

CYCLONE MIDHILI

25 fishermen still missing for a year

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

On November 17 last year, as Cyclone Midhili crossed the coast of Bangladesh, 25 fishermen from Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila, who were in three trawlers in the Bay of Bengal, went missing.

Even a year later, there is no trace of them yet.

Their family members still do not know whether they are dead or alive. As such, they are living amid uncertainty and grappling with financial strains in their effort to remain afloat.

According to locals, if the fishermen have managed to survive the cyclone, they are likely languishing in jails in either India or Myanmar.

Among the missing fishermen, eight were on a fishing trawler owned by Hasan Jomaddar of Kaukhali village, eight on a trawler owned by Didar Mridha and nine on a trawler owned by Himu Howladar of Kazikanda village.

Cousins Saiful, Tamim and Jisan were fishing in the rough sea amid the cyclone on board trawler FB Hasan when they went missing.

Since then, all three of their families have been living amid uncertainty

and poverty, since they were the lone breadwinner for their families.

"Even as a year passed by, I am yet to know if my son is dead or alive. We searched different areas, including Patharghata and the Sundarbans, in the past year but found no trace of him," said Saiful's mother Jahanara Begum as she broke down in tears.

Saiful's wife Kabita Begum was also weeping beside her.

"My son had just learnt to speak 'Baba' [father] before my husband went to the sea. I cry every day praying to the Almighty to return my husband. Without him, how am I going to rear my son, who is just one year and seven months old now?" she asked.

Visiting Jisan and Tamim's families, as well as those of the 22 other missing fishermen, this correspondent found them in similar dire straits.

Contacted, Shahadat Hossain, upazila fisheries officer in Rangabali, said, "The list of missing fishermen has been sent to the Department of Fisheries, while efforts to find them have continued. The upazila administration has provided assistance to the families of the missing fishermen."

Mir Mohammad Ali, a teacher and

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Two young readers look at the various books on offer at this stall at the "Bijoy Book Fair", organised by Prothoma Prokashon, at Bangla Academy yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Govt aims to reduce dependency on foreign treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is working to reduce dependency on foreign treatment for patients suffering from specific diseases, said Prof Md Sayedur Rahman, special assistant to the health ministry yesterday.

Speaking at a discussion meeting at Dhaka University, titled "Healthcare Services: Ways to Reduce Dependency on Foreign Treatment", Prof Rahman emphasised that while some patients travel abroad for treatment out of necessity, others do so due to perception.

The event was organised by Alliance for Health Reforms, Bangladesh, a citizens' platform comprising public health experts, health economists, and academics, with support from the Institute of Health Economics at Dhaka University and the UK's Department for International Development.

Prof Rahman highlighted the government's goal to implement equitable healthcare services. "While the current healthcare system is inadequate, we are working to make it more efficient," he said.

Addressing the issue of foreign treatment dependency, he explained that a longstanding gap between service recipients and providers has led to the perception that domestic healthcare is subpar. To counter this, the government is focusing on three diseases, including cancer, to reduce reliance on foreign medical services. The remaining two diseases will be announced soon.

Prof Rahman said that the government will provide incentives for private healthcare providers and establish advanced treatment facilities at BSMU Super Specialized Hospital. He further explained that if the cost of treatment is comparable domestically and abroad, the aim is to encourage patients to seek care within Bangladesh.

Incentives for private healthcare and necessary legal frameworks will also be introduced, he added. "New laws or amendments to existing ones will be considered to address this issue," he said.

Prof Syed Abdul Hamid, of Dhaka University's Institute of Health Economics, presented findings from a study on patients seeking treatment abroad. The study revealed dissatisfaction with domestic healthcare, including issues such as long wait times, inaccurate diagnoses, high costs, and unsatisfactory doctor-patient relationships.

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LAND SCARCITY FOR SOLAR POWER IN BANGLADESH

IT'S A MYTH



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Using just 10 percent of the government's khas lands nationwide could meet the country's entire electricity demand through solar power, as per a study by Coastal Livelihood and Environmental Action Network.

The study said that if the government plans to get 100 percent electricity from solar, they will require a total of 2.07 lakh acres of space, while the country's total available khas land is around 25.73 lakh acres.

The study excluded certain forests, rivers and agricultural lands that are unsuitable from the total 25.73 lakh acres of khas land and calculated that around 4.02 lakh acres are "solarisable".

Speakers at an event yesterday said the idea of land scarcity in regards to solar power expansion in Bangladesh is a myth.

"We are not demanding that 100 percent of renewables will come from solar, as there is potential for at least 30,000 MW from wind alone. But if the government plans to get 100 percent from solar, they would be able to keep 1.95 lakh acres of solarisable land for other purposes, after achieving the target," said SK Reason, research officer at CLEAN, while presenting the findings.

The remarks came on the second day of the Bangladesh Energy Prosperity 2050 Conference at the capital's BIAM auditorium in a session, titled "Land Constraints for Renewable Energy in Bangladesh".

"Outside of the existing solarisable land, there are also water bodies and rooftops where solar systems can be set up. Additionally, some agricultural lands could be used to set

up agrivoltaics systems to increase the power production," SK Reason said.

It is possible to generate around 1,35,929 MW of electricity from solar systems against the government's total power generation target of 84,858 MW in 2050, he concluded.

BRAC University's Assistant Professor Rohini Kamal said the government has a policy to not to use agricultural land for other purposes. However, agrivoltaics may be a solution.

"Dual use of land for both farming and solar energy generation [agrivoltaics] can be a win-win situation," she said, adding that they have initiated pilot projects to calculate how much compensation would be required per acre if such initiatives were taken.

Bahlul Alam, Learning and Advocacy Officer at An Organization for Socio-Economic Development (AOSED), described their own findings on how the land grabbers have been grabbing agricultural lands in the name of solar power installation.

Shahriar Ahmed Chowdhury, Chairman at Center for Renewable Energy Services Ltd, said there are thousands of acres of land available which have not been used as agricultural lands.

"We have built a power system where the government has to subsidise around Tk 40,000 crore a year. With this one year's investment, we can build solar power plants that would generate around 4,000MW, without requiring any fuel," he said.

Lawyer Qazi Zahed Iqbal chaired the session and Senior Coordinator (Programme) at Manusher Jonno Foundation Wasiur Rahman Tonmoy moderated it.

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Bring local counsel to defend Chinmoy

Court asks HC lawyer

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chattogram Metropolitan Sessions Judge Md Saiful Islam yesterday told Rabindra Ghosh, a senior High Court lawyer, to find a lawyer from Chattogram to stand with him to conduct a hearing on behalf of former ISKCON leader Chinmoy Krishna Das Brahmachari.

Rabindra Ghosh subsequently recruited local lawyer Sumit Acharya to stand with him.

On Wednesday, the judge rejected an anticipatory bail petition for Chinmoy after Rabindra Ghosh placed the application, saying the lawyer did not have a Vakalatnama (power of attorney) to represent Chinmoy in court.

Rabindra Ghosh yesterday told reporters, "The court today has accepted that it will hear my case. I have come here to assist Chinmoy's lawyers. They are scared to come due to

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Shomi Kaiser's bail stayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court chamber judge yesterday stayed a High Court order that granted ad-interim bail to actress Shomi Kaiser, also former president of the e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (e-CAB), in an attempted murder case.

Justice Md Rezaul Haque, chamber judge of the Appellate Division of the SC, passed the order following a petition filed by the state seeking a stay on the HC order.

The apex court chamber judge also sent the state's petition to its full bench for hearing of the matter on January 6 next year.

Shomi Kaiser cannot get released from jail following the SC chamber judge's order, her lawyer Hamidul Misbah told The Daily Star.

On December 10, the HC granted three months' ad-interim bail to Shomi Kaiser, who was arrested on November 6, and also issued a rule asking the state to explain why she should not be granted regular bail in the case.

Register BDP as political party: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the Election Commission to register Bangladesh Development Party (BDP) as a political organisation in a month.

The court also declared EC's decision not to register BDP as a political party illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Sashanka Shekhar Sarkar and Justice AKM Rabiul Hassan delivered the verdict following a writ petition filed by BDP's Chairman AKM Anwarul Islam challenging the legality of EC's decision.

On October 26, 2022, the BDP applied to the EC for registration as a political party. Party Chairman Anwarul Islam submitted the application along with documents to the EC.

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ID	Package	Title of Works	Closing & Opening Date and Time
1048616	GMDDS: 2024-2025/11	Renovation of 33kV Incomer Bay of 132/33 kV Tr-1 & Tr-2 at Keraniganj 230/132/33 kV Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka-South, Power Grid.	23 Dec 2024 at 12:30
1048716	GMDDS: 2024-2025/12	Civil Maintenance Works for Creating Separate Sitting Arrangement for Technical Staff at Sreenagar 132/33 kV Grid Substation under GMD, Dhaka-South, Power Grid.	23 Dec 2024 at 12:30

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Six killed in road crashes in 2 dists

STAR REPORT

Six people were killed in two separate road accidents in Gazipur and Jashore on Wednesday night.

Among them, four died in Gazipur and two in Jashore.

In Gazipur, four people were killed in a collision involving three vehicles on the Dhaka-Mymensingh highway near the Chandana intersection around 11:30pm.

The deceased were identified as Saleha Akhter Tuktuki, 26, Imran Hasan Rajan, 38, Mamun, 23, and Dulal, 42, said Kamrul Islam, a sub-inspector of Bason Police Station.

Quoting locals, the OC said, a Mymensingh-bound truck hit a stationary covered-van at high speed, crushing a CNG-run auto-rickshaw in between.

One person died on the spot, while the other three succumbed to their injuries on the way to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital in Gazipur.

Police have seized the truck and covered-van, but the truck's driver and helper remain at large.

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