

## Rampant theft of spares makes train movement risky

Speed limit lowered in Sylhet-Akhaura section: Rly employees, law enforcers allegedly involved in pilferage

**IQBAL SIDDIQUEE, Sylhet**

Pilferage of vital spares from railway tracks and bridges in Sylhet-Akhaura section has increased in recent months, making movement of trains risky.

On several occasions, police recovered truckloads of stolen spares. Cases were filed with police stations in the area, but there has been no let-up in the pilferage, sources said.

At places, local public representatives were involved in the pilferage, they said.

The miscreants steal mainly joint plate, nut, bolt, panel clip from tracks and bridges. There are 10 railway stations in Sylhet-Akhaura section of Bangladesh Railway.

The pilferage reached such a stage that the Engineering Section of Railway on August 8 ordered lowering of speed limit of trains in the hilly areas between Rashidpur and Satgaon stations, the sources said.

At least 35 incidents of pilferage took place in the last five months in Srimangal-Kulaura and Srimangal-

Lashkarpur portions.

Elastic rail clip, joint, bolt, hook bolt of rail bridges, guardrail and bearing plate, rail post, rail panel etc. are being stolen they said.

The criminals even take away wires and other spares from signal posts at places. They also steal rail piles used for protecting bridges.

Railway officials claimed that cases are lodged with police, but those were not followed by any action.

On May 10, a letter was given to Railway Police along with a list of 10 persons having criminal records, but to no effect, they alleged.

On April 19, the situation was discussed at a Sylhet meeting of high officials of Railway, but there is no sign of any action yet.

Pilferage was detected near Lashkarpur, Rashidpur, Satgaon, Bhanugachh, Shamsheernagar stations recently. Angles, joint plate, panel clip and bolts of rail slippers were taken away from at least three bridges in the area.

Last week, more than 800 panel clips were stolen from these

places, said a railway official at Srimangal.

Railway employees engaged in repair of rail tracks said the pilferage has increased due to rise in the prices of iron and metallic items.

An Executive Engineer of Railway seeking anonymity said that they gave reports on pilferage along with "lists of suspected persons" to all police stations near rail tracts in Moulvibazar and Habiganj districts. But nothing has been done, he alleged.

On August 2, a truck was caught with 81 plates and pieces of rail tracks of around 1262 feet, stolen from track No. 3 in Shamsheernagar railway station. The truck was caught when it met with an accident while fleeing with the stolen goods.

Sources claimed that the pilferage occurred at night in presence of some local people's representatives, railway employees and rail police.

The thieves took the stolen goods to a nearby house and cut those into pieces for easy transportation. Police had forced shopkeep-

ers in and around the railway station to down their shutters when the pilferage was going on, locals claimed.

When contacted, the Officer-in-Charge of Srimangal GRP admitted that on August 4, they seized a truck loaded with about 10 tonnes of railway

plates stolen from Shamsheernagar station yard. A case was lodged with Srimangal GRP but none was arrested.

A railway official seeking anonymity said that during a visit on August 5,

he found about 100 feet rail track missing from the line in Shamsheernagar railway station.

Local Union Parishad Chairman Abdul Gafur said a Railway engineer admitted to him about the pilferage.

Sources said a number of organised gangs are engaged in the large scale pilferage being done in connivance with some railway employees, security men and some people's representatives in the areas.



PHOTO: STAR

Three of the five persons arrested with costly border demarcation pins by Rab and BDR in Satkhira yesterday and on Sunday.

## Costly border pins seized in Satkhira: 5 held

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira**

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) and Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) arrested five persons and recovered four costly magnetic border demarcation pins from them.

Acting on a tip-off, BDR members yesterday raided two houses at Kharihati village in Assassuni upazila and recovered a border magnetic pin and a border pillar. They also arrested Abdul Mali, 55, son of late Nader Ali and Rabiul Islam Gazi, son of Kased Ali Gazi from the houses. They were handed over to Assassuni police.

Earlier on Sunday, Rab arrested three persons in Satkhira town and recovered three border demarcation pins.

The arrested are Mosharraf

Hossain 45, son of Riaz Uddin of Palashpole in the town, Ahmad, 50, son of Wahed of Beula village and Bakkar, 45, son of Afil Uddin of Shetpur in Assassuni upazila.

Mosharraf was nabbed from an auto tailoring shop on Kazal Sarani. After his confessional statement they arrested Ahmad and Bakkar.

They were handed over to Sadar police on Monday.

Rab sources said the price of each magnetic pin is around one crore taka.

## Fresh flood grips Sirajganj as Jamuna swells

Two women drown, 50,000 affected

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj**

Two women drowned in Kazipur and Raiganj in Sirajganj district as rains and onrush of water from the upstream swelled the Jamuna and its tributaries, flooding vast areas in five upazilas.

The two women are Ramicha, 55 of Kazipur and Shathi 16, of Raiganj, police said.

The Jamuna and its tributaries like Echamoti, Dharola, Bangala and Hurasagar marker further rise yesterday, overflowing their banks at places.

According to the Water Development Board (WDB) sources, the Jamuna near Sirajganj town was flowing 21cm above its danger mark yesterday.

At least 50,000 people in Sirajganj Sadar, Belkuchi, Kazipur, Shahzadpur and Chowhali upazilas have been affected by the second wave of flooding.

Several hundred houses have been washed away in the 39 unions in the five upazilas.

Over 2000 families have become homeless due to erosion. They have taken shelter river banks and other high lands. Many of them have moved to the district town.

According to the flood control room, waterborne diseases have

broken out in the affected areas due to crisis of drinking water.

Sources at the Civil Surgeon's office said they are preparing to send medical teams to the affected areas.

## One killed in Sirajganj bus mishap

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sirajganj**

One person was killed and four others were injured, two of them seriously, when a Sirajganj-bound bus from Kazipur rammied into a roadside grocery shop at Dublai bazaar on Sirajganj-Kazipur road in Kazipur upazila in Sirajganj district yesterday.

Hira 22, helper of the bus died on the spot. Critically injured shopkeeper Omez Ali and bystander Badsha were taken to Kazipur Health Complex.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Sirajganj Sadar Hospital morgue for autopsy. A case was filed with Kazipur thana in this connection.

## Tk 35 lakh gold looted from market in Comilla

**A CORRESPONDENT, Comilla**

Armed robbers looted over Tk 35 lakh gold armaments from Eastern Plaza Shopping Market in Racecourse area in Comilla town Monday night.

Police said a gang of robbers broke the collapsible gate at the basement floor and then broke open doors of three shops with a drill machine. They took away around 350 ounces of gold ornaments.

Police later recovered a drill machine, some machetes and other sharp weapons from the spot. Police could neither recover the looted gold nor arrest any of the dacoits till filing of the report yesterday afternoon.

## BADC yet to pay Tk 1 cr bills to seed farmers

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur**

BADC (Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation) contract growers in five northern districts are facing setback in producing Aman seeds this year as it failed to pay their outstanding bills amounting to about Tk one crore.

The growers supplied the seeds during the last IRRI-Boro season.

BADC procured 600 tonnes of IRRI-Boro seed from the their contract growers. But it paid only the bills for 100 tonnes of paddy seeds.

BADC Deputy Director Adhik Bij told The Daily

Star that the outstanding payments will be made when funds are released by Ministry of Agriculture.

Aftab Hossen, a contract grower said BADC officials are telling them for months that the payments will be made but nothing has been done.

## Khulna Hardboard Mill won't resume commercial production

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna**

Khulna Hardboard Mill will not be able to go for commercial production due to non-availability of raw materials.

The general manager (GM) of the mill told this while talking to this correspondent yesterday. He said the mill started experimental production from Monday. But the mill authorities had to purchase Gewa wood, the main raw material for producing hardboard, and furnace oil from local markets at higher prices. 'So, it would not be possible to go into commercial production unless raw materials are supplied by the Sundarbans Forest Division', the GM said.

The mill suspended its production 32 months ago due to severe financial crisis.

According to a reliable source, the Forest Department did not respond to a letter from the concerned ministry to supply Gewa wood to the mill.



PHOTO: STAR

Empty boxes of gold ornaments strewn on the floor in front of one of the jewelry shops looted at Eastern Plaza Shopping Market in Racecourse in Comilla town Monday night.

## 102 MT urea seized while being smuggled out

Fake documents used

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg**

Coastguard on Sunday seized 102 tonnes of urea worth Tk 6 lakh from the Karnaphuli river near Chittagong Urea Fertilizer Limited (CUFL) jetty after those were loaded in a cargo allegedly for smuggling.

Four persons were arrested and handed over to Patenga police in this connection.

They are Asish Kumar Nandi of West Betagi of Patiya; Bubul Bhattacharya of Rangamatia; Fatikchhari; Abdul Hamid of Kolagaon of Patia and Md. Mohiuddin of Char Pathorghata of Patia.

The fertilisers were seized from

MV Tibat after Coastguard officials detected forgery in documents.

"The smugglers came for clearance from Coastguard on August 2. We received secret information that the documents they submitted were fake and that the fertilisers were being smuggled out of the country," Coastguard Zonal Commander Lt Commander ATM Ashraf told newsmen at the Coastguard office here.

He said the fertilisers were lifted in the names of three dealers - Shahid Enterprise in Debhata in Satkhira, Suphala Traders in Kustia and Messers Chowdhury in Jessore.

After getting the tip-off,

Coastguard contacted Deputy Commissioners of the districts and came to know that the smugglers were using the names of dealers to smuggle the fertilisers.

The DC's office in Shatkhira informed Coastguard that Shaheed Enterprise had no fertiliser business.

Information collected from Kusthia and Jessore also confirmed that the documents were fake.

The documents the smugglers had produced also bore fake signature of an Assistant Commissioner of Chittagong DC's Office, sources said.

## Army nabs 3 'gunrunners' in Bandarban

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban**

Bangladesh Army nabbed three indigenous people and seized a foreign made pistol, 5 bullets in Town Hall Para in Bandarban municipality Sunday midnight.

Tipped off, the army team searched the Town Hall area and arrested U Sha Ching, 42, Lapu Cjing, 20, and Kew Ching, 18, with pistol, bullets and documents about arms smuggling, sources said.

The three arrested, handed over to the police yesterday, are now being quizzed, police said.

## BSF arrests 3 more Satkhira fishermen

**OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira**

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) men on Sunday arrested three more Bangladeshi fishermen while catching fish in the Ichhamoti in Debhata upazila.

They are Raju Mian, 14, Nur Hossain, 15, and Shariful, 25, all hailing from Komorpur in the upazila. Another fisherman, Shafiqul, 20, was also caught by them but he managed to escape, according to BDR sources.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) sent a letter to BSF with a request to release them but BSF did not respond to it.

Earlier, BSF rounded up two Bangladeshi fishermen, Nitai Chandra Das, 38, and Jakir Hossain, 40, from Debhata on Thursday.

A BDR-BSF flag meeting was held on Charipur embankment on Saturday but to no effect.



PHOTO: STAR

Members of Village Police brought out a procession in Barisal city yesterday to press their demand for pay scale and other benefits.

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