

SNAPS

Qazi Faruque's release demanded

RU CORRESPONDENT

Rajshahi chapter of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh (ADAB) on Friday demanded immediate release of the head of the association, Qazi Faruque Ahmed, also the president of Proshika.

The demand came at Rajshahi ADAB's executive committee meeting, chaired by its executive director Abdus Shobhan.

The meeting vehemently protested Qazi Faruque's arrest.

The International Council of Social Welfare (ICSW), a forum of development organisations of 74 countries also expressed its concern over arrest of the ADAB president who was the global president of ICSW from 2000 to 2002.

Stolen car recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A snatched car was recovered from Biraladaha Bazaar of Puthia upazila in Rajshahi district on Thursday.

Two persons identifying themselves as army personnel hired the car from Syedpur in Nilphamari district on Wednesday and set for Natore. After reaching the destination the two clients moved aimlessly with the car. In Sankorbhag area of the town they pushed car driver Abdus Samad out of his vehicle and fled away with it.

A frantic search for the car began after filing of a case with Natore police by Samad. Finally, police recovered the car.

Sub-standard smuggled cement floods market

BSS, Chapainawabganj

Sub-standard and adulterated cement from across the border has flooded markets in the district, depriving users.

A section of dishonest traders repack smuggled sub-standard cement and sell those but most of the customers are not aware of it, some dealers said.

Wrist watch parts seized

BSS, Lalmonirhat

Lalmonirhat Sadar police seized a huge quantity of spare parts of wristwatch from a BRTC bus in Lalmonirhat town and arrested three persons.

Police said the spare parts were being smuggled to India.

Acting on a tip off, a police team raided a Patgram bound BRTC bus from Rangpur in front of police line and recovered the parts worth about Tk 2.50 lakh on Wednesday.

The arrested persons are Shahinoor, Kaosar Ali and Shafiqul of Hatibandha area of the district.

4 children sustain eye injury

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Four children sustained major eye injuries while a betel-leaf shopkeeper was melting lime for the purpose of selling on Wednesday morning.

Because of poverty, the children are being deprived of treatment which may turn them blind permanently.

Saiful Islam, father of three affected children at South Balapara village in Dimla upazila was melting lime in a pot. During the melting process it exploded mildly affecting the children's eyes. The victims are Munnul, 7, Sumona, 6, and Sujja, 6. Another child, Ripon, 6, son of Mozaffar Hossen of Khari Bari village who stood beside the shop was also affected.

All the four children were rushed to Dimla Upazila Health Complex for treatment where on-duty doctors advised their immediate shifting to Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) for better treatment. But due to abject poverty their guardians failed to ensure their proper treatment. As a result, the children have been facing a threat of blindness.

Toll: AL leader sues party men

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

An Awami League leader has filed a case against another party leader and 13 others for demanding toll and looting his shrimp farm.

Sheikh Sahiduddin, a member of Satkhira district AL committee, filed the case against Sarulia Union Parishad Chairman and local AL leader Matiar Rahman, party activist Sirajul Islam and 12 people.

In the case filed with Tala thana on June 2, Shahiduddin alleged that they had demanded Tk five lakh toll from him. As he did not pay, they looted his shrimp farm at Biswer Abad village in Tala upazila on May 28.

Joint forces arrested Matiar Rahman, Sirajul Islam and another accused - Atiar Rahman - on Friday, police said.

Good catches of hilsha in Bay

Govt drive against jatka netting yields result, fishermen say

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Delicious Hilsha is being netted in plenty in the Meghna estuary and in the southern Bay.

This may continue for about a week, fishermen and traders at wholesale markets here said.

Good catches are available some days before and after full moon, they said.

The size of fish now netted is "reasonable" and *jatka* (fries) are less in number than before because of the government's anti-*jatka* netting campaign and measures, they said.

Ignoring rough weather, fishermen are going to the sea and returning with smiling faces, also to the delight of Hilsha mahajans (big whole sale traders) who are earning good profit from dadon (loan) given to fishermen.

The good supply has its impact in the market as well. Prices have

fallen by at least 25 per cent, whole-salers said.

But price of ice needed for preservation has doubled.

They said, since Sunday last, most of trawlers going to Ramnabad, Andharmanik, Dosha and Agunmukha in the Meghna estuary and in the southern Bay are returning with 7,000 to 8,000 pieces of Hilsha each. These are common fishing zones.

On Tuesday last, fishing trawler FB Momin returned with 16000 pieces of Hilsha and FB Hatem Jan with 15,000 from Kalapara shore in the Bay. About one third were fries and the rest were of medium and big size, a wholesaler said. The ratio of *jatka* is less than last year's.

Some of the fishermen and traders this correspondent talked to said the government campaign has yielded positive results and the drive against *jatka* netting should

be intensified.

"Now we realise *jatka* netting should be stopped totally for our benefit", said fisherman Hatem Ali. "We also should remain vigilant. Violators should be punished"

On Friday, one maund of Hilsha of one kilogram size and above was sold at Tk 5800 to 6000 in the whole sale market against Tk 6200 to 6500 about a week before.

Those less than one kilohram (500 to 975 grams) were sold at Tk 3600 to 4000 per mound against Tk 4500 to 4800. Small size fishes (less than 500 grams) and fries were sold at Tk 2000 to 2100, Tk 400 less than the previous price.

On other hand, price of ice increased to Tk 100 from Tk 50 per can within this period.

Whole sale trader Abu Hanif at Kalapara said Hilsha prices would have fallen more had ice price remained as before.



Heaps of Hilsha at a wholesale market in Barisal (Left) and fishes being loaded in trucks for supply to other districts. The photos were taken on Friday.



PHOTO: STAR

PRIMARY PROBE BY RMCH DOCTORS REVEALS Eye infection caused by Aspergillus fungus

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Primary investigation by eye specialists at Rangpur Medical College (RMCH) revealed that a fungus called *Aspergillus* caused the serious eye infection among many people in northern districts that led to blindness of some patients or removal of eye.

The investigation followed a letter from the Home Ministry to the Director of Rangpur Medical College Hospital four days back after The Daily Star published a story on the disease.

An eye specialist at RMCH told this correspondent yesterday that the infection was found more among farmers from Gibandha and Rangpur districts.

About 70 per cent of the patients at RMCH came from Gaibandha and 20 per cent from Rangpur. The

rest 10 per cent came from Nilphamari, Kurigram and Lalmonirhat.

Doctors have suggested use of spectacles during harvest or thrashing paddy.

They Director of RHCH Shahariar Kabir however said, "The RMCH does not have adequate equipment to detect it accurately."

When asked if he will invite specialists from Dhaka or abroad to defect it accurately, the director said, "I don't think it is necessary right now as the number of patients is not alarming."

The fungal infection created an alarm among farmers and many people came to the RMCH and other hospitals in the town for treatment. One eye of at least seven patients were removed and three others became blind due to the

infection in the last two weeks.

An eye is infected with the fungus when it comes in contact with ripe Boro paddy. Severe pain and swelling starts immediately. If proper treatment is not done within three-four days, the cornea is damaged and the eye has to be removed because the infection spreads to the other eye.

Tarsorrhaphy, a kind of operation is the only treatment, RMCH eye specialists said earlier.

The fungus grows on ripe Boro paddy during summer due to excessive humidity in the air. Doctors did not rule out the possibility of growth of the fungus from insecticides.

"We faced such cases once five years back, but the number this year is huge and unprecedented", Dr. Afzal Khan had said.



PHOTO: STAR

A common scene in rural areas during harvest...Paddy is being dried on the Sylhet-Jakiganj highway hindering smooth movement of vehicles. But who cares?

Arsenic: 23 pc tube-wells in Kulaura contaminated

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Waters of 23 percent tube-wells in 17 unions of Kulaura upazila are arsenic contaminated.

The Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE) tested about 23,620 tube-wells in the upazila after collecting water by random sampling system.

According to the findings, arsenic was detected in waters of 4,052 tube-wells. The break-up is 945 out of 1,223 tube-wells in Rautgaon union, 844 out of 1,098 tube-wells in Kadipur union, 493 out of 782 tube-wells in Bhukshimul union, 18 out of 1,309 tube-wells in Fultola union, 18 out of 1,339 tube-wells in Sagornal union, 25 out of 1,294 tube-wells in Goalbari union, 191 out of 1,701 tube-wells in Brahminbazar union, 93 out of 1,647 tube-wells in Tilagaon union, 237 out of 1,807 tube-wells in Kulaura union, 263 out of 2,192 tubewells in Jaifarnagar union, 114 out of 1,175 tube-wells in Hazipur union, 131 out of 1,372 tube-wells in Shariapur union, 260 out of 1,599 tube-wells in Joychandi union, 65 out of 1,170 tube-wells in Bhatara union, 62 out of 1,062 tube-wells in Baranchal union, 111 out of 1,337 tube-wells in Prithimpasa union and 182 out of 1,513 tube-wells in Karmadha union. The tube-wells were marked red and people were asked not to use waters of these tube-wells.

Drugs claim 51 lives at Bogra in 2 yrs

10,000 addicts in town include women and children: 200 drug selling points in district

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

Drugs claimed at least 51 lives in Bogra town in last two years.

There are over 10,000 drug addicts including women and children in Bogra municipal area now. They take heroin, phensidyl, ganja and other drugs, according to police and some local NGOs. Katnarpara and adjoining areas in the town are known most as drug infested areas.

Drugs are sold at about 200 points in twelve upazilas and in Bogra town.

Over 40 people died from drug abuse in Katnarpara area of the town in last one and a half years, according to a survey by a local NGO -- Program for Eco-social Development (PESD).

The victims include Forkan, Goni, Moju, Thanda, Badsha, Shah Alam, Dulu, Manna, Ajo, Samad, Raja, Sumon, Sharue, Jalu and Ujjal.

Another 10 people died in areas near Katnarpara, police said. PESD Executive Director Mahfuz Ara Mita told this correspondent that there are over 300 women and children drug addicts in Katnarpara area. Many of them are suffering from various diseases due to drug abuse. Death will lay its icy hand on them, she said.

She quoted former ward commissioner Kaniz Raza from Katnarpara as saying that there are several drug addict housewives in the area, but declined to name

them. One housewife who is taking heroin for over 12 years and has no control on herself now and is slowing creeping into death, Kaniz told Mahfuz Ara.

The government should take an initiative to stop the spreading drug use, they said.

PESD has been providing treat-

'Allocate more funds for neglected Satkhira' Citizen's body demands at seminar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Speakers at a seminar in the town on Friday urged the government to sanction more projects and allocate more funds in next fiscal budget for "development of neglected" Satkhira district.

The seminar on 'Upcoming National Budget and Expectation of Satkhira people' was organised by Satkhira Unnayan Committee (Satkhira development committee), an organisation formed last year, comprising civil society members. It was held at Satkhira Bar Council building.

Principal Asit Kumar Majumdar, convener of the committee presided. Journalist Kalyan Banerjee read out a paper prepared by the committee.

The speakers included Anisur Rahman, Sheikh Abdul Wadood, Advocate Tapan Chakraborty, Azahar Hossain, Prof Mainul Hasan, Prof Abdul Hamid, journalist Subhash Chowdhury, Mizanur Rahman, Yunous Ali, Ashrat Ali Siddique and Principal Raznul Islam.

Academicians, economists, lawyers, NGO representatives and

local government leaders attended the seminar.

The committee in its paper said, the country earns over Tk 2000 crore in foreign currency every year by exporting shrimps and frozen foods, of which 60 to 70 per cent are produced in Satkhira district.

But successive governments did not take any step for development of the district though it is playing a vital role in the country's development.

Expectation of people of the district was not reflected in any of the annual development plans in the past, it stated.

The speakers demanded adequate budgetary allocations for expansion of power supply and telephone facility, development of solar energy, construction of rural roads and supply of safe drinking water.

They also demanded re-excavation of silted rivers like the Kabadak, Betna and Marichchap, setting up of an agriculture college, conservation of bio-diversity of the Sundarbans and turning Bhomra customs station into a full fledged land port.

Ferry pontoon not salvaged in 13 days

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) could not salvage a ferry pontoon even after a fortnight of its capsizing in the Padma at Paturia ghat (terminal) here.

A ferry pontoon, two launches and six motor boats capsized in the river when a twister lashed the area on May 22 midnight. The launches and the motor boats were rescued but the ferry pontoon is yet to be salvaged.

BIWTC officials said at present there are two pontoons at Paturia ghat. Ferry movement on Paturia-Daulatdia and Paturia-Kazirhat is

being disrupted creating traffic jam at the ghat. Initially there were four pontoons.

A team of high officials of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) and BIWTA visited the ghat area on Friday. BIWTC general manager (GM-marine) Azam Hasan Khan, BIWTA joint director (marine) Emdadul Haque, BIWTC deputy general managers (DGMs) Atahar Ali, Saheb Uddin, BIWTA DGMs Amir Hossain and Joynal Abedin were included in the team.

While visiting the ghat, BIWTC GM Azam Hasan Khan told this correspondent he expects salvage of the pontoon within a week.



PHOTO: STAR

Drugs being taken in the open at Katnarpar in Bogra town