event organised by the Election Commission to distribute smart national identity cards for freedom fighters, Awal said people fought the Liberation War with a dual aspiration — freedom from exploitation and the establishment of democracy and good governance.

Despite progress, the country is still working to achieve these goals, said the chief election commissioner.

Four election commissioners — Ahsan Habib Khan, Rashida Sultana, Md Alamgir, Anisur Rahman — spoke at the event that was presided over by EC Secretary Jahangir Alam.

Former National Human Rights Commission Bangladesh Chairman Kazi Reazul Hoque and former EC Javed Ali also spoke.

BAN ON FISHING IN HALDA RIVER

When conservation and livelihood collide

SIFAYET ULLAH

Shimul Jaladas, 35, used to be like many others in Madarikul Jelepara village — a fisherman. For generations, his family had cast their nets in the Halda, Bangladesh's prime breeding ground for carp. But in 2020, a government decree shattered their way of life.

The Halda was declared "Bangabandhu Fisheries Heritage" and a complete fishing ban was imposed to protect dwindling carp populations and endangered Gangetic dolphins.

Shimul's sorrows echo the plight of over 2,000 fishers whose income vanished overnight. "The ban took away our livelihood. We're struggling to meet basic needs now," Shimul said.

The ban itself was not unjustified. A 2015-2016 study documented a drastic decline in the number of fish species in the Halda, from 72 to just 26. Conservation was crucial. However, the fishers were not provided with any alternative livelihood options or compensation.

For four long years, the fishers were left to fend for themselves. Some collect hilsa eggs seasonally, a few find work as day labourers, some pull rickshaws, but most of them just feel forgotten, left behind.

Only now, after four years, is a project being taken to help them, with the details of compensation yet to be finalised. Before 2020, the fisheries department imposed



To save Halda's dwindling fish population, a ban on fishing was imposed. Conservation was crucial. However, the fishers, whose survival depended on the river, were not provided with any alternative livelihood options or compensation.

PHOTO: STAR

a similar fishing ban in a section of the Halda from 2007.

Around 60 families in Madarikul Jelepara solely depended on fishing for their livelihood. Now, they are crippled by debt.

"We don't know how long we can continue by borrowing money," said 65-year-old Ananta Jaladas from Jelepara.

The story of Johur Lal Jaladas, a 75-year-old retired fisherman, is a bit different. He watches helplessly as his family's legacy on the river fades away. "Our children are gradually changing their professions," he said, a hint of resignation in his voice.

Babul Jaladas, a fisherman

from Sonacharan Jelepara, a village adjacent to the Halda river, said he is desperate to return to his profession. He has tried out different jobs after the fishing ban, but has not succeeded much as fishing was the only thing he knew to do best since an early age.

Halda River Protection Committee secretary Mohammed Ali said they too are against a permanent ban on fishing in the Halda. "To save only four species of fish — rui, katla, mrigel, and kaliboush — there is no need to ban fishing in the river for the whole year," he said.

But the officials of the fisheries department said mother fish will

not exist in the Halda if fishing is not banned. And rightfully so, they have data to back it up.

However, they couldn't provide a satisfactory answer as to why the fishers were not duly compensated in four long years.

"The river is the source of eggs worth about crores. Those fishers who used to fish in the river can earn a huge amount of money by collecting eggs from the river," said Sribash Chandra Chanda, district fisheries officer of the Chattogram. But, only a few fishers, mostly owners of boats and trawlers, take up the majority of the profit made in the collection of eggs. The rest just works on the boats for meagre wages.

Meanwhile, there is a precedent of providing an alternative livelihood to struggling fishers in the Halda, although, it didn't quite work out for the insignificant nature of the compensation.

The fisheries department in 2010 gave a loan of Tk 10,000 to each of the fishers affected by the 2007 ban. They also provided 60kg of rice yearly to each affected family from 2010 to 2014. But the project was not extended after 2014.

Conservation versus livelihood debate has been around for a long time, but a good solution is still lacking.

According to Dr Manjurul Kibria, a Zoology professor at Chittagong University, giving loans for alternative livelihoods is not practical. He said allowing controlled seasonal fishing could address the crisis.

COURT CORNER

Bail of Prof Yunus extended till July 4

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday extended bail of Nobel Laureate Prof Muhammad Yunus and three directors of Grameen Telecom till July 4 in a labour law violation case.

MA Awal, chairman (in-charge) of the Labour Appellate Tribunal, passed the order. Around 11:00am, Yunus, chairman of Grameen Telecom, and his three colleagues appeared before the tribunal.

Talking to reporters, Yunus said, "It is a sad thing that I am being made to suffer. People are being deprived for it."

He also asked people to pray for him.

On January 1, the Labour Court-3 of Dhaka sentenced the four to six months' imprisonment.

MP AZIM 'ABDUCTION' Court fixes July 4 for probe report

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set July 4 for submitting a probe report in a case filed over the abduction of Awami League lawmaker from Jhenaidah-4 Anwarul Azim Anar, who was murdered by, what the government says, some Bangladeshi men in Kolkata.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mahbubul Haque passed the order after accepting the FIR submitted by police.

On Wednesday, Azim's daughter filed the abduction case with Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station accusing unnamed people.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters the same day that Azim was murdered at a Kolkata flat. Those involved in the killing are all Bangladeshis.

16TH AMENDMENT SC defers hearing on review petition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday deferred to July 11 the date for holding a hearing on the review petition challenging a High Court verdict that scrapped the 16th amendment to the constitution, which empowers parliament to remove the top court's judges for incapacity or misconduct.

A bench headed by Justice M Enayetur Rahim passed the deferment order. Manzill Murshid, principal counsel for the petitioner, prayed to the SC to fix a date after Eid-ul-Azha.

PK Halder's aide Bashudeb asked to surrender

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday directed Bashudeb Banerjee, an associate of PK Halder and the then director of International Leasing and Financial Services, and his wife Papia Banerjee, also a director of the institution, to surrender before the trial court concerned by June 4 in connection with money laundering cases against them.

Halder, a former managing director of NRB Global Bank, is reportedly involved in Tk 10,000 crore loan scam. He was arrested in Ashoknagar, India on May 14, 2022.

Care when cure nearly impossible

Speakers stress need for raising awareness on palliative care

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite an increased need for special care for thousands of terminally ill patients, Bangladesh is still lagging in terms of minimising the pain and suffering of such patients, said healthcare experts at a workshop yesterday.

Care services for terminally ill patients, known as palliative care, are predominantly based in Dhaka, but that too is inadequate, they said, stressing the need for raising awareness about palliative care in the country.

The workshop, jointly organised by Kumudini Welfare Trust, Bangladesh Palliative Society and Institute of Palliative Medicine of Kerala, India, was held on the last day of the two-day International Cancer and Palliative Care Service conference.

Kumudini Welfare Trust, Simmons University and Massachusetts General

Hospital of the US organised the conference on the Kumudini Welfare Trust campus in Mirzapur of Tangail.

Palliative care encompasses the holistic care of patients with incurable life-limiting diseases, addressing their physical, mental, social, and spiritual well-being.

In his keynote speech, Prof Nezamuddin Ahmed, founder of palliative care department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said approximately 7,00,000 people — including 40,000 children — are in need of palliative care, but only 0.001 percent of them receive the service.

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PROF NEZAMUDDIN AHMED
Founder of palliative care department at BSMMU

He said doctors sometimes tell relatives to take their patients home when they are at the final stage of a terminal disease. Families take the patients home without proper knowledge on how to care for them, he added.

"If family members have knowledge and

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To get somewhat relief amid the scorching heat in the morning, this girl brings a portable fan with her on the rickshaw ride to school. The photo was taken in front of Holy Cross Girls High School yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS