

Ex-MP among 5 Pabna BNP leaders arrested

Two AL men also held on corruption charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Joint forces in separate raids Monday night arrested five front ranking leaders of Pabna district BNP including a former lawmaker, a central Sramik League leader and an Awami League leader on charge of corruption and patronising criminals.

Union Parishad chairman Abu Sayeed and former Hemayetpur Union Parishad chairman Alauddin Malitha.

"They were arrested on specific allegations of corruption and patronising criminals", said ASP Tanvir Arafat of Rab-12 in Pabna yesterday.

Law enforces raided their

When contacted, police said Sirajul Islam Sarder is accused in several cases. He also patronised smuggling syndicates in Ishwerdi in Pabna.

Sirajul Islam was elected from Pabna-4 in 1991 election on a BNP ticket.

During the 4-party alliance government, he also earned money through transfer of officials by using his political influence, police said.

Kamrul Hassan Mintu faces at least 18 cases including one for murder, police said. He formed a cadre group named 'Mintu Bahini', which was involved in various crimes.

There are allegations that his men misappropriated funds from government development projects, police said.

Mokhlesur Rahman Bablu is accused in 11 cases. He was one of the persons accused of planning the attack on Awami League chief Sheikh Hassina in Ishwerdi in 1995, police said.

Abu Sayed was arrested by army with a AK-47 rifle during the Operation Clean Heart. He is accused in seven cases and has links with outlaws, police said.

Alauddin Malitha faces 19 cases. He was arrested earlier also but released because of loopholes in charge sheet, police said.

houses Monday night and arrested them, sources said.

Besides the charges, they also failed to submit statements on assets, asked by law enforcing agencies under Section 15(Gha) of the Emergency Act, the sources said.

"There are numerous allegations of corruption and sheltering criminals against them", Tanvir Arafat told this correspondent but declined to elaborate.



Arrested Pabna BNP leaders (from left) Sirajul Islam, Mokhlesur Rahman and Kamrul Hasan.

They are Pabna BNP president and former lawmaker Sirajul Islam Sarder, district BNP organising secretary and Pabna municipal chairman Kamrul Hassan Mintu, Ishwardi Pourasava chairman and Ishwardi BNP president Moklesur Rahman Bablu, Pabna Sonali Bank CBA (collective bargaining agent) president and Sramik Dal leader Abu Ishahaq Bappi, Sramik League central vice-president Rashid Ullah, Awami League leader and Bharara



Indigenous youths display their skill at a traditional *ghila khela* (a sport using bamboo sticks), left, while elders play a long flute to kick-off celebrations to welcome Bangla year 1414 at the Tribal Cultural Institute in Khagrachhari town yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

3-day New Year celebrations begin in Khagrachhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khagrachhari

A three-day Bangla New Year celebrations got off to a colourful start here yesterday with great enthusiasm and a fresh vow to protect the age old culture and traditions of different indigenous communities.

The programmes were inaugurated at function held at the Tribal Cultural Institute at Khagrachhari town. The main celebrations will begin today to welcome the Bangla year 1414.

The 13 ethnics communities in Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) welcome the New Year through their traditional ways.

Chakma community will observe Bizu, Marma community will observe Sangrai and Tripura community will celebrate Baishu in Khagrachhari through their traditional cultural events.

Attired in traditional dresses, they will bring out colorful rallies today, which will be joined by thousands of Bangalees from the hills.

Visitors from other districts have already flocked to the hill town to see the colourful celebrations.

Yesterday's function was inaugurated by Khagrachhari District Council Chairman Monindra Lal Tripura.

Among others, District Council Chief Executive Officer Abu Sayed Mohammad Hasim, Mong Raja (Mong King) Paihalapruue Chowdhury, former principal of Khagrachhari Government College Dr Sudin Kumar Chakma, District Council Member Animesh Chakma Rinku, Anupom Dewan, Mongprue Chowdhury and elite of the town attended the function.

Speakers there said all the ethnic communities in the CHT have rich cultural heritage which should be protected and nourished. They also urged the government to help protect the traditions and culture.

8 govt offices ransacked at dead of night at Sakhipur but 'nothing missing'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Unidentified miscreants damaged important files, papers, and documents as they ransacked eight government offices at Sakhipur upazila headquarters in Tangail district Monday midnight.

The miscreants squandered files at one room of Upazila AG office, two rooms of project implementation officer's office (PIO), one room of upazila eoffice, two rooms of upazila land office, two rooms of upazila education office and one room of upazila women affair officer's office.

The authorities could not say anything about the motives and the people behind the mysterious incidents.

The night guard at the Upazila Parishad building was arrested yesterday morning for quizzing,

5 Jubo League leaders held while gambling

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Five Jubo League leaders were arrested in Sakhipur yesterday while they were gambling.

The arrestees are Sakhuipur upazila Jubo League president Saiful Islam Shamim, its vice-president Kamal Hossain and party leaders Khalilur Rahman, Mohammad Lablu and Sultan Sharif Panna.

Acting on a tip off, a team from Sakhipur police station raided a hotel at Main Road in the upazila headquarters and arrested the five while they were gambling there, police said.

They were being quizzed at Sakhipur police station when the report was filed in the afternoon.

police and administration officials said.

The miscreants broke open locks and lockers in all the 12 rooms at upazila parishad. Files and papers were seen strewn on the floors, the sources said.

The miscreants did not take away anything though valuables including motorbike, computers and bank drafts were at the offices, police and upazila administration sources said.

They said so far no important paper is missing. Scrutiny is on to

ascertain whether any file or paper is missing, they said.

The upazila administration officials said they have taken the incident seriously as eight important government offices were ransacked on a single night.

Sakhipur Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Ahmedul Haque told The Daily Star that the incident is very mysterious as the miscreants did not take away any valuable thing.

"We can not say anything about the incident till investigation," the UNO said.

Police arrested Hafizuddin, night guard at the Upazila Parishad building, suspecting his involvement in the incident. He is being quizzed at Sakhipur police station.

When contacted, Sakhipur OC Kamrul Hassan told The Daily Star that they are investigating the mysterious incident.

"We suspect that the miscreants did it with a motive to embarrass the local administration as law and order in Sakhipur remained by and large good," the OC added.

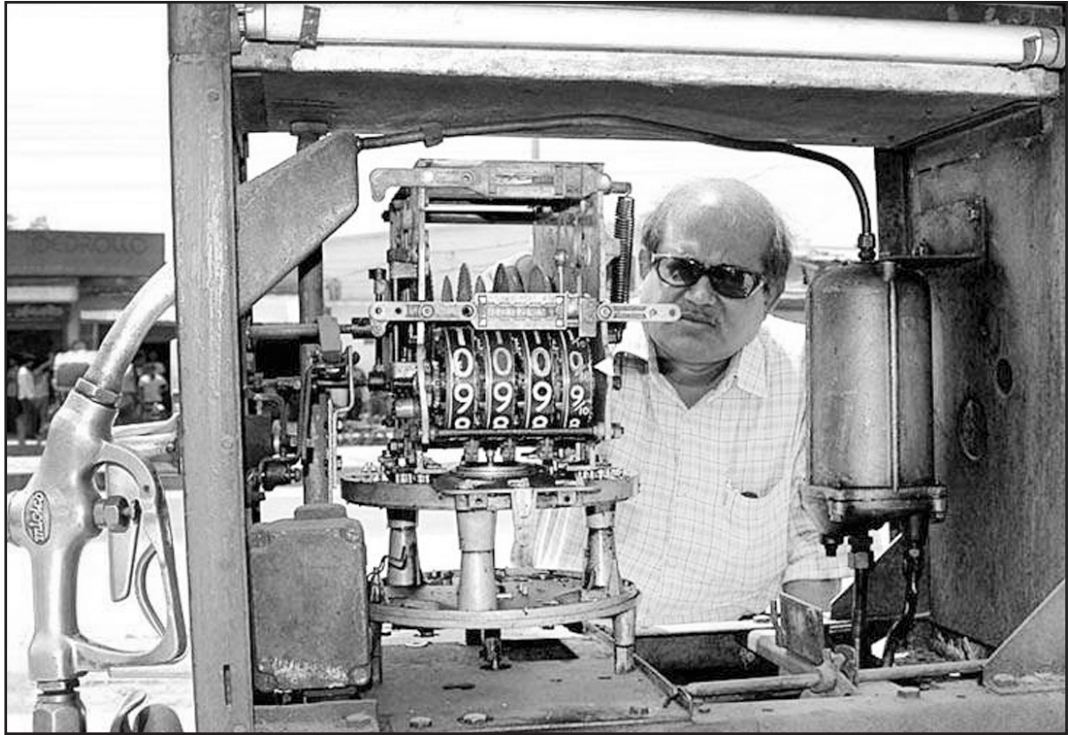


PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

A magistrate inspects equipment at a fuel station during a mobile court drive yesterday in Bogra.

3 BNP men arrested in Khagrachhari, Satkhira

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Joint forces arrested two BNP leaders in Khagrachhari and Satkhira yesterday on charge of corruption, our correspondents report.

In Khagrachhari, Laxmichhari upazila BNP secretary Mohammad Rafiqul Alam was arrested for alleged corruption including misappropriation of funds from government projects.

Police said, Rafiqul Alam faces charge for alleged misappropriation of Tk 78,000 from

funds allotted for repair of a mosque and a madrasa.

He also demanded Tk 50,000 from women Union Parishad (UP) member Kajal Tripura. His men realised Tk 32,000 from the UP member, who then complained to joint forces, police said.

He was handed over to Laxmichhari police.

Police said Rafiq confessed to extracting money from the woman UP member and misappropriation of government funds.

Joint forces arrested Satkhira Sadar upazila BNP president and Labsa Union Parishad (UP) chairman Abdul Alim from Itagachha area in the town in the early hours of yesterday. He hails from Khejurdanga village in the Sadar upazila.

Intelligence sources said Abdul Alim went into hiding soon after declaration of emergency as he was on the arrest list.

Police said, an extortion case was filed with Satkhira Sadar police station yesterday against Abdul Alim.

One Amir Ali of Debnagar village in the Sadar upazila filed the case.

On contact, Sadar thana Officer-in-Charge (OC) Safiqur Rahman confirmed the arrest.

CAB for stringent laws to protect consumers' rights

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Satkhira

Speakers at a meeting yesterday urged the government to formulate stringent laws to protect rights of consumers because existing laws are not enough to serve their interests.

Organised by Satkhira district unit of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (CAB), the meeting was held at Sarkhira Unnayan Kendra office in the town in observance of the International Buyer-Consumers Rights Day.

Chaired by Satkhira CAB convenor Ashek-e-Elahi, the meeting was addressed by, among others, Principal Asit Kumar Majumdar, Prof Subhas Chandra Sarkar, journalists Kalyan Bannerjee, Kali Das Roy and Sharifullah Kaiser Suman, AFM Ayub Ali, Nur Jahan Begum.

They said the media can play a vital role in creating awareness among people to protect consumers' rights.

The stressed the need for integrated efforts by the government and non-government organisations to protect rights of consumers. The meeting also adopted some suggestions to protect consumers' rights. These include introduction of special courts, promulgation of laws to limit what they called misleading advertisements by companies and compensation for consumers.

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