

# 50 hurt as traders, extortionists clash in Sirajganj town

**From Akhteruzzaman Bablu**  
SIRAJGANJ, Dec 31: At least 50 people were injured as traders of local markets and toll collectors locked in a clash in the district town on Wednesday night.

During the clash, angry people damaged and looted 10 shopping centres. Selling and buying were also suspended for about five hours on the night before Eid-ul-Fitr. Because of this, locals alleged, Eid shoppers could not buy their Eid gifts for their near and dear ones.

Police and witnesses said that Masud, a businessman, accompanied by JCD leader Abu Syed of Fazal Biponi Kendro, a shopping arcade here, at SS road, came to Nur Market to realise last year's pending 'toll' of Tk 14,000 from a seller of the market, but they were beaten up by the shopkeepers.

Equipped with lethal weapons like hockey stick, the salesmen of the local markets, locked in fierce clash which left 30 injured. SP and other high police officials of the district rushed to the spot to bring the situation under control.

However, the extortionists left the place while the agitating sellers brought out a procession chanting slogans demanding immediate arrest of

the miscreants. They also paraded the main roads in the town.

All the markets and shopping centres in the town remained closed. The common people as well as the buyers were panicked as the situation went out of control.

Meanwhile, political leaders under BNP rival groups and ruling party Awami League rushed to the spot, discussed with the business association leaders at Fazal Biponi Kendro. After long discussion, they decided to resume businesses activities in the shopping centres at 12 midnight for the sake of public interest. But the panic-stricken buyers left the market place as soon as the clash ensued.

After the Eid-ul-Fitr 'namaj' (prayer) at the Railway Colony Eidgah, another clash took place between the devotees and agitating persons over collection of money for cleaning the Eidgah field. Some 20 people were injured, two of them seriously. The critically wounded were admitted to local clinics while the rest were released after first aid.

A case was filed with Sirajganj Sadar thana.

## 115 affected by arsenic in two Satkhira upazilas

SATKHIRA, Dec 31: Arsenic beyond the permissible limit was detected in tubewell waters in the two upazilas here threatening the public health of about three lakh people, reports UNB.

Meanwhile, 115 people were affected by arsenic in Tala and Kalaroa upazilas, official sources said. Of them, 65 were reported from Kalaroa while the remaining from Tala. The number of the people affected by arsenicosis is much higher than that of the official figure, unofficial sources claimed. Water of 1,500 tubewells collected from different areas of Kalaroa upazila was recently tested at a laboratory. Of the total sample, water of 1,300 tubewells was found contaminated with high level of arsenic. In different areas of Tala, 62.37 per cent arsenic was detected in waters of 305 tubewells out of the total of 483. Locals said hundreds of people would be affected with arsenic contaminated water if the government would not take giant steps immediately in this regard.

When contacted, the executive engineer of Public Health Engineering Department emphasised on the importance for taking steps by the government to combat the arsenic contamination.

**Comilla is a town of rickshaws. Rickshaws cause unbearable traffic jams in the district town. This picture was taken from Kandirpar, at the heart of the town. Star photo** ---

## Sugar mill at Chunarughat

# Promise remains unfulfilled

**From Rajat Kanti Goswami**

MOULVIBAZAR, Dec 31: Chunarughat, a remote area in Habigonj district is well-known for sugarcane.

Sugarcane farming provides employment to a large number of people in the area. About eight per cent of poor farmers support their families depending on sugarcane farming.

Soil of the area as well as the climate is suitable for cultivation of sugarcane. Sugarcane is being cultivated on more than 18 thousand acres of land in the area.

In spite of having such a vast resource of sugarcane, there is no initiative from any party or from the government to set up a sugar mill here for the greater interest of the local people.

The government had promised to establish a sugar mill in the area just after the liberation of the country, but the promise did not come true.

The local cultivators produce molasses from the juice of sugarcane in large scale.

According to an unofficial report, over 10,000 tons of molasses are being produced in the area which meet the demand of local markets in Sylhet region.

Molasses is being produced in almost every house in Raghunandan, Satchhari, Kalenga Rema and Shaltila.

But the molasses producers get no loan or any other help from any organisation. Almost every home of the villages have been turned into molasses manufacturing units.

According to the poor peasants of the villages sugarcane cultivation is more profitable than any other crop in the area. They get much money by producing molasses in every winter season.

However, if a sugar mill is established in the area the farmers could get higher prices of sugarcane.

A molasses trader has underscored the need for proper marketing system of sugarcane.

The local farmers urged the concerned agricultural authorities a number of times for help, but in vain.

Some people also expressed their opinion for setting up a sugar mill in the area.

## Robbery at jewellery shop in Rajshahi

**From Our Correspondent**

RAJSHAHI, Dec 31: A robbery was committed at a jewellery shop in Aliganj area under Rajpara police station in the city on Friday night.

Police quoting the shop owner said a gang of robbers stormed the shop by breaking collapsible gate. They looted gold ornaments worth about Taka 2 lakh and decamped with the booty.

A case was recorded with police in this connection. None was arrested.

## 12-gram heroin seized in Sirajganj

**From Our Correspondent**

SIRAJGANJ, Dec 31: Heroin weighing 12 grams was seized from Ajuga village under Belkuchi upazila here on Wednesday.

Acting on a tip-off, a team of Narcotics Department raided the area and seized the contraband. A man, identified as Heru Sheikh, 44, was arrested in this connection. A case was lodged with Belkuchi police station.

## Problems grip Dinajpur health complex

DINAIJUR, Dec 31: People of the district are being deprived of minimum healthcare facilities as all the 13 upazila health complexes are beset with numerous problems for a long, reports UNB.

According to the latest report, a total of 50 patients were killed in the health complexes during the last two years in absence of proper treatment and medicines.

Local people said the poor patients had to buy all medicines, including life saving one, from the open market.

Shortage of doctors and nurses is another serious problem in the health sector of the district.

**Chum-chum being soaked in syrup at its final stage of production.**

---Star

# Porabari sweets losing glory

**From A Correspondent**

TANGAIL, Dec 31: Porabari in Tangail is famous for sweets. The name and fame of Chum-Chum of Porabari is well-known to all.

Porabari is a small union which is only four kilometres away from the district headquarters. It is situated beside the small River Dholeswari.

During the British period there was a steamer ghat here which was founded for the purpose of promotion of trade and commerce. A large number of people used to visit Porabari for business purpose from different parts of the country and even from India. Ultimately the sweets of Porabari, specially its 'Chum-Chum' gained popularity in the sub-continent.

Nobody can tell precisely the name of the person who introduced 'chum-chum' here for the first time. But accordingly to elderly people, Dasrat Gour a renowned 'chum-chum' trader first begun his trade of sweets at Porabari.

Seventy-six-year old Kala Gour, another 'bonafide' 'chum-chum' trader said that he had begun this trade in the beginning of the 19th century. At that time all the ingredi-

ents for producing 'chum-chum' such as milk, sugar and other things were cheaper and were easily available. But now-a-days these ingredients have become dearer. So the prices of 'chum-chum' have also increased. Now one kg of 'chum-chum', is being sold at the rate of Taka 80, he said.

Besides, there had been 70 sweetmeat shops in Tangail town in 1960. The area is still known "misti patti".

When contacted with a 'chum-chum' trader named Gourango Chandra Karmakar he said that still many people from different parts of the country come to Porabari to buy 'chum-chum' every day. 'Besides, we supply 'chum-chum' to various parts of the country, he added.

But with the passage of the time 'chum-chum' of Porabari has been losing its charm and glory. Because the sweet producers have been facing various problems now. They need capital and pure sweet producing ingredients at cheaper rate.

In the beginning of sweetmeat trade, about 60 families including 400 people who had been engaged

in this profession. But at present only four families have been engaged in this trade.

A local 'chum-chum' trader of Porabari said "we have no capital. We are unable to maintain our trade," he added. Besides, the menace of extortion has been hampering the trade a lot, he added further. For this reason many local 'chum-chum' traders have been deserting this profession. Besides, many workers are continuing their service in exchange of inadequate salary.

The 'chum-chum' traders of Porabari have urged the government to patronise the traders by giving loans on easy terms and conditions.

They also urged the government to check the activities of illegal extortionists and create a congenial atmosphere of trade and commerce here. In case of failure the famous 'chum-chum' of Porabari would ultimately vanish, traders apprehended this.

## Eid celebrated in dists

The holy Eid-ul-Fitr, the greatest religious festival of the Muslims, was celebrated in all the districts of the country with due solemnity and religious fervour, report agencies.

The port city of Chittagong, thousands of people joined the main Eid congregation at MA Aziz Stadium at 8:45 am. Khatib of Andarkilla Shahi Juma Masjid Maulana Muhammad Anwar Hossain was the Imam of the Eid jamaat there.

Another big congregation was arranged by the Chittagong City Corporation at the Jamiatul Kanah national mosque ground.

Labour and Employment Minister MA Mannan said his Eid prayers at the Jamiatul Dalah mosque and later exchanged greetings with people at the local Circuit House.

Civil Aviation and Tourism Minister Engr Mosharraf Hossain celebrated Eid at village home with people of his constituency at Mirsarai. He exchanged Eid greetings with his electorates after Eid prayers at local Shantirhat Madrasa ground.

Eid assemblies were also arranged at Laldighi Maidan, Agrabad, Jamburi Maidan, Bandar Stadium, Kadam Mobarrak Shah mosque, Hazrat Amanat Shah Dargah mosque and Pahartoli Nesaria Alia Madrasa.

Main Eid congregation in Rajshahi was held at central Eidgah Maidan in the morning. Besides, Eid prayers were arranged at the Upashahor mosque, Hetom Khan mosque, central mosque of the University of Rajshahi, Police Lines ground, Mohish Bathan Eidgah, Shiroil High School field, Tikapara Eidgah and Saheb Bazaar street.

State Minister for Fisheries and Livestock Prof Abdul Quddus said his Eid prayers at Hazrat Shah Makdum Eidgah ground while State Minister for Women and Children Affairs Zinatunnesa Talukder attended women's Eid congregation at Kadirganj Haji Lal Mohammad Eidgah.

In Khulna, main congregation was arranged at Khulna Circuit House Maidan at 9 am. State Minister for Relief Talukder Abdul Khaleque, Jatiya Sangsad Whip SM Mostafa Rashidi Suja, former speaker of Jatiya Sangsad Shaikh Razzak Ali, city mayor Shaikh Taiyabur Rahman and Khulna University vice chancellor Dr S Nazrul Islam were among the devotees who attended the main assembly.

Khulna Alia Madrasa principal Maulana Mohammad Saleh conducted the jamaat and a special munajat seeking continued prosperity and peace of the country.

Second jamaat of the city was held at Town Jame mosque ground at 10 am. Eid jamaats were also arranged in more areas, including Baitun Noor mosque complex, Dak Bungalow mosque, PTI, Alia mosque, Baitul Aman and Railway mosque.

Divisional Information Office in Khulna screened films at Shahid Hadit Park in the evening.

In Chandpur, about 10,000 inhabitants of Olipur, Faridganj and Sadri villages in Haziganj upazila on Wednesday observed Eid-ul-Fitr maintaining consistency with Saudi Arabia.

People of 23 villages observed Eid on Tuesday coinciding the Eid-day in Libya.

In all other districts also Eid-ul-Fitr was celebrated in a similar way.

## Satkhira border points now safe routes for smugglers

SATKHIRA, Dec 31: The border points here have now been turned into safer routes for smugglers and traffickers, reports UNB.

Activities of the traffickers increased in the 138-km borders with India as they can easily send the children and women by giving bribe to the border guards.

A number of unauthorised ways are there in Kalaroa, Debhata, Kaliganj, Shyamnagar and Sadar upazilas, adjacent to India, to cross the country illegally.

Everyday, hundreds of people illegally cross the boarder without passports giving only Tk 50 to the 'ghat' owner, it is alleged.

It is learnt that the traffickers have been taking the women and children from different parts of the country first and then keep them in

the house of pimps and then send them to India.

Some local leaders, wishing anonymity, told that a section of employees and officials of the law enforcing agency take bribe from the 'ghat' owners giving them chance to carry on their illegal trading.

The smugglers and traffickers are carrying out their business under a strong network. If the higher officials come for inspection, the pimps warn the gang earlier.

Kakdanga BOP Commander of Satkhira 12 Battalion said that he has to work with only 20 law enforcing members and the incidents of woman and child trafficking could not be controlled with such inadequate manpower.

**Kazi Wahiduzzaman, chairperson of ADAB Khulna chapter speaking on Monday as the chief guest at a three-day training course on "River Management and Development of Ganges Plain Area" arranged by Padma Network at the auditorium of NGO Forum for DWSS in Khulna. Eighteen persons from different NGOs including Unnayan Dhara of Jhenidah participated there.**

## Wheat farming may face setback in Panchagarh

PANCHAGARH, Dec 31: Wheat cultivation in the district seems poised for a setback this season, as many growers could not procure seed in time, reports UNB.

The farmers alleged that they could not procure wheat seed from BADC as middlemen with the help of a section of its employees bought the seed well before the farming.

As a result, the growers have been compelled to buy seed from the middlemen at a higher price. The middlemen are selling a 20-kg sack of wheat seed at Tk 240-250 against the government rate of Tk 220.

According to Agriculture Extension Department, some 25,500 hectares of land in the district have been brought under wheat cultivation in the current season. Brushing aside the allegation of selling seed to middlemen, a BADC official here said the government has sanctioned 111 tons of wheat seed for the district this year.

Another report from Rangpur adds: A scheme has been taken up to distribute 2,540 mts of high yielding variety wheat seeds in five districts of Rangpur zone during the current season.

BADC sources said the districts under the zone are Kurigram, Rangpur, Nilphamari, Gaibandha and Lalmonirhat.

The sources said of the total, 2,500 mt are 'kanchan' and the rest 40 mts are 'Protiva' varieties.

These seeds are being distributed

to the growers at Tk 11 per kg through 13 sale centers and dealers of the zone.

A total of 1,16,500 hectares of land have been brought under wheat cultivation in five districts of the zone with a production target of 2,58,630 mt this season.

Meanwhile, BADC under its contract grower programme in the zone has fixed a target to produce 1,500 mt of improved varieties of wheat seeds this year.

Official sources said some 300-contract growers have been given the responsibility to make the scheme a success.

## Body of boy recovered in Mymensingh

**From Our Correspondent**

MYMENSINGH, Dec 25: Police recovered a body of a boy from Char Kalibari area under Sadar upazila here on Saturday.

The victim was identified as Abir, 5, son of Manik Mia, a worker in a furniture shop of Poruhit Para in the town.

According to family members, the boy had been missing since December 20.

The reason behind the killing could not be known immediately. The body was sent to Mymensingh

## News snaps

### BDR-Mob clas : 10 injured

CHUADANGA, Dec 31: At least 10 people were injured in a clash between BDR personnel and mob in the town on Monday, reports UNB.

Witnesses said the clash ensued in the evening when BDR men mercilessly beat up a truck driver in front of the police station here after he reportedly escaped with the truck laden with smuggled sugar and salt. Of the injured, truck driver Rabul was admitted to Sadar Hospital in a critical condition. During the clash, the district town turned into a battlefield. BDR men fired 12 shots in the air to bring the situation under control. Later, the angry people became calm after the Deputy Commissioner assured them of taking legal actions against the BDR personnel.

### Gun snatched

FARIDPUR, Dec 31: A licensed two-barrel gun was looted by a gang of miscreants at Baytul Mokaddem Market in the town on Thursday, reports UNB.

Owner of the gun Layek Ali of Barokhada village in Sadar upazila said the miscreants numbering eight to 10 swooped on him when he reached the market. He said he renewed the license on the same day from the office of the Deputy Commissioner.

### 1,770 arrested in 11 months

PANCHAGARH, Dec 31: Police arrested some 1,770 people from different parts of the district in last 11 months till November, reports UNB.

Of the total, 1,212 were wanted criminals, 10 absconding convicts and 548 arrested on various charges. Besides, the law enforcers recovered one pistol, one country-made revolver and one bullet during the period. Another report adds: Police in their month-long drive arrested 150 accused and seized contrabands worth about Tk 1.24 lakh from Sadar upazila till November 15. Of them, 109 were wanted criminals while 35 held on various charges and six under Section 54. The contrabands include 88 foreign-made radios, 132 watches, 103 bottles of Indian phensidyl, 75 small tape recorders, 28 kgs of sugar, one Indian cycle and 250 grams of hemp.

### BCL worker stabbed to death

PABNA, Dec 31: A local Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) worker was stabbed to death by extortionists in the town on the Eid day for protesting toll extortion, reports UNB.

Police said Minto Hossain Babu, 23, son of Sarwar Hossain in Dilalpur Beltala Road in the town, was stabbed indiscriminately by the extortionists in the evening following exchange of hot words. He died on the spot. Local people and police said Minto tried to resist his neighbours, Rubel Pavel and Ripon, sons of Mukul Hossain, from collecting tolls from shops and individuals. On the Eid day, the three took Minto to local Selim Nazir High School ground and stabbed him to death. They went on hiding after the killing. Police arrested their mother, Beauty, 35. A case was filed with the local police.

### Firearms recover : 2 arrested

COMILLA, Dec 31: Police in their separate drives recovered five firearms and arrested two people from Sadar upazila on December 21, reports UNB.

The arrested were identified as Delwar Hossain of Daribat village and Shafiqul Islam of Minnat Nagar village of Sadar upazila. Police said they recovered three abandoned pipe guns from Chhaya Bitan Housing area at Dhanpur in the town at about 10pm. Later, they searched an auto-rickshaw in the same area and recovered one foreign-name gun and one revolver. They caught auto-rickshaw passengers Delwar and Shafiqul.

### Road link disrupted

BARGUNA, Dec 31: Road communications of the district headquarters with other parts of the country remained stopped from Monday causing immense sufferings to hundreds of people, reports UNB.

District Bus Owners Association stopped plying buses along 10 routes from the district in an alleged bid to deprive some 250-transport workers from Eid bonuses. Earlier, the bus owners assured the transport workers of paying Eid bonuses ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr.

### Three killed in road mishap

GAZIPUR, Dec 30: Three people were killed and seven others injured in a head-on collision between two trucks here at Salna on Dhaka-Mymensingh highway early Monday, reports UNB.

Police said Raju Mia, 35, Jamal Hossain, 30, and Hossen Mia, 22, of Jhenaigati upazila in Sherpur died on the spot in the accident. The victims, all vegetable traders, were coming to Dhaka by one of the trucks.

### School building burnt to ashes

JAMALPUR, Dec 31: A school building was reduced to ashes in a devastating fire in Diggait under Sadar upazila on Wednesday night, Fire Brigade and school sources said, reports BSS.

They said some unknown miscreants set the 60-year-old KD High School at Diggait afire. The semi-pucca building was gutted before local firefighters and hundreds of people rushed to the scene to douse the inferno. The motive for the arson and the estimated loss could not be immediately known. A probe body headed by former upazila chairman Prof Abdul Hamid was also constituted locally to inquire into the blaze. Kazi Mohammad Ashraf Ali, Headmaster of the school, claimed that the fire inflicted a loss of Taka seven lakh.

### Fishing boats looted

SHARIATPUR, Dec 31: A number of pirates looted nets, fish and cash worth about Taka one lakh from three fishing boats and left 11 fishermen injured near the Padma, reports BSS.

Armed pirates numbering 15 looted the fishing boats on Friday last. The pirates beat and stabbed the fishermen who tried to resist them. Of the injured, Kasam, 26, was admitted to local Health Complex where doctors said his condition was critical. Others were released after first aid.

### Robbery

THAKURGAON, Dec 31: A gang of bandits stormed three government offices in the municipality area in the town and looted Tk 25,000 in cash on Wednesday midnight, reports UNB.

Police said some 20-25 robbers attacked the district council office at about 2 am keeping its night guard hostage and looted Tk 15,000 from the steel almira. Later, they stormed into the offices of Islamic Foundation and Local Government Engineering Department and decamped with Tk 10,000. Cases were filed with police.

### Maize farming on 1,900 hectares

KISHOREGANJ, Dec 31: Some 1,900 hectares land in five districts of Mymensingh region have been brought under maize cultivation in the current Rabi season with an output target of 6,175 mts, reports UNB.

The districts are Mymensingh, Jamalpur, Sherpur, Kishoreganj and Netrakona. Of the total, some 700 hectares would be cultivated in Mymensingh, 200 hectares each in Jamalpur and Sherpur and 400 hectares each in Netrakona and Kishoreganj districts, official sources said. To achieve the target necessary steps have been taken to supply loan, seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and other agri-inputs to the growers at fair prices.

**Maj Gen (Retd) M S A Bhuiyan, a noted freedom fighter and former Principal Staff Officer (PSO) to the Prime Minister during the regime of Khaleda Zia, addressing a meeting at Daudkandi Eidgah ground on Friday which was arranged by General Bhuiyan Supporters' Forum.**