

Culprits under political clout evade arrest

Spurious fertilisers flood markets in N districts : Tk 19 cr BADC testing lab ready but inoperative

RAFIQUE SARKER, Rangpur

The men behind production and marketing of adulterated medicines, fertiliser and cement in Rangpur can not be arrested because of pressure from ruling party men, sources in the Detective Branch of police admitted to this correspondent.

Even the two persons arrested along with spurious medicines and fertiliser during the August 3 police raid on a fake laboratory at Hazirhat in Uttom union in Rangpur Sader upzila is yet to be taken on remand for interrogation due to political pressure, they claimed while talking to this correspondent.

The DB police can not proceed further in its drive against unauthorised fertilizer manufacturing laboratories, they said.

DB police in its August 3 raid had arrested night guard Alam and fake chemist Masud of Moulana Bashiruddin Cold Store and recovered huge quantities of adulterated medicines, cement and fertilizer and equipment used in their production.

But police could not arrest the two persons - Moulana Bashir of Dhap in Rangpur and Imam Hossen of

Narayanjanj -- who are allegedly behind the racket.

DB Sub-inspector Ashok Shing, who led the operation had told The Daily Star on August 3 that Alam and Masud would be taken on remand for interrogation.

But a DB source in Rangpur seeking anonymity said yesterday that police are yet to seek their remand because of ruling party pressure.

"A leader of Jamat-e-Islam interfered in the matter and compelled police to refrain from arresting the accused in the case", the source alleged.

"Most of the culprits disappeared after the drive".

Meanwhile a meeting of the District Fertilizer and Seed Monitoring Committee was held at the Deputy Commissioner's office on August 14.

The meeting with the Deputy Commissioner in the chair discussed possible ways to stop production and marketing of adulterated fertilizer in the district but it did not give any specific instruction to the committee, Mostafa Azad Chowdhury Babu, President of Rangpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a member of the committee said.

"We are assigned to monitor de-

mand, supply and stock of Urea and seeds in the market. We have no other function," Azad said.

Meanwhile sale of fake fertilizer continues unabated in markets in the district and thousands of farmers are being deceived.

Many farmers this correspondent talked to said they are worried because adulterated potash, zinc, phosphate and SSP fertilisers have flooded markets.

Abdur Rahman of Paglapir in Gangachara upzila in Rangpur said, "It is difficult to detect adulterated fertiliser till their use in fields because their colour and formation is same as real fertiliser".

The police inaction after the August 3 drive has surprised many fertiliser dealers in Rangpur. Some of them now term the drive a "eyewash because the main culprits are yet to be nabbed".

"It is unbelievable that the main culprits behind production and marketing of adulterated fertiliser can not be nabbed", said fertiliser dealer Kashem Patwari of Nabdiganj in Rangpur Sader upzila.

In the last five years, police un-

earthed three fake factories in the district which produced adulterated fertiliser.

Even, Mithapukur Upzila Nirbahi Officer Borhan Uddin himself unearthed a huge quantity of adulterated fertilisers and equipment at Jaigirhat in 1999.

Police had lodged a case with Mithapukur thana. But court released them after the fertiliser testing laboratory of BARI at Joydebpur in Dhaka gave a test report in favour of the accused.

Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) has set up a fertiliser testing laboratory in Rangpur at a cost of Tk 19 crore to facilitate BADC and DAE offices in 16 districts in Rajshahi division to control quality of fertilisers.

Though complete, the laboratory has not started functioning for reasons unknown.

The dealers said adulteration of fertiliser can be controlled to a great extent if the laboratory starts functioning.

President of Rangpur Fertilizer Dealers Association Abul Kashem at the August 14 fertiliser committee meeting at the DC's office demanded immediate opening of the laboratory.

Pollution kills fishes in Bahirab river

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

The water of the Bhairab river at Noapara-Fultala point has become polluted to the extent that fishes are dying.

Local people told this correspondent that about twenty industries including a tannery on the bank of the Bhairab at Noapara discharge chemical toxic wastes into the river.

Besides, waters of the beels and canals of the surrounding areas polluted by rotting of jute plants fall into the river and get mixed with the toxic materials in the rainy season every year. As a result, some particular varieties of fishes die due to pollution.

Downpours on August 11, 12 and 13 reduced the pollution level to some extent, giving a reprieve to the fishes.

Talking to this correspondent recently, some fisherman in Abhoynagar also confirmed that fishes are dying in the river from pollution.

When contacted over telephone, a teacher of Geography and Environmental Science Department at Khulna University said fishes like shrimp, "bele" and "cheva", which stay at the bottom of the river, do not get required oxygen due to pollution and are also infected with toxic wastes. The toxic wastes prevent the fishes from getting oxygen at the riverbed, he said.

8-hour strike in Rajshahi tomorrow

VAT withdrawal, gas supply demanded

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

An eight-hour strike will be observed here tomorrow pressing for fulfillment of demands for withdrawal of VAT and a government announcement for supply of natural gas.

Rajshahi Traders' Allied Council (RTAC), an organisation of local traders, called the strike at a public meeting held in Laxmipur here on Thursday.

RTAC leaders demanded fulfillment of their demands within one month, otherwise, they threatened an indefinite strike after expiry of the ultimatum.

Chaired by RTAC president Mosharraf Hossain Akhunji, the meeting was also addressed, among others, by its vice presidents Harur Rashaid, Farjul Islam and general secretary Farid Mamud Hasan.

Jamaat is not an Islamic party: Charmonai Pir

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The chief of the Islami Shashantantra Andolon (ISA), Charmonai Pir Alhaj Maulana Syed Fazul Karim, yesterday said Jamat-e-Islami, a partner in the ruling Four-Party Alliance, is not at all an Islamic party.

They use Islam to go to power only but remain silent when Muslims across the world are being repressed and tortured by big powers, he said.

He also called upon the government to declare Ahmadiyas non-Muslim. Otherwise, his party will launch a tougher agitation to press the demand.

He was addressing a public meeting at Shahid Abdur Razzak Park, organised by Satkhira ISA.

With Syed Nesar Uddin Ahmed in the chair, it was addressed by Prof Syed Belayed Hossain, Moulana Syed Abdul Kader, Rahiul Islam, Osman Sani and TM Motiz.

Programmes held but aborigines live in panic

7 families left Bhimpur since murder of Alfred Soren

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A deep sense of insecurity is prevailing among the aborigine families at Bhimpur on August 18, where different NGOs observed Alfred's death anniversary through different programmes. Despite these programmes, the aborigine families were seeking panic-stricken.

It was reported earlier that nearly 200 musclemen of local landlords killed Alfred on August 18, 2000 with a view to forcing 22 aborigine families from the village. But the killing sparked countrywide protests, forcing the then government to declare that the disputed lands belonged to aborigines.

Four years have passed but the Alfred murder case is still under trial and his family is yet to get the right to live on their land, forcibly captured by local

influential persons.

Alfred's brothers have already left the village and other family members are planning to leave their ancestral village forever.

National Aborigine Council General Secretary Rabindranath Soren told newsmen that the government should immediately return 250 bighas of aborigines' lands captured by local landlords over the years.

Meanwhile, Broti, a Dhaka-based NGO, has prepared a research paper on the state of aborigine families since Soren's death.

"A copy of the research paper was also given to the government for necessary action", said Dr Mohiuddin Ahmed, chief of Broti's research programme.

Fatal flood fallout

5 to 8 feet sand layers on 3000 acre in Jamalpur

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

The floodwater has receded from Islampur upazila in Jamalpur district but left a deep scar, making several thousand lands uncultivable. The lands have turned into sheets of sand.

Farmers in Kulkandi, Belgacha and Chinaduli unions are bewildered. Waters from the mighty Jamuna has left layers of five to eight feet sand. The flood made them virtually pauper, taking away crops and damaging houses. Now they can neither cultivate the lands for crops nor remove the sand.

The future of about 90 per cent of farmers in 25 villages are now covered with darkness. They have no food but can not cultivate Aman crop this year.

Islampur Agriculture Extern Department (AED) sources said the floods damaged about Tk 50 core Aus paddy, sugarcane and jute on about 30,000 acres and also seedbeds. Most of the lands are now covered with sand.

About 20,000 acres of land, 6,000 acres of paddy, 3,000 acres of jute and 1,000 acres of seedbeds were ruined by sand. AED sources said it will not be possible to remove the sand in next 2-3 years.

"I cultivated sugarcane on all ten acres of land and hoped to earn at least Tk three lakh, but all are gone", Amjad Hossain of Chainaduli village in Chainaduli union told this correspon-

dent during a visit.

"The fields are now covered by sand. I do not know how I shall survive", he lamented.

Another farmer Kalu Mia of the same village said, "I have only two acres of sugarcane land. Every year I get about Tk 50,000 by selling sugarcane. Flood has made me virtually a beggar".

"I have no money to remove the sand and make the lands cultivable again."

Islam Uddin Mondol of Kulkandi village said Islampur is famous for sugarcane, but sand has covered its



Sugarcane fields in Kalkandi village are now sheets of sand.

PHOTO: STAR

HIRALAL MURDER 6 chargesheeted

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Charges were framed against six persons as accused of Workers Party (WP) leader Dr Hiralal murder case.

Terming the murder as non-political and result of a land dispute, Uzirpur Thana Sub-inspector Muhammad Ali submitted the chargesheet on Thursday.

The charge-sheeted accused are : Goutam Howlader, Bijoy Howlader, Shudhanshu Mistri, Nehar Bagchi, Shekhor Howlader and Kalipada alias Dilip Chandra Biswas, according to police sources.

All the accused are victim's relatives and neighbours.

Earlier, police arrested Kalipada alias Dilip Chandra Biswas, Nabin Howlader and Alim Howlader as suspects.

But Nabin and Alim were not included in the charge sheet. Five other charge-

sheeted accused are absconding. Twenty-five persons including six eye-witnesses were named as witnesses of the case.

An investigation revealed, accused Goutam and Bijoy had a land dispute with Dr Hiralal's brother Nikhil Howlader.

As Hiralal stood beside Nikhil strongly against his enemy, he fell in wrath of Goutam and Bijoy. So, they planned to kill him. Accordingly, assassins ambushed him at a place near Nittananda Bazaar at night on March 19, 2004 and gunned down him there. At that time Hiralal was on way to his home from Nittananda Bazaar.

Victim's younger brother Shankar Howlader lodged a murder with Uzirpur police station.

Initially, Sarbahara men were blamed for the murder which delayed and diverted the investigation.

Anti-drug drive in B'baria soon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

An anti-drug campaign aiming at creating awareness among people will begin soon at all upazilas in the district as soon as floodwater recedes.

This was decided at an anti-drug meeting organised by Barhmanbaria Dhuppan-O-Madak Birodhi Sangathan, a local non-smoking and anti-drug committee, in Halderpara area in Barhmanbaria Pourasabha yesterday.

Sangathan President advocate Md Tanbir Ahmed was in the chair while it was addressed, among others, by Abul Fayeze, freedom fighter Md Jamal Uddin, Prince Md Muzibur Rahman, advocate Liton Dey, Md Joynal Abedin, Abu Huraira, Md Anisur Rahman, Dr Sadrul Huda and journalist Reaz Uddin Zami.

Barhmanbaria police arrested three persons involved in drug peddling and recovered 1,200 bottles of Indian Phensidyl and hemp in last two days.

Meanwhile, District Narcotics De-

partment launched an anti-drug drive at Dakshin Paintala arrested Jakir Hossain, son of Fazul Hoque and recovered 12 grams of heroin from his possession on August 18.

They also arrested Tawfiq Mia, son of Taru Mia, Saruf Begum wife of Abdul Hannan and Hafeza Khatun, wife of Samsu Mia from the rail colony area and Rafia Begum, wife Mozif Mia from Kandipara in Barhmanbaria Pourasabha on charge of smuggling Phensidyl.

Barhmanbaria police arrested three persons and recovered 1,200 bottles of Indian Phensidyl syrup and eight kilogram of hemp from Ashuganj toll plaza and Kasba here on August 19.

Police in recent drives recovered 1,200 bottles of Phensidyl and from a Dhaka-bound car at Ashuganj toll plaza.

Police arrested its driver Shaheedul Islam and passenger Abdul Halim and eight kilograms of hemp and arrested 11 people.



PHOTO: STAR

Race for relief...mere sound of a mechanised boat makes them run like this, thinking relief is coming. The photo was taken from Char Rathinathpur village along the Jamuna in Sariakandi upazila in Bogra on Tuesday.

SNAPS

Young talents honoured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

The Students Talent Assistance Forum (STAF), Satkhira, a civic body, yesterday accorded a reception to students who got GPA-5 in the last SSC and Dakhil examinations and Junior Scholarship in 2003.

The STAF distributed Tk 50,000 stipends among 30 GPA-5 scorers and 50 Junior Scholarship recipients at a colourful ceremony, held on Khan Chamber premises in the town.

Former state minister Dr Aftabuzzaman attended the reception as chief guest. He praised the STAF for introducing the stipends.

Presided over by STAF Chairman Principal Matir Rahman, the function was addressed by, among others, principal Sheikh Abdul Wadood, Principal AKM Mokarran Ali, Principal Abdul Latif, Principal Emdadul Haq.

Acid thrown on baby, mother

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A 10-month-old baby, his mother and grandmother on Wednesday night became victims of acid attack by identified criminals at Singria village in Jaladhaka upazila. The victims are Milon son of Lalini Kanto Roy, his mother Himbala, 25, and grandmother Nonibala, 70.

The victims were sleeping in their house when acid was thrown on them through the window.

Lalini Kanto Roy had a feud with one of his influential neighbours over land for a long time.

The victims were rushed to Jaladhaka Upazila Health Complex. Being informed, BRAC workers shifted the baby, Milon and his mother Himbala to the Acid Survivors' Foundation in Dhaka in a critical condition.

A case was registered with Jaladhaka Thana.

Wicked father, criminal son

A CORRESPONDENT, Jessore

Husband Shah Alam Biswas allegedly killed his wife Ikasi Khatun, 25, by pushing a poisonous injection Wednesday night, police said yesterday.

He pushed the injection on her right leg when she was asleep at their house at Marun village in Chowgachha upazila. As her body started getting cool, the husband raised a hue and cry that his wife was bitten by a snake.

He called a 'oza' (snake charmer) Sobdul. The two pushed two more injections in the name treatment and she died.

Ikasi was the third wife of Shah Alam. She was five months' pregnant.

Quoting villagers, police also said Shah Alam's two former wives left his house alleging that their father-in-law had attempted to violate them.

It is alleged that about six months back, Shah Alam's father tried to violate Ikabi Khatun also.

Land dispute: One killed, 20 hurt in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

At least one person was killed and 20 others were injured in a clash at Sreerampur village in Nabinagar upazila on Thursday.

Hiralal Das and Giasuddin of the village had a rivalry over land for a long time, according to eye-witnesses, hospital and police sources.

Both of their supporters equipped with lethal weapons locked in a clash. Critically injured Reno Bala Das, Bimol Das, Bapani Das and Kawsar Mia were sent to Nabinagar hospital.

As the condition of Kawsar Mia worsened, he was sent to Dhaka for better treatment where he died afterwards.

A case was filed, police sources said.

Five Jubo League leaders get life for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Five Jubo League leaders were sentenced to life term rigorous imprisonment (RI) in a verdict announced by Additional Sessions Judge of Nilphamari Md Jahidul Islam on Tuesday in the sensational Jewel murder case.

The convicts are Dimla upazila Jubo League president Sailen Chandra Roy, vice president Abu Hossain, organising secretary Mozaharul Islam Liton, publicity secretary Shah Alam and sports secretary Guru Das.

The judge also fined each of them Tk 20,000, in default, to suffer two years' RI more.

The convicts killed Jubo League leader Ziaul Huq Jewel with sharp weapons in a feud over formation of Dimla upazila Rasel Memorial Committee and centering a club house at night on March 30. Victim's father Abul Kashem filed a murder case with the respective thana accusing the aforementioned five convicts the next day.



B'baria National Doctors Forum treating flood victim patients at Bhadugor (left) and Awami League Advisor Maj. Gen. (Rtd) Subid Ali Bhuiyan distributing relief among flood victims in Daudkandi, Comilla (right).



PHOTO: STAR

2 fugitive convicts nabbed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Barhmanbaria police on Thursday night arrested two fugitive convicts from Mukandpur and Boyshrapur villages in Sadar upazila.

The arrested persons are Md Ilias, 30, and Habib Mia, 38.

Md Ilias was sentenced to 14 years' RI and Habib Mia to seven years RI.