

SNAPS

2 BDR men escape bomb attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) personnel escaped a bomb attack narrowly at Dighaldanga village in Alamdanga upazila, Chuadanga on Thursday. The BDR men are Rafiqul Islam (No-58) and Abdus Sobhan (No-243). They were returning to a joint forces' camp at Durlavpur after their duty at Alamdanga bazaar, according to police. Criminals waylaid them and hurled the powerful bomb at them. Luckily it missed the target. After the blast joint forces launched a massive raid and arrested Masiur Rahman alias Pintu, 35, and Hafizur Rahman, 25, of the village.

Trader rescued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A small businessman was rescued from the clutch of abductors on Friday. The rescued businessman is Jamal Uddin 25, son of Azim Uddin of Ballaghata in Gangni upazila, Meherpur. He was abducted on Monday for Tk. 50,000 as ransom. Meherpur police raided an abandoned house at Kallaghat and rescued him. They also arrested two abductors, Kamrul Islam and Alam.

# Duty evasion at Burimari land port detected

## Forged treasury bills submitted: Customs officials involved

RAFIQUE SARKER back from Lalmonirhat

**Rangpur:** A number of clearing and forwarding (C&F) Agents, export and importers, allegedly in collaboration with some customs officials at Burimari land port in Lalmonirhat have dodged Tk 26 lakh import duty by submitting forged treasury chalan (bill).

Sources at the land port said the Customs Commissioner in Rajshahi ordered immediate action against the corrupt C&F agents, customs officials, exporters and importers. But the Assistant Customs Commissioner in Burimari station is mysteriously silent about it, they claimed.

The forgery was detected recently by Customs Superintendents Sodrul Alam and Abu Hena and Customs Inspectors Najirullah and Monoranjon Gosh while examining the register and bank scrolls,

the sources said.

They found that there was no entry of the chalans (bills) and bank scrolls with the accounts office at Patgram and the bank concerned.

They lodged cases with Burimari customs station as per Tax Law, 1969, VAT Law 1991, and Customs Licensing Rules 1986.

The cases have been lodged against four C&F agents. These are M/S Fahim Enterprise, M/S Hasan Traders, M/S Ispita International and M/S Shilpi Traders.

They placed forged treasury chalan to the custom stations along with the bill of entry.

Of the amount, M/S Shilpi Traders dodged taxes amounting Tk 2,22,444, M/S Ispita International Tk 1,69,114, M/S Fahim Enterprise Tk. 11,70,242, and M/S Hasan Traders Tk.

9,60,160.

The export and importers involved in the forgery are Alwarisha Traders of Sayedpur in Nilphamari; Dhata Trading International of Gulshan in Dhaka; Chadni Bazar of Bogra; Moon Enterprise of Bogra; Hoque Trading of Sayedpur in Nilphamari; Raj Spin of Noagoan; Mamun Brothers of Bogra; PHK Traders of Shahajada Miah Lane in Dhaka; Noor Enterprise of Bogra; Karim & Brothers of Ahsanullah Road in Dhaka; Khan Traders of Syedpur in Nilphamari and Raj Pathor of Bangla Motor in Dhaka.

These exporters and importers, with the help of some customs officials and C&F agents, unload consignments imported from India through forged treasury chalan.

In a note sent to the Assistant Customs Commissioner of Burimari

station, Custom Superintendent Sadrul Alam stated that the exporters and importers, with the help of the C&F agents unloaded consignment of Indian fruits by submitting fake treasury chalan.

As fruits are first rotting goods, the customs issued permission hurriedly without checking the treasury chalan with banks eight miles from the land port.

However, the customs officials who detected the forgery were later withdrawn and posted at other customs stations in the country. So steps for action against the corrupt customs officials, C&F agents, export and importers have slowed down, said the sources seeking anonymity.

# They build country but starve in disaster

## A journey through flooded Sirajganj

MORSHED ALI KHAN

The villages all along the road to Sirajganj from Dhaka were under water. There were vast sheets of water all around, at places overflowing the highway.

At Kaliakoir, heavy vehicles drove through about two feet water but smaller ones were stranded. Some youths came with polythene bags. They wrapped silencer pipes of vehicles with polythene bags as a protection from water and then pushed those across 100 metres and realised Tk 100 from each.

Further down the road from the Jamuna Bridge, the river looked enraged.

Half of Sirajganj town was under knee deep water. Only rickshaws plied.

At the Deputy Commissioner's office, about 400 flood victims from low-lying areas of the town occupied half of the office block. Officials were in trouble with the uninvited guests, trying to pursue them to move to a school. But the victims refused.

The reason was known later. Sources in the administration claimed that the chairman of the flood effected area, a local BNP leader, was at loggerheads with a party central leader and minister. So he asked them to keep occupying the DC's office.

As we drove, more horrifying scenes appeared. About half of the 30-kilometer Sirajganj-Kazipur road was washed away. Thousands of people, having lost everything, took shelter on the remaining part.

A day before the Daily Star team arrived in Sirajganj, the Prime Minister and her entourage had visited some affected areas there. The Additional Deputy Commissioner of Sirajganj, having failed to provide an information on time to an official of the PM's entourage, was made OSD on grounds of "public interest". The incident shook the local administration.

Officials worked overtime for relief operations and to make sure good quality ration reached the flood victims. The DC office maintained hourly information on flood situation and displayed it on boards.

The flood victims on the Kazipur Road said each one of them got five kilograms of rice.

As this correspondent's vehicle crossed a small bridge at Dakatiapara, some workers were seen dumping sandbags in the water. Strong current flowing under the bridge dangerously threatened its foundations on both ends.

While returning towards Sirajganj about an hour later on the same road, hundreds of villagers were seen struggling to save the bridge from being washed away.

Half of the road was already washed away, barely six feet still remaining. A split second decision had to be made whether to cross the bridge or remain stranded on the Kazipur Road.

Within seconds after the vehicle crossed the broken road and climbed the bridge, gushing water washed away the road.

Shahajadpur upazila, about 30 kilometers from Sirajganj town, was the worst hit area in the district. All the thirteen unions in the upazila were under water with dwellings were completely submerged in some remote areas.

The Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) said that the ferocity of Jamuna river is increasing every year.

"We are allocating relief, mainly rice, through the chairmen and members," said the UNO.

Chairmen of several unions were at the UNO office to collect their share of relief. Ziaul Haque, Chairman of Narina Union Parishad, said the biggest problem in his union was unemployed weavers. He said up to 2,500 weavers were facing starvation as there was no work.

As soon as the mechanised boat carrying the Daily Star team entered Koizuri union, about 25 kilometers from Shahajadpur, men and women from their rooftop shelters started swimming towards it, thinking that relief had arrived. The entire village was under water. They said they had not received any aid whatsoever.

Raimon Begum, about 70, was sitting on top of her tin shed roof when this correspondent went to the village in a



PHOTO: STAR

Desperate to earn a living... Women weavers displaced by the deluge are working on their tools on the Nagarbari road near Shahajadpur.

trawler. She hesitated for a moment and then descended into the water and started swimming toward the trawler with a bowl that floated on the water.

She came near and pleaded, "Bajan (my son) please give me something, I have not eaten for two days." Her eyes hollow, she looked exhausted. Like Raimon Begum, dozens of others looked on as the trawler moved in the village.

"Most people in this village are skilled weavers who earned daily wages but they have no work for about a month", said chairman of the union, Golam Rasul Peter.

Though Golam Rasul claimed to have distributed 18 tons of rice among flood victims in his union, none in Koizuri asked by this correspondent said he received any relief.

"I told the elected members of my union not to indulge in any irregularity in relief distribution. This incentive

from me would encourage them to be fair," said Golam Rasul.

On the Nagarbari Road, several thousand people took shelter under makeshift thatched structures. Maidan Ali, a weaver from Ullapara, looked for

loan in a bazaar on the main road. He told this correspondent that he was on the roadside for two weeks and spent his last penny the day before.

"Now I am looking for a loan but they do not even want to give me 100 grams of chilies on credit," Maidan said.

# Procession against toll

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Over 5,000 people from Kadakati in Assasuni upazila brought out a procession and held a rally in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office here on Friday protesting toll collection in their area by criminals backed by local body leaders.

Speakers alleged that extortionists like Ganesh Thakur, Touhid, Rabiul Gazi of Kadakati and Dargahpur unions and their accomplices allegedly led by

Dargapur UP Chairman Sheikh Miraj Ali demanded illegal tolls ranging from Tk 5,000 to 20,000 from each well-to-do family in the area.

The meeting was addressed, among others, by former Awami League MP Dr Mokhlesur Rahman, Kadakati UP Chairman Kanak Chandra Sarkar, former Sreeula UP Chairmen Noor Muhammad, advocate Zahurul Haq and Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal leader Tuhinuddin.



PHOTO: STAR

The Bhairab river flowing through Jessore town is now a breeding ground for mosquitoes and germs and a source of environment pollution.

# Potential turns problem

## Dead Bhairab river polluting environment: Civic body formed to press re-excavation

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

The Bhairab river, once a potential, is now a problem, creating environmental hazards for the people of Jessore. The river flowing through Jessore town and Jhenidah district was navigable in 1960s; and steamers, launches and boats plied it carrying merchandise. It was a good source of fishes.

It started dying after construction of the Farrakka Barrage on the Ganges by India. It gradually silted up as the water flow decreased.

Over the years, raising of bamboo barriers by so-called fish farmers at many points and encroachment by landgrabbers hastened its death. Such illegal encroachments are seen all along the river from its entry to Bangladesh at Basundia in Jessore Sadar upazila.

The encroachers have built houses, shops, factories and even multistoried buildings on both banks of the river in the town. Now, all the garbage, filth and even swears generating in the town are dumped in the river, which create health and environment hazard.

It is a good breeding ground of mosquitoes and germs.

The river is dead from Babla Tala to Barandi Para in the Sadar upazila.

Despite these obstacles, the river is still alive in Noapara industrial town in the downstream.

The government did not take any step to free the river from encroachers despite demands were made on numerous occasions by people of all classes since 2001.

In the face of people's demand for re-excavation of the river, people, the Development Board (WDB) had prepared a 'project concept paper' (PCP) involving Tk. 81.54 crore, to be implemented in three years, to restore the river.

The project involved Tk 40 crore for dredging of 25 kilometres from Basundia to Rajarhat, Tk 10 crore 87 lakh for re-excavation of 78.5 kilometres from Taherpur by labourers, Tk 3 crore for construction of five water control infrastructures, Tk 10 crore for construction of 20 bridges and Tk 2 crore for digging 50 kilometres of connecting canals.

The project documents said once re-excavated, the river would be able to provide irrigation water during dry season and drain out excess water in rainy season. Besides, the at least 50,000 fishermen families could be rehabilitated.

But the project papers are gathering dust in ministries concerned, WDB sources said.

A committee comprising representatives of all classes of people has been formed to press re-excavation of the river. The committee members include former principal Sharif Hossain, Dr. Rabiul Haq, advocate Enamul Haq, Awami League leader Bimol Roy Chowdhury and Workers Party leader Iqbal Kabir Zahid. There is none from ruling BNP in the committee.

The committee held its first meeting on Friday and discussed programmes to realise the demand.

Talking to this correspondent, some members of the committee said once restored, the river could also add to the beauty of the town by creating parks and planting trees on both sides. This would also create entertainment facilities.

They said they will prepare a programme for beautification of the river banks.

# Cop sued by female UP member

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Binodini Pal, a member of Ghatbhog Union Parishad in Kupsha upazila, has filed a case with a court against accusing Sub-inspector Feroze Ahmd of Rupsha police station for abusing and assaulting her at Shiali police camp on July 23.

She filed the case with the Special Judge's court on August 4. She also named 16 people of Ghatbhog union as witnesses to the incident.

In the case, the UP member stated

that neither the DIG nor the Police Superintendent took any action against the "most corrupt, immoral and delinquent Sub Inspector despite a written complaint against him".

She alleged that the cop abused and beat her when she along with her husband went to the police outpost to know why 10 innocent people of her area were held without any charge.

The cop had also demanded bribe from her to free the 10 people, she alleged.

Later addressing a press conference on Saturday at Khulna press Club in presence of two male and one female advocates of Khulna District Bar association, she has also appealed the Prime Minister for redress and action against the corrupt cop.

The female advocates present at the press conference include Taslima Nasrin Chanda, president of Khulna city unit of woman's wing of BNP.



PHOTO: STAR

World Vision Distributing Relief In Netrakona (left) And Girl Guides In Aid Flood Victims In Brahmanbaria (right)