

NAT'L ANTI-GRAFT TEAM VISITS KUSHTIA

Allegations against ex-BNP MP found correct, ACC to file case

OUR CORRESPONDENT, KUSTHIA

The National Coordination Committee Against Corruption and Crime (NCCACC) has found allegations of various corruption and other crimes against former BNP lawmaker Shahidul Islam correct.

Shahidul was lawmaker from Kusthia-2 (Mirpur-Bheramara) constituency since 1996.

NCCACC team visited Kusthia to investigate the allegations against him. The team visited different areas and talked to people including those who filed complaints or cases against Shahidul at different times, sources close to the probe team said.

The team also visited some government and non-government offices and seized documents on alleged corruption and crimes by the former lawmaker and his men during the last 10 years.

The Anti Corruption Commission (ACC) will lodge case against the former lawmaker after the team submits its report, ACC sources here said.

The team led by two high officials of the army stayed in Kusthia for two days. It left several days ago after completing the investigation, the sources said.

Shahidul Islam, also president of Kusthia BNP, was on the ACC list of 20 top 'corruption suspects' announced in March this year. He is on the run since proclamation of emergency.

Law enforcement agencies including joint forces raided his house several times but could not arrest him, police said earlier.



SAHIDUL ISLAM

Shahidul faces 11 cases for alleged involvement in murder, extortion, vandalising opposition rallies and torturing journalists.

Most of the cases were filed after expiry of tenure of the BNP-Jamaat government. Seven cases were filed on February 12.

Police so far submitted charge sheet in only one case regarding attack on a journalists' convention in Kusthia on May 29 last year. Shahidul was prime accused in the case.

Another former lawmaker from Kusthia-4 (Khoksa-Kumarkhali) Syed Mehedi Ahmed Rumi is also included in the charge sheet as an accused.

Police said the rest of the cases are being investigated.

The team visited some educational institutions in Shahidul's constituency (Mirpur and Bheramara) including Bheramara Adarsha College and Halsha Degree College and seized some documents.

The documents include one on alleged misappropriation of Tk 12 lakh which was sanctioned for salary of 32 teachers.

Sources said Shahidul drew the money by taking blank signatures from 32 teachers of Bheramara Adarsha College. He was president of the college governing body in 2002.

Rafiqul Islam, one of the teachers filed a case against Shahidul for misappropriating the money. The case is still pending.

The team also probed Shahidul's educational qualification. A probe body headed by the then Deputy Commissioner (DC) of Kusthia during investigation found that Shahidul's Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) certificate was fake. He was removed as a lecturer of Zoology from Bheramara College in 1981 after his certificate was found fake, sources said.

The team also visited some buildings constructed in Mirpur and Bheramara during the tenure of the BNP-led coalition government. A few construction companies built all the buildings under different government projects.

Allegations have it that six of the companies were owned by Shahidul's close relatives.

It was gathered that at least Tk 600 crore were involved in implementation of the developments projects in Mirpur-Bheramara upazila during the five years' BNP rule.

It is alleged that lion shares of the funds were misappropriated by BNP men led by Shahidul Islam.

Of the works, the highest amount of Tk 85 crore was spent for

construction of the Sagarkhali-Barabila irrigation project in Amla in Mirpur upazila. The project was implemented by a firm owned by Shahidul's 'close relative'.

The NCCACC team visited the Sagarkhali-Barabila irrigation project and seized documents from offices concerned, sources said.

The team also visited some sand quarries in Padma river, which were forcibly occupied by Shahidul's musclemen in the name of lease.

The team also checked Shahidul's wealth statement submitted by his wife Selina Shahid to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) on September 14.

At least 20 journalists in Kusthia were subjected to torture allegedly by Shahidul's musclemen during the period, sources said.

Any journalist who wrote on alleged corruption or repression by Shahidul or his men faced threats, cases or attacks, or was forced to leave the district.

The former lawmaker used another tool to silence journalists. He let loose outlaws against media men who wrote against him.

Shahidul's cadres attacked a journalists' convention held in Kusthia town on May 29 last year. Twenty-five journalists including Observer Editor Iqbal Sobhan Choudhury were injured in the attack.

Kusthia Reporters Unity called the convention to protest filing of false cases against three Kusthia journalists filed by Shahidul on May 9.

Pirates toss 16 fishermen into Bay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Pirates looted the nets, fish and fuel worth over Tk 1.5 lakh from a trawler after throwing 16 fishermen into the Bay waters about 40 kilometres south of Kuakata sea beach on Friday afternoon.

All the fishermen of the boat, FB Nahid, were later rescued by another trawler.

After getting on FB Nahid when it was netting Hilsha, the gang of some 20/25 pirates hit the fishermen with sharp weapons and threw them into water.

Five injured fishermen -- Wadud, 40, Abul Hossain, 45, Abul Hasem, 18, Mokter, 34 and Hossain, 30 -- were treated at Mohipur health centre.

VILLAGERS CLASH

65 hurt in Netrakona

OUR CORRESPONDENT Netrakona

At least 65 people were injured, several of them seriously, in separate clashes at Mandaura and Gairakanda villages in Mohonganj upazila in the district Friday night.

Forty people were injured in a clash over a mosque at Mandaura village at about 8:00pm on Friday, Mohonganj police said.

Seriously injured, Abdul Khaleque, Soab Mia, Harun-ur-Rashid, Abdul Kaddus, Swapan Mia and Rupa Mia were sent to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital in critical condition. The others were admitted to Netrakona Sadar Hospital and Mohonganj Upazila Health Complex.

After iftar on Friday, the people Mandaura village arranged an arbitration to settle the quarrel between the supporters of Rupa Mia and Abdul Mannan who had a dispute over a mosque, police said. During the arbitration the rival groups engaged in a bloody clash with lethal weapons.

Bullets were also fired during the clash, locals said. Police arrested Swapan Mia, Abdul Mannan, Humayun and Akkel Ali in this connection.

Twenty-five people were injured in a clash among the villagers after the Salaiman of Gairakanda village in the same upazila teased a teenage girl.

AUG 17 BLASTS

Verdict in 2 Sunamganj cases today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Verdict in two cases filed in connection with August 17 serial blasts in Sunamganj town will be pronounced at the divisional speedy trial tribunal here today.

Tribunal judge Dipyoman Sarker fixed the date on completion of the arguments in the cases, court sources said.

Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) militants blasted bombs at six places in Sunamganj town on August 17, 2005.

The bombs were blasted near Sunamganj DC office, judge court, bar association, Eidgah, Mollikpur and bus stand.

Six cases were filed in connection with the blasts. Police submitted charge sheets against JMB operatives Abdul Aziz alias Hanif and Salahuddin alias Salehi.

Abdul Aziz alias Hanif gave a confessional statement before a magistrate last year. Speedy trial tribunal judge Dipyoman Sarker awarded him 14 years rigorous imprisonment (RI) in another case filed in connection with storing explosives at a house in Sylhet town.

Hanif, a close aide to hanged JMB chief Abdul Rahman was arrested on March 2 last year.

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TIB REPORT ON B'BARIA SADAR HOSPITAL 98pc patients buy medicines from outside

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

Transparency International, Bangladesh (TIB) at a press conference here yesterday made public its survey report on services to patients at Brahmanbaria Sadar Hospital.

On an average, each patient is to wait for 43 minutes for a doctor while a doctor spends only five minutes for a patient, it said.

According to report, 91 per cent of the patients alleged that they did not get 'proper behaviour' from doctors. Forty-two per cent indoor patients said they did not get any doctor on call at night. The report said 39 per cent indoor patients are

treated on floors as they could not be given any bed.

It said 98 per cent indoor patients are to buy medicines from outside.

The local unit of TIB also made some recommendations to improve the service.

The report was read out by ABM Rashduzzaman. TIB programme officer Md. Ashraf Hossain, senior research officer Wahed Alam came from Dhaka to attend the press conference.

Advocate Abu Taher, convener of Brahmanbaria Sacheton Nagorik Committee; Prof Md. Muklesur Rahman, ex-principal of Brahmanbaria Government

College; Muhammad Arzoo, secretary of Brahmanbaria Press club; Poet Joydul Hossain; engineer Md. Rafiqul Islam; Md. Al Mamun Sarker, former chairman of Brahmanbaria pourashba; advocate Kazi Masud Ahmed; Farhan Noor; and journalists Sheikh Md. Shahidul Islam, Md. Abdun Noor, Walid Shikder Robin, Md. Monir Hossain, Al Amin Shaheen, Dipak Chawdhury Bappy, Md. Nazrul Islam Shahjada and Baharul Islam Mulla were also present.

Neither Civil Surgeon nor any doctor from Brahmanbaria was present at the press conference though they were invited.

Kala Azar reappears in full fury in Mymensingh

11 killed, over 2000 attacked in 9 months: Lack of awareness is main problem, says civil surgeon

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Killer disease Kala Azar has reappeared in bordering hilly areas of the district.

It claimed 11 lives in four upazilas of Mymensingh in last nine months. Seven of the deaths were reported from Trishal upazila, two in Phulbaria and one each in Haluaghat and Bhaluka upazilas.

Over 2000 people were infected with Kala Azar this year till last month, official sources said. Of them, 1807 were treated at different health complexes.

Among the infected people, some 900 were in Trishal, 840 in Phulbaria, 131 in Bhaluka, 110 in Gafargao, 14 in Haluaghat while 11 in Nandail Upazila.

It killed 10 people including four in Phulbaria last year. In the same year, the disease infected 4193 people including 2030 in Phulbaria.

A total of 3726 patients were treated for the disease at different health complexes last year. Phulbaria upazila topped the list for Kala Azar attacks.

Doctors said as most of the houses in remote areas of Phulbaria are mud-built, female sand flies easily transmit the vector-borne disease to humans.

Attack by the disease can not be stopped due to lack of awareness and proper preventive steps, doctors said.

It is also alleged in some health complexes, arrangements for blood test is not available that hampers treatment of Kala Azar patients.

Last month (September) some 100 people were infected with Kala Azar in Phulbaria upazila. Most of the patients were from Chowdh, Kalandah, Radhakana, Nichhintapur, Kushmire, Ramnagar, Phultala, Kayerchala, Naugao, Palashtali and Putigana villages.

Kala Azar patients are also affected with Post Kala Azar Dermal Leishmaniasis (PKDL) if they are not fully cured, the doctors said. A Kala Azar patient has to take treatment for 21 to 28 days and in many cases patients, mainly poor



PHOTO: STAR

A doctor taking blood sample of a child at Phulbaria Upazila Health Complex for Kala Azar test.

ones, do not complete the course and are eventually affected with PKDL, they said. After being attacked with PKDL, a patient has to undergo treatment for 120 days, they said.

Talking to the Daily Star, Mymensingh Civil Surgeon Dr. SM Shamsul Alam said spread of the disease can not be checked unless preventive measures are strengthened.

He said a campaign should be launched to create awareness among people about the disease.

He said medicines are available at local health complexes but patients have to go there for injections for 21 to 28 days.

As the treatment starts, a patient feels better and do not complete their full course. They fall victims to PKDL, he said.

Direct Agglutination Test (DAT) to diagnose Kala Azar and Aldehyde Test (AT) for primary investigation are available at health complexes,

he added. He however claimed that the situation is under full control.

The medicine for the disease is beyond the reach of the poor. Stibatin injection, the only medicine for its treatment, is sold at between Tk 150 and Tk 200 against its actual price of Tk 110. Often there is crisis of the injection, the civil surgeon said.

Malaria However, no death from Malaria was reported in Mymensingh this year and from many areas, the disease has been eradicated, claimed a source at the civil surgeon's Office.

According to sources, a total of 8131 patients were tested from January to August this year and only 66 were found positive including 48 in Dhobaura, 13 in Haluaghat, three in Phulpur while one each in Gouripur, Bhaluka and Nandail Upazilas.

Hilsha sells at Tk 80-200 a kg in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

With Hilsha fish selling at Tk 80 to 200 a kg, the delicacy item has come within the reach of common people here.

Netting of a large amount of the fish and abundance of supply for several weeks along with imposition of official ban on export of hilsha for next six months to India.

The prices were Tk 250 to 400 only two months ago.

During visits to the fish markets in New Market, Launch Ghat and Katpatti on Saturday, this correspondent saw a kg of Hilsha fish selling at between Tk 80 to 200.

In the local fish market 40 kg of Hilsha (weighting over 1 kg each) was selling between Tk 7,500 to 8,000. But only two months ago it sold at Tk 14,000 to 14,500. Small size (less than one kg each) Hilsha was selling between Tk 3,000 to 3,500 against Tk 10,500 to 11,000 only two months ago.

Boiler blast kills one in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

One person was killed and three others were injured as a boiler blasted at Progati Rice Mills at Hat Gopalpur Bazar here yesterday.

The deceased is Abdul Kader, 55, son of late Abdul Kuddus of Teorda village in Jhenidah Sadar.

Eyewitnesses said, Abdul Kader had been working at the mills with Sufia Khatun, 30, Mongol Kumar, 28, and Nazrul Islam, 32. All on a sudden, the boiler of the mills exploded with a big bang causing instantaneous death of Kader at about 9:15 am. Sufia Khatun, Mongol Kumar and Nazrul Islam sustained serious injuries. They were immediately rushed to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for treatment.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Patients being treated on the corridor of Chapainawabganj Sadar Hospital as diarrhoea spreads in district.

SPECIAL DRIVE IN PABNA

36 'listed criminals' held, arms recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The joint forces arrested 36 listed criminals including four top ones at several spots in different upazilas of the district on Friday night.

Police, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) and the army took part in the special drive to put an end to the outlaws' activities in Pabna ahead of Eid-ul-Fitre.

Following a tip-off, the law enforcers raided village Kumilli Rahimpur in Gaishpur union under Pabna Sadar upazila at about 1:50am Friday and recovered a revolver, a shutter gun, a pipe gun, eight bullets and three sharp weapons.

The joint forces arrested arrested Lutu alias Sarbahara

Lutu, of village Talimnagar in Bera upazila, a regional leader of outlawed Sarbahara faction, Abdul Baten of village Bamandanga in Atakula, Nipa alias Akter of village Purbadangi in Iswardi upazila and Rajab Ali of village Jagannathpur in Chatmohar upazila.

Besides, 11 criminals were held from Atakula upazila, six from Atghoria upazila, five from Chatmohar upazila, three from Ishwardi upazila, three from Sujanagar upazila, one from Bhangura upazila, one from Faridpur upazila and two from Santhia upazila. The arrestees are accused in different cases filed with different police stations in Pabna district, police said.

"The joint forces have

launched the operation to stop extortion and other criminal activities by the outlaws ahead of Eid-ul-Fitre and it will continue," Pabna Police Superintendent AFM Masum Rabbani said at a press conference held at his office yesterday.

Major Mostafiz of Pabna army camp and Major Amjad of Rab-12 also addressed the press conference.

Leaders and activists of the outlawed factions and other criminals have been extorting money from people on different occasions including Eid-ul-Fitre.

Among 406 criminals listed earlier by Pabna police, over 100 are still evading arrest, police added.

Stop harassment to us, ex-BNP MP' family appeals

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Family members of former BNP lawmaker Nazimuddin Alam, elected from Bhola-4 constituency, yesterday at a press conference held at Barisal Reporters' Unity, appealed to all concerned for an end to harassment to them by a vested group and rival politicians.

Md Kamal Uddin and Jamaluddin, two brothers of the former lawmaker read out a written statement and answered questions of newsmen.

They said no other member of their family excepting Nazimuddin Alam is associated with politics directly or indirectly. But at least five cases have been lodged against Nazimuddin, his brothers, cousins and other family members till date, they said. The cases were lodged after promulgation of emergency, the said.

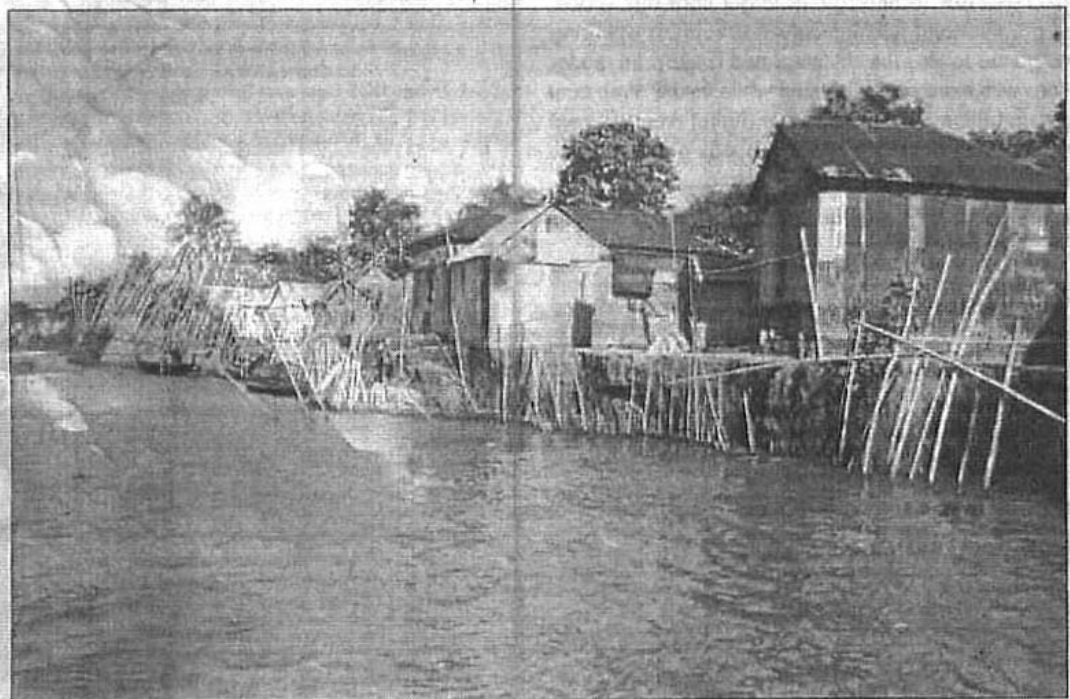


PHOTO: STAR

Attempt to save houses with bamboo fencing proves futile as strong haor waves washed away over a hundred houses at Chatrichar Purbobahi in Nikil upazila in three to four hours recently.