



PHOTO: STAR

Communication between Gaibandha district headquarters and Saghata and Fulchhari upazilas has remained snapped as floor of the bailey bridge, left, replacing damaged portion of Badaikhal Bridge across Alai River on Gaibandha-Saghata-Fulchhari road sagged following collapse of a main pillar on Monday. Roads and Highways Department constructed the bailey bridge to keep the road fit for plying of vehicles after floods damaged part of the concrete bridge in 2007.

BCIC dealers protest 'low quality' urea

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Dealers of Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) of Rangpur district yesterday staged a protest near BCIC fertiliser depot for what they said supply of date-expired and substandard urea.

The BCIC dealers stopped drawing urea allotted for March and declared that they would continue the move till BCIC stops supply of these kinds of urea.

About 80 out of 103 BCIC dealers of the district gathered at the depot and took part in the demonstration.

Director of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association (BFA) and Rangpur BFA unit president Abul Kashem said, BCIC supplied those low quality urea for which maximum product remained unsold in January and February as farmers did not buy them.

He said, "We lodged a complaint with BCIC but to no effect."

Deputy Commissioner of the district BM

Enamul Haque rushed to the fertiliser depot and requested the dealers to stop demonstration assuring them of taking steps.

"We have honoured his request," said Rangpur unit secretary of BFA Golam Mowla.

Mowla alleged that a section of unscrupulous BCIC officials in collaboration with transport contractors bring substandard and date expired urea from Baghabari.

BCIC dealer of Bederganj upazila Gobind Kundu said spurious urea in the bags becomes stone hard. Many of the bags of urea were torn as they were kept under open sky for years, he claimed.

Rangpur BCIC fertiliser depot in-charge Golam Mostafa said the dealers were opposing pill urea imported from China.

"They demanded granule urea manufactured by KAFCO in Bangladesh. Therefore the Chinese urea remained unsold and turned hard. But they are not date expired and substandard," he explained.

Smuggled jute seeds in Jhenidah worry farmers

AZIBOR RAHMAN, Jhenidah

Jute cultivation may face a setback in Jhenidah district this year as farmers are purchasing Indian low quality seeds at high prices due to acute crisis of locally produced seeds in the sowing season.

A section of dishonest traders are supplying smuggled Indian substandard seeds to the market using names of different brands as Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) fails to supply adequate seeds for the farmers in the district, local seed dealers said.

A one kg-packet of Indian low quality seeds is selling between Tk 200 and Tk 250 whereas the government rate for BADC produced seeds is Tk 87.

There is a target to bring about 12,000 hectares of land under jute cultivation in six upazilas of Jhenidah this year, said sources at Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE).

Farmers will start sowing seeds in full swing within the next 10 days (from the last week of Falgun to the first week of Chaitra), and jute cultivation might exceed the target this season as farmers received fair price of it last year, DAE officials said.

But the farmers are likely to incur huge losses as the local markets have been flooded with substandard Indian jute seeds, the officials said.

When contacted, Khasruzzaman, senior

additional director of local BADC office, told this correspondent that they earlier sent a letter to the head office in Dhaka seeking allocation of 1,500 kg jute seeds for Jhenidah but they are yet to receive any response.

A DAE official of Jhenidah, preferring anonymity, said jute plants on 1,000 hectares of land in six upazilas got damaged at a very early stage last year as the seeds were supplied from India.

"Failing to understand the quality of seeds, I sowed Indian seeds on two bighas of land last year and incurred a huge loss," Altaf Hossain of Enayetpur village under Kaliganj upazila said.

The Indian seeds are being smuggled into the district through different bordering areas in Sadar and Alamdanga upazilas of Chuadanga, local sources said.

Rashidul Hasan, a fertiliser dealer appointed by BADC in Shaikupa, said, "Now different companies are selling Indian low quality seeds in the local market. No companies other than BADC produce jute seeds locally in Bangladesh."

"BADC has appointed 90 seed dealers for Jhenidah but Indian substandard seeds are selling at different shops openly. If the government does not take necessary action immediately the farmers will be cheated again like the previous year and incur huge losses for sowing these low quality seeds," Nur Hossain, president of Jhenidah Seed Dealers Welfare Association, said.

RAJSHAHI MEDICAL COLLEGE BCL declares vice principal unwanted, locks his office

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Leaders and activists of Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) yesterday declared the vice principal of Rajshahi Medical College (RMC) Dr Shahidur Rahman Tarafdar *persona non grata* on the campus for what they said, sheltering Jamaat-shibir men and blaming BCL leaders for corruption.

They staged a two-hour sit-in programme, brought out procession on the campus and put the office of the vice principal under lock and key demanding his removal.

Dr Tarafdar was not present at his office during the chaos.

Sampad Kumar Dutta, the college BCL organising secretary said Dr Tarafdar was declared *persona non grata* because of his activities. He said, Tarafdar, also chairman of ophthalmology department, being a member of the Swadhinota Chikitsok Parishad, regularly practices

at the Jamaat controlled Islami Bank Medical Hospital. He also shelters Shibir men, Sampad alleged.

College unit BCL president Ashok Roy blamed Dr Tarafdar for his involvement in the Tk 4 crore project to purchase equipments for the ophthalmology department.

"He blamed us (the college BCL leaders) for pressing the authorities for doing wrong, but now he himself is involved," he said.

Talking to The Daily Star, Dr Tarafdar refuted allegations against him.

He said, a section of doctors are provoking the BCL leaders to tarnish his image. He claimed he had no link with the equipment purchasing project. About Jamaat, he said, "I have some friends among pro-Jamaat doctors and it does not mean that I belong to Jamaat."

Principal of the college Dr Abdul Hannan said the authorities are looking into the matter.

Two JMB militants jailed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Dinajpur Special Tribunal Court yesterday sentenced two militants of Jama'atul Mujahideen of Bangladesh (JMB) each to life term imprisonment and 10 years' jail in a bomb blast and arms case of 2003 in the district.

Of the convicts, Md Anwar Shahadat, 32, is son of Md Hafez Muhammad Shahidullah of village Rajbari of Dinajpur and Md Obaidullah, 34, is son of Md Amir Uddin of village Haldibari Railway Colony under Parbatipur upazila of Dinajpur.

Md Rafiqul Alam, Judge of Dinajpur Special Tribunal Court pronounced the verdict in a crowded courtroom in presence of the two accused.

Another accused Md Badal, son of Zakaria of village Moymothopur of Gaibandha district died at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) on February 22, 2003.

ASI Amulya Chandra Das submitted the chargesheet accusing the two men while six persons were acquitted.

The court recorded statements of 26 witnesses.

According to the prosecution, a bomb exploded accidentally at a JMB hideout at Chhoto Gurgula in the district on February 13, 2003.

The blast injured Md Badal, a JMB member who later died at DMCH.

Police recovered bomb making materials and firearms from the spot.

They also arrested JMB shura member Khaled Saifullah, Anwar Shahdat and Obaidullah in connection with the incident. But Saifullah was freed on bail in July 2005.

Later ASI Kabir Hossain filed a case with Dinajpur police station on charge of keeping explosive substance and firearms.

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Headquarter

ZTE Plaza, Keji Road South High-Tech Industrial Park
Nanshan District Shenzhen, P.R.China
Zip Code: 518057
Tel: +86 755 26770000, Fax: +86 755 26771999
Website: http://www.zte.com.cn

Bangladesh Office

Concord I-K Tower, Plot no. CEN(A)-2, 3rd floor, Unit B & C,
North Avenue, Gulshan-2, Dhaka - 1212, Bangladesh.
Tel: +88 02 8828513, 9891464
Fax: +88 02 8858850
website: http://www.zte.com.cn

