

Addiction alarmingly up in southern districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Drug addiction is on an alarming rise in the southern region of the country, as phensidyl cough syrup -- a common means of alcoholic drug addiction to most addicts -- has become pretty available along with other narcotics.

The phensidyl syrup has nowadays gained much popularity among the people, particularly the young generation, here as elsewhere in the country due to its low price and availability in comparison to other alcoholic drugs.

The very drug, popularly known as *dail* to its fans, is easily available at different spots in the cities, districts, thana headquarters and even in villages.

It used to be produced and marketed in Bangladesh by a multinational pharmaceutical company -- May and Baker -- until it was banned. Though production of the syrup is denied in the country, it is still being produced and marketed by the multinational in neighbouring India.

As a result, phensidyl is now being smuggled into Bangladesh through different border areas.

It is learnt that in connivance with the local influential people, the smugglers, particularly those in the northern districts, illegally bring the drug through the borders and later carry it to different parts of the country.

In the southern districts of Barisal, Patuakhali, Bhola, Jhalakati, Pirojpur and Barguna under Barisal division, phensidyl traders have a wide network connecting different places of these districts. They use passenger buses, trucks and even microbuses on land routes, while launches, trawlers and some-

times boats are used for carrying out the job.

Experts say that regular intake of phensidyl gradually destroys the white blood cells (WBC) in the human body and thwarts production of new ones. Thus it often causes failure of the body's internal immune system. Regular use of the syrup may also cause chronic blood diseases like aplastic anaemia and sometimes do harm to the lungs.

Physicians say that codein, a powerful component of the syrup, has the potential to cause obstructive jaundice and some special kinds of allergic problems. It may also lead to liver pain, hallucination and pressure on the gallbladder.

Regular phensidyl intake may destroy the harmonic regulatory balance of the body, decreasing normal interest in sexual activities and eventually making an individual totally impotent. Ephidrine, another component of the syrup, usually leads to high blood pressure and sometimes causes sudden death due to massive cardiomyopath and heart failures.

Experts also say that if a phensidyl addict with higher dose-taking habit stops taking it for a long time and then suddenly starts it anew with old dose, he may face severe health hazards as reaction to the overdose.

Unofficial sources said phensidyl syrup of Indian origin is smuggled into the country in 125ml bottles. Besides, below-standard products with fake expiry dates also pour across the borders almost unabated.

According to a survey report, lower middle and lower class people usually take the syrup out of family and social frustration while others take it as a means of relief from anxiety, tension and depression.



PHOTO: STAR

Farmers sit beside heaps of sweet pumpkins and wait for prospective buyers at Maharaja Road area in Mymensingh town recently. The farmers in the district have harvested bumper crop this season and look forward to a better future.

Kawkhali phone exchange goes digital

BSS, Pirojpur

Kawkhali upazila under Pirojpur district has come under digital telephone network.

Nationwide dialing (NWD) system was introduced in Kawkhali telephone exchange last month.

The 100-line capacity exchange, now functioning experimentally, is waiting for formal inauguration.

For direct dialing the area code number is 04624.

Khulna JP splits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Khulna Jatiya Party (JP) formally split on Sunday evening when the Matin-Naziur faction formed a 101-member city convening committee with Advocate Latifur Rahman Labu as convenor and Shamsher Ali Minto as member-secretary.

They also formed a district committee with SM Babar Ali as president and Shaikh Akram Hossain as general secretary.

Earlier, Babar and Akram were asked by the presidium on April 26 to form a new committee of Matin-Naziur faction, a press release said Sunday.

"We were authorised to form the committees and accordingly the new committees were formed," Babar Ali said.

The formal split in JP took place at an extended meeting at a local hotel with Babar Ali in the chair.

Eighty-nine district, city and thana level leaders attended the meeting and expressed their confidence in the leadership of Dr Abdul Matin and Naziur Rahman Manzur, the acting chairman and the secretary general respectively of the central committee, the press release said.

Speakers at the meeting expressed solidarity with the out-government movement of the opposition four-party alliance. The speakers also demanded withdrawal of false cases against leaders and activists of the alliance.

Expatriate chopped to death in Gazipur

UNB, Gazipur

An expatriate was hacked to death by assailants at Majhukha village in Sadar upazila in Gazipur last week.

Police said a gang of hoodlums swooped on Hemayetuddin, 36, at dead of night and chopped him to death over previous enmity.

He returned home from Saudi Arabia one and a half months back.

The elder brother was also injured in the attack while he was trying to save his brother.

A case was filed with local police.

2 Barisal BCL men assaulted

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Two activists of ruling party-backed BCL were injured when their rivals in the organisation attacked them in Barisal recently.

According to police, Government BM College student Asaduzzaman Asad and Sujon came under the attack when they were returning their homes in Oxford Mission Road area in the town.

They were assaulted allegedly by supporters of local BCL leader Sheikh Manna.

Asad was admitted to Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital, but later was sent to Dhaka.

IU BCU celebrates founding anniversary

IU CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Bangladesh Chhatra Union (BCU) of Islamic University (IU) unit took elaborate programme to celebrate the organisation's 49th founding anniversary on the campus last week.

At around 10:30 in the morning BCU brought out a colourful procession which started from the Arts Faculty building and paraded various streets on the campus.

Following the procession they held a discussion and cultural functions at Amtala on the campus.

CPB leader Advocate Firoz Ahmed, Bangladesh Mohila Parisad leader Montaj Ara Rumi, former student leader Alamgir Hossain, Kushtia CPB leader Shahidul Alam Dipu, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Woman commits suicide in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT Mymensingh

A housewife committed suicide by taking acid at village Roymoni in Trishal upazila in Mymensingh recently.

The victim was identified as Rehana Khatun, 30, wife of Saiful Islam.

She was rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH) where she died.

The cause behind the suicide could not be known immediately.

NEWS SNAPS

Two killed in road accident

BSS, Bogra

Two men were killed and 10 others injured when a Gaibandha-bound bus fell into a roadside ditch at Matidali near Bogra town on Sunday.

The dead were identified as driver Mansur Ali and his assistant Abdul Majid. The injured were admitted to Mohammad Ali Hospital. A case was registered.

Nurses assaulted

UNB, Pabna

Nurses in general hospital in Pabna accused of 'negligence of duty' leading to the death of an old man were assaulted on Sunday.

Yead Ali, 78, a resident of Kalachandpara on the outskirts of the town, was brought to hospital with heart ailment at 1:30 pm. He died at about 3:25 pm. Relatives accompanying the patient alleged utter negligence of the nurses in taking care of Yead Ali and held them responsible for his death. And they beat the on-duty nurses. One of them, Nurunnahar was admitted to the hospital with injuries. Police rushed in and brought the situation under control.

Trawler capsizes: 5 missing

UNB, Barguna

Five people were missing after a trawler capsized in the Paira river in Barguna on Sunday.

The trawler with over 100 passengers on board sank in the river at about 11am due to strong current. Other trawlers and boats rescued most passengers while others, except five, swam ashore. Two of the five passengers who remained missing were Badsha, 40, and Salam Fakir, 35. Sources said most of the passengers were traders and they were carrying goods and cash money. Three passengers rescued from the river were sent to general hospital in critical condition.

50 hurt as police open fire on mob

UNB, Rangpur

At least 50 people were injured as police opened fire and lobbed teargas shells to disperse a mob who laid a siege to a GRP outpost in Rangpur on Monday.

Witnesses said hundreds of people besieged the outpost at Rangpur railway station where two police personnel allegedly violated two girls. Constable Abul Kashem reported the matter to the local people. Hearing the news, police rushed to the spot and fired at least 14 rounds of bullet and lobbed 12 teargas shells apart from resorting to baton charges to disperse the mob. They also arrested ASI Ashraf and Constable Swapan of GRP in connection with incident. The two girls were taken to safe custody. A case was filed with police.

Abducted girl rescued

UNB, Satkhira

A teenage girl was rescued from a remote frontier village of Magura district on Sunday after 8 days of her abduction from Satkhira town.

The 16-year-old was abducted on April 14 by a man, who had a love affair with her. The man, identified as Siddique, in the name of marrying the girl, took her to his village home at Sonabania in Kalaroa upazila and then shifted her to Khajura village in Magura to traffic her to India. After a case was filed in this connection, police rescued the girl, who reads in class nine, from the house of Azizar but could not arrest anybody.