

APP appears for accused, seizure list of arms case missing from Satkhira court

District Judge orders probe, PP serves notice on APP

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A seizure list is missing from the case docket (file) of an under-trial arms case, an incident that has created a sensation in the court area and in the district administration.

An Assistant Public Prosecutor (APP) has been served with a showcause notice for appearing in favour of the accused in the case by concealing his identity, influencing prosecution witnesses to testify in favour of the accused and thus destroying the merit of the case.

The showcause notice has been served on APP Abdul Jalil (2)

by Public Prosecutor (PP) Syed Iftekhar Ali, court sources said. He has been asked to reply within seven days. It is also alleged that the APP was involved in removal of the seizure list.

The seizure list is missing from the Second Additional District Judge's court, Satkhira, and files of the Public Prosecutor and the Assistant Superintendent of Police (Kaliganj circle).

The showcause notice followed an order by District and Sessions Judge AKM Zahir Ahmed on Joint District Judge Masudur Rahman to probe the matter.

Tipped-off, the Satkhira Sadar

thana officer-in-charge (OC) had arrested alleged pirate Abdul Gafoor, son of Monsur Hawlader of Chondimukho Napitkhali village in Shyamnagar upazila, from Machchkhola village in the Sadar upazila in 2001.

Acting on his confession, police recovered three pipe guns, one gun and 92 cartridges from the Sunderbans.

Sub-Inspector Monsur Ahmed had prepared the seizure list of the recovered arms and ammunition.

A case was filed with Shyamnagar thana and the then officer-in-charge (OC) of the thana, Fazlur Rahman, was made the investigation officer (IO).

The IO submitted a charge sheet after investigation.

The case was sent to the Second Additional District Judge's court, Satkhira for trial.

The court recorded statements of five prosecution witnesses, who gave statements in favour of the accused.

It was alleged that APP Abdul Jalil appeared before the court for the accused though he was supposed to plead for the state.

He also allegedly influenced nine other prosecution witnesses to give statements in favour of the accused, as the five had done. Thus, the merit of the case was destroyed, it was alleged, in the showcause notice.

On Wednesday at one stage of the trial, it came to light that the seizure list was missing from the case docket.

Meanwhile, the Joint District Judge has recorded statements of four APPs, three lawyers appointed by the accused, two bench clerks and a peon.

A Union Parishad Chairman of Shyamnagar upazila is also allegedly involved in removal of the seizure list.

In such a situation, it will be difficult to prove charges against the accused if the missing seizure list is not recovered, said Advocate Azharul Islam, a senior lawyer.

20,000 vessels ply without registration, fitness certificate

7,453 killed in road-waterway accidents in three years, CAB survey says

AKTER FARUK, Barisal

At least 7,453 people were killed and over 19,561 injured in road-waterway accidents in the country in the last three years.

This was revealed in a survey by the Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), based on media reports from January 2001 to December 2003.

The numbers will be much more as the media reports only on major accidents, the CAB survey said.

The survey report made available to this correspondent did not mention the number of people missing in accidents.

The survey claimed that more than 20,000 motorised vessels are plying without registration or fitness certificate and about 40 per cent of those are operated by Sukanis (assistants of masters).

The situation is worse in the road transport sector as a good percentage of vehicles are without fitness certificates and run by untrained drivers with false licences.

Accidents are increasing due to increase in corruption in giving licence to transport operators and

their registration, the survey said. Their owners and operators escape punishment as they allegedly manage with law enforcers after accident, it said.

Inquiry reports on 496 major

launch accidents in the last 26 years were never published, nor suggestions to help check such disasters implemented, it said.

According to the CAB survey, at least 842 people were killed in nine major launch accidents and 2360 in 486 road accidents last year making a daily average of 8.77 and 8.75 respectively. A total of 3194 people were also injured in these accidents.

In 2002, at least 512 people were killed in launch disasters and 1990 in road accidents. The daily average death was 6.85. More 7797 people were injured.

In 2001, road accidents killed 1749 and injured 8570. The survey did not mention the casualty from launch accidents in 2001.

The most horrific launch disaster took place in July last year in which 600 people were killed when MV Nasrin-1 sank in the Meghna. Another 400 were killed when MV Salauddin sank in the same river in May 2002 at Shatol. MV Subha sank in Baleswar river near Mathbaria in Pirojpur in May 2002, claiming over 200 lives.

50 hurt as villagers clash in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

At least 50 people were injured in a clash between two rival groups at Chitri village in Nabinagar upazila Thursday evening.

Seven of the injured were sent to Dhaka and three to Comilla in critical conditions, said sources at Nabinagar Upazila Health Complex where 23 of the injured were admitted. The rest were given first aid there.

According to police, hospital sources and witnesses, the clash took place between people of Matbarbari and Sarker Bari over supremacy in the village.

PCJSS-UPDF rivalry

6 killed, 20 abducted in CHT in 40 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Rangamati

Clashes between supporters of Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) peace agreement backed by PCJSS and opponents led by UPDF left 6 people killed and 20 abducted since the beginning of the year, according to police and army sources.

Five of the abducted people were released on ransom payment and the rest are yet to be traced.

The clashes centred establishment of supremacy in respective areas of PCJSS (Parbattya Chattagram Jono Sanghaty Samity) and UPDF (United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF)).

Both are organisations of tribesmen. PCJSS signed the peace deal with the then Awami League government in 1997, ending decades of insurgency in the hills. UPDF, formed in December 1998, is opposing the deal and demanding

full autonomy in the CHT.

Their rivalry is spreading in the entire hilly region with inaccessible forest areas bordering India and armed clashes between them are frequent now.

The deterioration in law and order drastically reduced flow of tourists in Rangamati, Bandarban and Khagrachhari hill districts.

The February 2 abduction for ransom of a manager of a Bandarban hotel frequented by foreigners raised an alarm in the government, prompting steps to beef up security for foreigners.

Acting on an order from higher authorities, the Rangamati Deputy Commissioner on Wednesday held a meeting with senior officials from all the 10 upazilas and issued directives to take steps "whatever necessary" to ensure security of foreigners.

On January 3, an armed indige-

nous gang abduct a businessman--Bancharam Borua, 50 --- from Kotchukhali in Rangamati. He was released on payment of Tk 50,000 ransom.

Five days later, a pro-PCJSS gang attack a UPDF stronghold at Shapmara village, gunned down three people, abducted 10 others and torched four houses. Four of them were released later and the fate of the rest is still unknown.

On January 25, a shootout between supporters of UPDF and PCJSS left one person dead and three bullet-hit.

On Monday last, PCJSS activists abducted seven supporters of UPDF from a wedding party in Shabekhyong in Rangamati.

On January 3, police recovered the body of an indigenous young man, allegedly killed after abduction, from Shilchhori in Borkol upazila.

Parabat stoppage at B'baria from Monday

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

The inter-city Parabat Express running between Dhaka and Sylhet will have stoppage at Brahmanbaria station from Monday.

The Dhaka-bound Parabat will stop here at 7:53 PM and the Sylhet-bound Parabat will stop at 9:13 am, according to railway sources here yesterday.

Twenty seats in Shuvon coaches (economy class) and four in air-conditioned (AC) coaches will be kept for passengers here.

Shuvon tickets for Dhaka and Sylhet will cost Tk 80 and Tk 120 and AC tickets Tk 180 and Tk 265 respectively.

Station Master Md Fazlur Rahman said he has received an official order regarding the new stoppage and tickets will be available from today.

Three women held for possessing Phensidyl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Three women including a mother and her daughter were arrested and recovered 83 bottles of Phensidyl from them in separate drives in the town in two days.

Bogra police conducted the drives on Wednesday and Thursday.

The arrested were identified as Juthika Datta, 56, wife of late Niranjan Datta, her daughter Mukti, 22 of North Chelopara and Hosneara Begum, wife of Toyeb Ali of Sultanganjpara in Bogra town.

Acting on tip-off Sadar thana police launched a drive in North Chelopara area and arrested Juthika Datta and her daughter Mukti and seized 75 bottles of Phensidyl and 300 blank bottles from their house on the day.

In another drive at Toyeb Ali's house at Sultanganj Para, the Sadar thana police arrested his wife Hosneara Begum on Thursday.

Later, police seized seven bottles of Phensidyl from her possession. Locals alleged that during the operation police caught a drug addict youth with his motorcycle, but police released him.

Separate cases were filed with Sadar thana.

Magura Jubo Dal biennial council held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Magura

The joint biennial council of Magura Sadar thana and pourasava units of Jatiyatadabi Jubo Dal was held at Asaduzzaman Auditorium here on Wednesday.

A 71-member Sadar thana Jubo Dal committee with Alamgir Kabir, Abu Sayeed-Al-Mamun and Mohammad Laltu as President, General Secretary and Organising Secretary and a 51-member Magura pourasabha Jubo Dal headed by Riadul Hakim, Aminul Islam and Tanjel Hossain as President, General Secretary and Organising Secretary were formed in the conference.

Riadul Islam presided over the conference while it was addressed, among others, by Joint Secretary of Jubo Dal central committee Moniruzzaman Monir, member of central Jubo Dal, Meer Rabiul Islam, district Jubo Dal convener Khan Hasan Imam Suja and Joint Convener Alamgir Hossain.

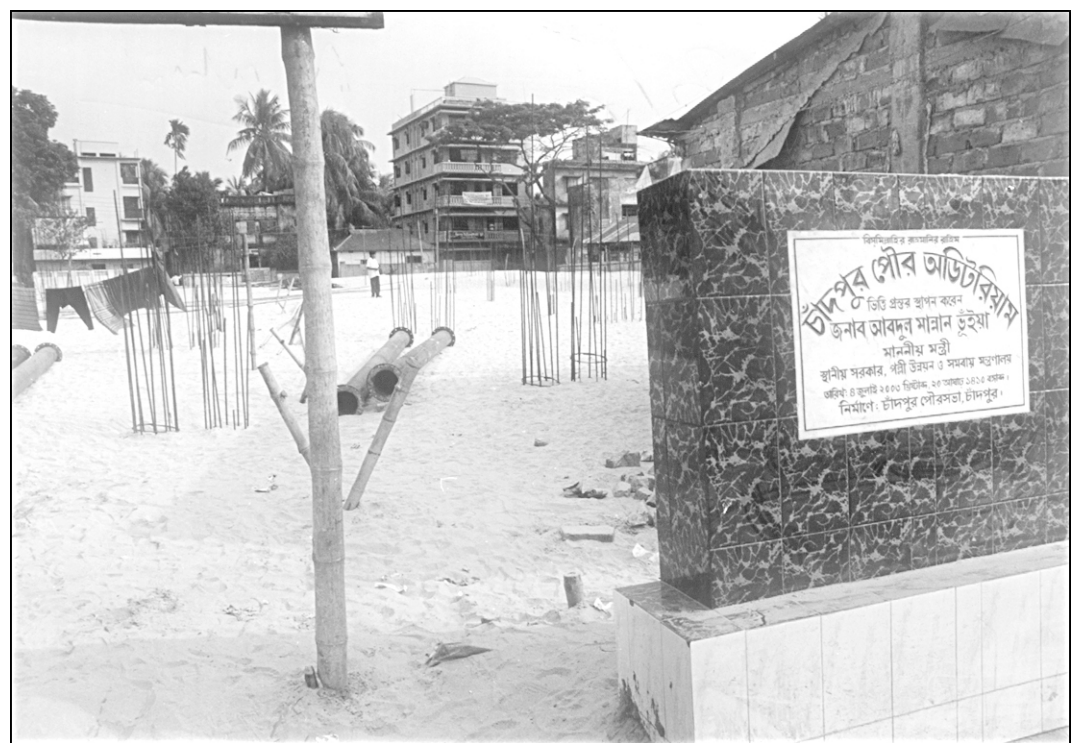


PHOTO: AKM MOHSIN

Sand was dumped on the field last year for construction of the proposed Chandpur Pura Auditorium. But no work has been done after that. It is a project of Chandpur Municipality.

Fertiliser prices high in Nilphamari

OUR CORRESPONDENT,

Nilphamari

Fertilisers are being sold in markets in the district at prices Tk 50 to 100 more than the government-fixed prices, allegedly due to evil practices by a section of dishonest traders.

State Minister for Education ANM Ehsanul Haq Milan, who is minister-in-charge of the district, at a meeting Tuesday night asked the district administration to take steps to reduce fertiliser prices. But this yielded little result.

The Deputy Director of Agriculture Extension Department of Sakhawat Hossen admitted the high price of fertilisers and said this is due to less supply and more demand.

On Thursday, he held a meeting of the district fertiliser monitoring committee at the conference room of the Deputy Commissioner, where fertiliser dealers told him that prices have increased due to their increase in the international market. It is not possible for them to sell fertilisers at government-fixed prices, they told the meeting, according to sources.

But this correspondent gathered

that prices of imported fertiliser have increased by around 20 dollars per ton. Taking this into account, prices should increase by only Tk1.20 per kg.

At markets, a 50-kg bag of Urea is now sold at between Tk 320 and 325 against the government-fixed price of Tk 280 and Tk 290.

Bangladesh-made TSP (triple super phosphate) is sold at Tk 850-880 against Tk 750-780; TSP imported from America at Tk 700-725 against Tk 650-685 and DAP at around Tk 925 against Tk 800-825.

It is alleged that a handful of big traders have purchased quotas from all the 74 dealers in the district and are controlling the prices.

It is also alleged that the dishonest traders are deceiving the farmers by re-packing below standard imported TSP and marketing those as Bangladesh TSP, which is better. Sources said over 92,000 tonnes of fertiliser will be needed to cultivate IRR1-Boro on targeted 63,200 hectares of lands in the district this year.

But the government allotment is less than 15,000 tonnes, sources said.

BCL leader arrested in Bagerhat while collecting toll

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) leader was arrested by Kachua police in Bagerhat district while collecting illegal toll from a businessman named Nirmol Kumar Nandy from Badhal bazaar on Wednesday.

The arrested was identified as Sohel Hasan Kakon, 25.

Police said Kakon was the former Vice President (VP) of Projpur Shurawardy Government College Students' Union.

Police and eye-witnesses said Kakon was caught red-handed by angry crowd while he and his associates went to Badhal bazaar to receive Tk 5 lakh as toll from Nirmol Nandy.

However, others escaped when chased by people. Police recovered a motor cycle and a mobile phone set from the toll collectors who identified them as extremists.

SNAPS

Suandarbans Day S-Wdists today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The Sundarbans Day will be observed in the south-western zone of the country today to create mass awareness for maintaining ecological balance in the world's mangrove forest.

Elaborate programmes have been taken to observe the day also in Satkhira, Narail, Pirojpur and Bagerhat districts. Humayun Kabir Balu, convener of the observance committee said at a press conference here yesterday.

The programme includes campaign, discussion meeting, procession and cultural functions based on the diversity and usefulness of the Sundarbans.

Rupantar, a Khulna-based NGO, is playing a leading role in motivating the people to observe The Sundarbans Day.

The Sundarbans has a vital role to play in increasing government's revenue earning. But we are not getting any help from the government in our movement to save the forest, he said.

Manikganj Pourashabha by-election stayed

A CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Manikganj Pourashabha by-election scheduled to be held on February 25 was stayed by the Appellate division of the Supreme Court on Wednesday.

The stay order was declared following a writ petition by former chairman of the pourashabha, Mosharaf Hossain Babul.

Additional District Magistrate of Manikganj and Returning Officer of the by-election announced the notice of the stay order Thursday.

Md Mosharaf Hossain Babul was elected Manikganj Pourashabha chairman on January 26 in 2002 and was removed from the post by a no-confidence motion of the commissioners on September 3 in 2003.

Husband gets life for torturing wife

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

A man was sentenced to life term imprisonment on charge of torturing his wife for dowry on Thursday.

The convict is Arif Sarder, son of Zia Sardar of Bairabnagar village in Shyamnagar upazila.

The convict tortured his wife Fazila Khatun for dowry on April 15 in 2002. She was shifted to Shyamnagar Upazila Health Complex in a critical condition. On April 20, she filed a case with the Women and Children Repression Preventive Court.

Six PWs crossexamined in Sergeant Arif murder case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The trial of Khulna Metropolitan Police Traffic Sergeant Arif Hossain murder case began on Monday.

Six Prosecution Witnesses (PWs) were cross-examined in the court of the Speedy Trial Tribunal Judge Abdus Samad. They are Traffic Inspector Akbar Sharif, Si Faruque, Sergeant Kamrul Islam, constables Abdur Rahman, Paritosh Kumar and Abul Hasan.

The next hearing will be held on February 24.

Three of the accused Siraj, Rob and Milon are still absconding while three others in jail. They are Abul Shaikh, Haripada and Shujon.

Sergeant Arif was killed in bomb attack on the night of March 1 last year near Khulna Circuit House ground.