

Fingers pointed

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At least 76 children died allegedly after intake of Flammolod, name of the paracetamol syrup of Adflame, till 1991.

Dr Hanif said the DDA must have a copy of all documents related to collection of samples and the test conducted by the government's own drug testing laboratory under direct supervision of an expert consultant from the World Health Organisation (WHO).

"The drug authorities should have confirmed that the official representing them was prepared for a legal battle," Hanif added.

The Daily Star investigation in 2009 revealed that the case against Adflame Pharmaceutical has always been the strongest of the four cases DDA filed in December 1992 as the syrup was used in both Shishu Hospital and the Bangabhaban clinic where hundreds of children died.

Moreover, Flammolod was tested positive for containing diethylene glycol both in government tests and two separate tests in two US laboratories organised by Dr Hanif -- one in early 1991 and another in late 1992.

The other companies charged in 1992 are Polychem Laboratories Ltd, BCI (Bangladesh) Ltd and Rex Pharmaceutical.

The case against Rex Pharma only ended in trial in 2003 and can be taken as an example of how the drug administration officials have been involved in saving the accused.

The flaws The Daily Star probe uncovered in Rex Pharma trial was that no evidence was given about the role of the WHO in supervising the tests. The test report, produced by WHO Consultant SK Roy, was not even shown to the court, prompting the court to think that the investigation was not done properly.

Though the test was done at Essential Drug Company Limited (EDCL), government official laboratory to test drug, it was not mentioned in the trial.

Yet the prosecutor did not inform the court that the place of test is not important when it is conducted in presence of analysts from the government's drug testing laboratory with suitable equipment.

"The statement Khair gave cannot be accepted as merely a fact of forgetting information about an incident just because it happened many years ago. Often drug cases cannot be proved in court just because of neglect by DDA and its officials," said Mahmud Hossain Jahangir.

Currently, the drug administration has only 22 to 23 pending cases with the court, mostly filed on trivial charges.

They also threatened to circulate the video on the internet if their demand was not met.

Monir claimed influential locals put pressure on his family to settle the matter locally and not to file case, adding that they were feeling insecure.

The law enforcers visited the spot yesterday while an influential quarter of the area made several attempts to cover up the incident.

After talking with the victim girl and others, Narayanjanj police confirmed the incident. They recovered the victim and handed her over to Fatulla Model Police Station.

Locals alleged Narayanjanj Sadar Model Police Station was informed about the incident on Monday. Police pointed at jurisdiction boundary related difficulties as the cause of the delay for visiting the spot.

Alleged rapist Foyzal is the younger brother of Mamun, an accused in Shiplu killing case in Deobhog in the town, said locals.

The Daily Star investigation found that since 1998 the DDA filed only 38 cases, mostly on trivial charges, except for 2002 and 2003 when 25 and 28 cases were filed respectively.

The mother of Tanvir Ahmed Biplob, one-and-a-half-year old boy who died after taking the adulterated syrup 16 years ago, was speechless listening to the news of Khair's statement.

"I want justice. I want punishment of those who manufactured such syrup and also of those who are trying to destroy the case through false statement," said Peyara Begum as she cried recollecting the last days of her ailing child when at least four to five children died every day at Shishu Hospital.

3cr children

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socio-economic inequalities. The report termed the government budgetary allocation too inadequate to improve the scenario of the children.

According to the survey funded by the UN, children constitute 45 percent of the country's population. Of them, 46 percent live below the poverty line with their one-fourth being extremely poor. And poverty compels these children to work, the report said.

Statistics show that nearly 36 lakh children between the age of 7 and 14 were employed in fiscal year (FY) 2005-06 whereas the number of children working in the cities alone will go up to 11.20 lakh by 2011.

Unicef also said about 64 percent of the country's children do not have access to sanitation and 59 percent to right to information while 41 percent of them are deprived of housing and 35 percent of ample food.

Citing a study by the UK Department for International Development, it said government spending can directly contribute to the child's welfare.

For the current FY 2010-11, the government has allocated around Tk 19,497 crore, 14.75 percent of the national budget, to 80 social safety net projects. But only 16 of these projects with an allocation of Tk 1,900 crore will be implemented for the children.

The government should reduce the socio-economic inequality by increasing the funding for the disadvantaged to improve the overall poverty situation, the report said.

It also said the increase in the government investment will reduce the national poverty rate which now stands at 40 percent. The report points out that the poverty of children is one of the major obstacles to the development of the country's human resources.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith and Unicef representative Carel De Rooy, among others, were present at the function.

Mizan

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Incensed at the act of the teacher, a gang of local stalkers ran a motorcycle into him at Lokmanpur Bazar on October 12, leaving him critically injured.

On Wednesday different newspapers including The Daily Star, quoting Mizanur's brother Mamunur Rashid, reported that the teacher had expired.

Mamunur Rashid yesterday confirmed they learnt on Wednesday that he had died. But in fact he was declared 'clinically dead'.

"The Daily Star regrets the inadvertent error.

Teachers of the college yesterday wore black badges and hoisted black flags protesting the stalkers' attack on their colleague and demanded exemplary punishment of the offenders.

Fearing students' outburst at the development, the college authority suspended academic activities yesterday.

Angry students and locals halted a train for sometime in Natore on Wednesday after hearing the news of Mizanur's death.

Family members of Mizanur yesterday claimed the stalkers' attack was preplanned and the attackers are trying to hide their involvement, reports our Rajshahi correspondent.

Victim's wife Razia Sultana Mili, with her four-year-old daughter and parents, was offering special prayers at the shrine of Shah Makhdum yesterday for Mizanur's recovery.

"He [Mizan] is now facing the trouble for saving a girl. He has also a girl child who does not understand anything but her father. I urge all to pray for my husband's recovery."

Mili's father Shawkat Alam alleged the offenders are trying to cover up the matter as an accident. They visited the attending doctors to convince them about reporting the attack as an accident.

Murdered boy's body found in field

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police recovered a body of a teenage boy from capital's Sabujbagh early yesterday.

The deceased Mohammad Hridoy, 13, son of Hiron Miah, lived at Kadamtoli Jheelpar slum of the area.

Police recovered the severed body of the boy from Manda Balur Math around 7:30am.

Md Asaduzzaman, officer-in-charge of Sabujbagh Police Station, said Hridoy, a street urchin, might have been killed in feuds with his fellows.

Police have picked up four street urchins for interrogation.

Father of the deceased Hiron Miah said Hridoy remained missing since he went out on Wednesday evening.

Locals said Hridoy was last seen nearby his residence helping a van driver around 9:00pm. Some fellow street urchins called him at that time, they added.

Police sent the body to Dhaka Medical College Hospital for an autopsy.

Pilkhana mutiny

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from BDR special court-8 while the rest protested innocence.

The court at the BDR headquarters' Darbar Hall earlier read out charges against all the accused in the mutiny case.

The special court headed by BDR Deputy Director General Brig Gen Obaidul Haque fixed November 7 for recording statements of the witnesses. It adjourned the trial proceedings until 10:30am the same day.

Of the four border guards, Sepoy Saiful Islam told the court that he left Darbar Hall on February 25 "against his will" ignoring the then DG's directive.

"I had to leave Darbar Hall as a stampede broke out. I was unsure about what to do. I admit my guilt as I could not stay at the Darbar Hall despite the director general's orders," he said seeking clemency of the court.

Sepoy Sharif Jahangir Alam, Jamaluddin and Ishtiaq Uddin also pleaded guilty.

Ishtiaq said he left Darbar Hall and fled the Pilkhana headquarters in self-defence.

Being a junior jawan, he was too inexperienced to decide what to do in such a messy situation.

"I left Darbar Hall. It is my fault and I admit it," he said.

Ishtiaq said he is the lone breadwinner of his family and appealed to the court to make sure that he retains his job.

"If I lose the job, I will be left with no other choice but to beg," he told the court.

Following the proceedings, prosecutor Lt Col Akhter Hamid Khan told journalists that of the four jawans, sepoys Saiful, Jahangir and Jamaluddin left Darbar Hall ignoring the then DG's orders.

He said they have evidence that Ishtiaq took firearms out of the armoury and participated in the mutiny.

Seventy-four people including 57 army officials were killed in the February 25-26 carnage at the BDR headquarters last year.

Health minister

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report that claimed Bangladesh's total population rose to 16.44 crore in 2010, from 12.43 crore in 2001.

"I have no knowledge about the UNFPA claim and I was not consulted before revealing such a report on Bangladesh," Ruhul Haque told BSS at a city hotel when a journalist sought his comments on UNFPA report 'The State of World Population 2010'.

Taken by surprise, the minister asked health secretary whether he was consulted or informed before the report was launched and the answer from the secretary was "no".

"I don't know how this report can come without the consultation of the government," said an official of the health ministry, adding that they were looking into it seriously.

The report might have a vested interest to influence next year's population census, he added.

The UNFPA in its report said Bangladesh's population stood at 16.44 crore and has been increasing at the rate of 1.4 percent per year. It also predicted that the population size would reach 22.25 by 2050.

The UNFPA report came ahead of Bangladesh's national population and household census scheduled for early cases 2011. The last national population census was conducted in 2001.

Director of Family Planning Directorate Ganesh Chandra Sarker, who attended Wednesday's report launching programme, contradicted the UNFPA claim and said the present size of population might be 14.4 crore.

Media worries

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He endorsed the need for a qualitative change in the media, and said the government will use the Press Institute of Bangladesh to that end, and will take steps to make the National Press Council effective.

The daily Prothom Alo organised the roundtable on "Freedom of Mass Media and Accountability" in the conference room of its office in the capital.

"Never before had I seen in my professional life the way the media was attacked in the parliament recently, without giving it the opportunity to defend itself," said the daily Samkal Editor Golam Sarwar.

"Interestingly, the Speaker of the House also joined in the attack, and that raises the question whether the attack was planned," he said, adding that the country's media is passing through a difficult period, when money and power are influencing it.

He said it has been reported that the purview of the contempt of court charge is expanding, if so, that will affect press freedom.

"A vile campaign has been launched lately, maligning the reputation of the Prothom Alo editor, we all should unitedly protest against it," he said.

President of the Federal Union of Journalists Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury said the parliament and the media have their due roles, and if anyone fails to carry out the duties, that person or institution could be criticised, but with due respect.

"The media must be objective. Otherwise, vested quarters will interfere with its independence," he said.

People with money, who are not professional journalists, are now becoming editors of news outlets, the ultimate result of which will not be good, he added noting, unlimited infusion of capital in the media industry could create bubbles, and that would affect journalists in the future.

Political considerations in issuing licenses could destabilise the media, he cautioned.

The News Today Editor Reazuddin Ahmed echoed Iqbal Sobhan on the point, saying, the same is true for cancellation of licenses as well.

"This eventually creates self-censorship in the media," he said, suggesting that there should be a policy on the electronic media. Ethical and professional standards could ensure 80 percent of the media accountability, he said.

CEO and Editor-in-chief of Boishakhi Television Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul said the audience of both politicians and journalists is the people. Conflicts between the two arise when they deviate from their responsibilities, he added.

Since the opposition party does not go to the parliament, the news media has to play the role of opposition to a certain extent, and that makes the government think the media is favouring the opposition, he

Railway

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The report recommended punishment to those responsible for the offences under Bangladesh Railway Act, 1890 and publishing a gazette declaring illegal all public meetings near rail line, said BR Acting Director General TA Chowdhury.

The probe committee pointed out that the meeting stage was constructed within 48 feet of the rail line.

Under the railway act, any activity within 52 feet of rail line is considered encroachment, railway sources said.

The probe has not found any negligence of duty by any railway staff, including the train driver, guard, attendants, stationmaster and the gateman of Mulibari rail crossing.

The DG said the on-duty employees had maintained all the railway codes and procedures.

The report said the locomotive driver lowered the speed when he noticed gathering on the track. It also said, the train stopped on the track as some BNP activists disconnected the "hosepipe of the locomotive".

Meanwhile, samples of the torched coaches were sent to a laboratory in Dhaka for chemical testing to identify the material used in the arson, another source in the railway said.

BR Chief Engineer (western zone) M Amzad Hossain, also chief of the five-member probe team, formally handed over the report to the acting DG in Dhaka Wednesday afternoon, reports our Sirajganj correspondent.

So far, a total of 81 people have been arrested after eight cases were filed in this connection.

DISTRICT PROBE BODY

The local administration has given 20 days more to the four-member committee formed by the Sirajganj deputy commissioner as it failed to submit its report by Thursday, Dipak Ranjan Odhikary, chief of the enquiry team, said.

Some journalists nowadays are however influenced by money, while there are signs that the same is true for members of the parliament as well, he added. Strengthening media related institutions could solve some of the problems in the media to an extent, he said.

ABC Radio Head of News and Programme Salahuddin Lablu said the electronic media remains under constant threat of shutdown, as the outlets have to renew licenses and frequency allocation periods every year.

Channel I Head of News Shykh Seraj said orders have been issued that private TV channels must telecast state owned BTV's news, which is quite unreasonable.

New Age Editor Nurul Kabir said the media as a whole has been playing a much better role than the politicians.

He said some newspapers published reports provided by the Directorate General of Forces Intelligence (DGFI) accusing politicians without incorporating what the accused had to say, during the last caretaker regime.

Nasty discussions take place in the parliament regarding the media, judges go beyond their jurisdictions to send journalists to jail on charges of contempt of court, the executive branch of the government also represses the media, if all three branches of the state act like that then the media falls into a crisis, he added.

Prothom Alo Editor Matur Rahman said the media is the fourth column of the state. Most of the news media outlets in the country are in favour of the liberation war, secularism, and freedom. The media keeps the government accountable by pointing out its mistakes. The media's accountability is to its audience, he said.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam suggested forming an editors' forum to improve the ethical and professional practices in the media, and requested the information minister not to frame any media policy without inputs from journalists.

The Independent Editor Mahbul Alam endorsed the proposal, saying a strong media is vital for a democratic society.

Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad said he will convey the concerns of the media personalities to the prime minister.

Columnists ABM Musa, Syed Abul Maksud, and Muhammad Jahangir; Nayadiganta Editor Alamgir Mohiuddin, Dhaka University Journalism Department Chairperson Giti Ara Nasreen, Amader Somoy Editor Nayeemul Islam Khan, Bhorer Kagoj Editor Shyamal Dutt, Machrangra Television's Head of News Shah Alamgir, ATN Bangla's Chief News Editor J E Mamun, ATN News channel's Head of News Munni Shaha, and Daily Korotoa Editor Mozammel Haque also spoke.

\$2b needed

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Bangladesh will have to build new hospitals and repair the older ones for their probable damage by cyclones and other disasters during this period, he added.

Speaking at the press briefing, Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque said, "Scientists have forecast that global warming will eventually increase the sea level and a large part of the country will go underwater."

Bangladesh is already facing the consequences of global temperature rise and climate changes in the form of increased rates of floods and devastating cyclones like Sidr and Aila, he added.

"The health sector receives the primary impact of such floods and cyclones, so the health issues need to be addressed at the UNFCCC to be held at Cancun from November 29 to December 10," the minister said.

"The issue of health impacts of climate change did not get due importance in the Cop-15 in Copenhagen last year," he said adding that, "We will present this estimation at the Cop-16 in Cancun this year."

The minister read out the meeting's Dhaka declaration that urged that greater efforts and timely actions are needed at national, regional and global level to increase the resilience and adaptation of the vulnerable population to minimise the health impacts of climate change.

The Dhaka declaration urged on making the health issue as a central issue in climate policy and urged on allocating resources for adaptation by the health sector.

A total of 65 participants from 11 South East Asia Region (SEAR) countries, including Bangladesh and India, and World Health Organisation (WHO) officers attended the meeting.

WHO acting country representative Dr Sangeeta Diorditsa and Health Secretary Humayun Kabir were also present at the press briefing.

JAPANESE WOMAN Death still shrouded in mystery

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The body of Japanese national Kazuko Uful, who died on October 18 mysteriously, was taken to the capital's Apollo Hospitals mortuary yesterday after autopsy at Dhaka Medical College Morgue.

Police are yet to know the reason behind the death but morgue sources said it could be a suicide.

Mohammad Musa, husband of the Japanese woman, on October 15 took his wife to Apollo Hospitals where she expired on October 18.

Kazuko's mother Nariko and aunt Zumko reached the city early yesterday. They visited the morgue around 2:00am.

Morgue sources said Musa and his brother Mohammad Sayed had accompanied the two women. They allowed Nariko and Zumko for around 15 minutes to stay at the morgue and then took away the two women.

Musa's brother took the body to the mortuary.

Musa and his family members didn't allow reporters at their Marium Tower residence in Gulshan area despite repeated attempts yesterday for two hours from 6:30pm.

They couldn't be reached over phone. Whereabouts of the two women were also unknown.

A security guard at the Gulshan residence said last night that they had seen the two Japanese women going out from the house earlier in the evening.

A high official of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Gulshan zone said Musa informed them yesterday evening that Nariko and Zumko were at the Gulshan house.

The DMP official also said they didn't interrogate any person in this connection as they were waiting for the autopsy report.

According to a DMP official, Musa and Kazuko got married some 16 years ago in Japan and had been living in Bangladesh for two and a half years. Musa, hailing from Comilla, is a businessman.

Police said Musa had informed them that Nariko was trying to take the body to Japan.

University

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Rahman, 19, daughter of Mizanur Rahman of the city's GEC area and a third-semester BBA student of East Delta University.

Sources said Mridhat was involved in an affair with Sourav of Bayezid area for around eight years until she broke up with him six months ago.

Yesterday around 5:30pm, Mridhat and Sourav met on the rooftop of their friend Safaaf Ishtiaq to talk about their relationship.

Safaaf told the reporters that at that time Safaaf and his friend were on the other side of the roof. He claimed that at one stage of their discussion, Sourav stabbed Mridhat with a knife leaving her seriously injured.

According to Safaaf, he and Sourav took Mridhat to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH) where doctors declared her dead. Sourav had gone into hiding since then, he added.

Kotwali Police Station Sub-Inspector (SI) Mohammad Mohsin said police recovered the knife used for the assault from an adjoining building's roof. Police also picked Safaaf and security guard of the building Abul Bashar for interrogation.

However, details about Sourav could not be known, the SI said.

SI Mohsin said name of their another friend Navil also came up. He said, "Safaaf told us that Navil saw the incident from the roof of his [Navil's] building which is adjacent to the scene."

Navil is absconding since the incident, said the SI, adding that they are trying to apprehend Sourav and Navil.

When the news of Mridhat's death spread, her relatives and friends rushed to CMCH.

Mridhat's friends said that Mridhat broke up with Sourav because he used to torture her mentally and threatened her of dire consequence if she denied him.

Pilots warned

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unfitness increase for the pilots with their age.

Pilots oppose it saying the authority must follow the accord signed between Bangladesh Pilots' Association (BAPA) and Biman. The agreement ensures benefits such as insurance coverage for the BAPA members in the case of loss of licence.

Under the agreement pilots are supposed to fly 70 hours and enjoy eight days of holidays a month, and not to fly more than two consecutive nights, said the pilots.

They would not give Biman any concession on these provisions from today, the pilots said.

Biman cautioned the pilots saying it would be considered a "direct violation of instructions" if there is any disruption in flight schedule because of their actions.

"If any flight schedule is disrupted for any undue activity, it would be considered a violation of instructions. It is a punishable offence according to the service rules," said Biman Bangladesh Airlines in a letter to BAPA yesterday.

The national flag carrier said it would not change its decision now as the matter rests with the Supreme Court.

Biman asked the pilots to withdraw their 24-hour ultimatum saying it goes against the labour law.

"Otherwise legal actions will be taken," read the letter signed by Biman Manager (Industrial Relations) Zobayer Uddin Ahmmed.

JS body

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the haor areas of Sunamganj along with increasing seats in the existing 12 cadet colleges as students of the cadet colleges are doing well in public examinations.

The committee chief M Idris Ali said, "We have asked the ministry to formulate a new defence procurement policy in light with the public procurement act to ensure transparency and gear-up purchasing."

Idris Ali, also a ruling party lawmaker and former defence secretary, was briefing the media after the committee meeting at Jatuya Sangsad Bhaban. Chiefs of three services and other officials were also present in the meeting.

The defence procurement policy, which is known as DP-35, was formulated in 1935.

"Every year thousands of crores of taka is spent on equipments for the armed forces but the defence procurement policy being different from the public procurement act is causing unnecessary delay in making purchase decision," said the committee chief.

He said a new convenient policy would help avoid the delays ensuring transparency.

Bangladesh had been allocating about 6 to 7 percent of its annual budget for defence. This year the defence spending would exceed \$ 1 billion, which is about 1.3 percent of the GDP, more than the allocation for health or energy sector.

Cyclone

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Under its influence, squally weather may affect the maritime ports and the coastal regions of Bangladesh.

Maximum sustained wind speed within 54 km of the storm centre is about 62 kph rising to 88 kph in gust or squalls. Sea will remain rough.

Maritime ports of Chittagong and Cox's Bazar have been advised to hoist local warning signal number four instead of three.

Maritime port of Mongla has been advised to keep hoisted local cautionary signal number three.

All fishing boats and trawlers over North Bay and deep sea have been advised to remain in shelter until further notice.

Drug DG's

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conversation. The correspondent tried to contact Khair over mobile phone