

# Betel leaves on another 50 bighas torched in Jhenidah

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

In yet another arson attack, betel leaves on about 50 bighas of land at two adjacent villages—Raigram and Dulalmundia—in Kaliganj upazila of the district were destroyed yesterday morning.

Locals and betel farmers alleged that criminals set fire to their orchards, causing

damage to betel leaves worth about Tk 1.8 crore.

This was the second such attack on betel leaf farms in the area within a span of 24 hours and the third in 12 days. Betel leaves on 20 bighas of land at the two villages were torched on Monday morning.

On February 9, betel-leaf orchards on 60 bighas of land at adjacent Balidapara

and Dulalmundia villages in the upazila were set on fire allegedly by unidentified criminals.

Several such incidents of arson took place in Kaliganj upazila last year, but law enforcers and local administration mysteriously failed to identify the culprits involved, locals alleged.

The farmers affected in yesterday's incident are

Pradip Dutta, Jonai Dutta, Azizur Rahman, Kumaresh, Kalachandra, Taposh, Shyam Dutta, Chanchal Sen, Ananda Das, Jaga Das, Sadhan Bhattacharya, Bikash Bhattacharya, Chandan Sen, Gazi Mondol, Shankar Sen and Haren Dutta.

While visiting the area yesterday morning, the farmers told this correspon-

dent that they cultivated betel, taking loans from banks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). "Betel farming is the only source of our livelihood. But fire completely damaged our orchards, they said.

Chandan Sen, a betel-leaf grower, said he has taken loan from banks and spent those in betel-farming. He demanded immediate investigation into the arson attacks and exemplary punishment to the criminals.

Ananda Das of Raigram village said he cultivated betel on two bighas of land, taking loan from relatives. "How will I repay the loan and maintain my family?"

Taposh Mondol of the same village told this correspondent that he would not cultivate betel further as he incurred a huge loss.

Fire fighters from Jhenidah sadar Kotchandpur upazila headquarters extinguished the fire with the help of locals. They said betel leaves worth over Tk one crore were gutted in the fire.

ASP Rezaul Islam, Upazila Parishad Chairman Anwarul Azim Anar, UNO Anjumanara Begum, and Officer-in-charge (OC) Faruk Hossain of Kaliganj Police Station visited the spot yesterday.

Upazila chairman Anar assured the affected farmers of taking actions against the persons responsible for torching betel orchards after proper investigation. The chairman said he will form a committee at a meeting on Friday to investigate the incidents and find the culprits.



PHOTO: STAR  
Rupali Bala gives a bleak look at her torched betel garden at Raigram village in Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah district.

# Drastic fall in Jamuna water level hampers transport

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gaibandha

Plying of goods and passenger boats on river routes along the western bank of Jamuna River in Gaibandha Sadar and Fulchhari upazilas is hampered due to drastic fall in water level and development of shoals in riverbed.

At least 20 big and small river port terminals (locally called ghats) including Balashi railway ferry ghat situated along the western bank of Jamuna River are facing difficulty in transshipment of goods and carrying passengers to different destinations of Kurigram, Jamalpur and Sirajganj districts, as river routes in many points have silted up.

Ferryboats are to cover much longer distances to avoid grounding.

"Plying of boats now needs longer time and additional fuel cost. Only 30 years ago, the Jamuna River remained navigable round the year and large cargo vessels from Indian territories sailed to Dhaka and Narayanganj river ports," said Ramijuddin, an elderly boatman of Syedpur ghat in Fulchhari upazila.

After the opening of Jamuna bridge several years ago, railway ferry services between Balashi and Bahadurabad ghats closed down permanently and since then country boats became the chief mode of communication on the route.

Railway marine department however continued wagon ferry service on the route but it is provided for only five months during the rainy season, said the Railway Marine

Superintendent at Balashi ghat.

Railway marine department this season suspended wagon ferry services on November 18, 2010 due to drying up of channels.

It needs six feet water for movement of vessels, but the water level at present has come down only two to three feet deep and many small and large shoals developed along ferry routes. Many of the tributaries almost dried up, making even plying of country boats hard.

This season Balashi ghat authority had to shift passengers' pontoon half kilometre eastward from the main terminal as country boats could not connect the main stream of the Jamuna due to drying up of the mouth points of the tributary. Passengers have to cross the tributary amid risk with the help of a makeshift bamboo bridge to reach the pontoon.

Last year local people set up a shallow engine operated manual dredger to make the dried up channel navigable for plying of country boats, but it was too expensive, said Hashu Mia, a lease holder of Syedpur ghat.

People in char (newly emerged landmass) areas are to change boats frequently to reach the destinations, because this time riverbed almost silted up and water level fell alarmingly, said Akbar Ali, chairman Kanchipara union.

The tributary along the western bank at Kamarjani ghat dried up due to deposition of sand and so, jute laden country boats cannot move to the main stream, which is now one kilometre off the bank, said Solaiman Islam, chairman Kamajani union of Gaibandha Sadar upazila.



PHOTO: STAR  
People cross the silted and narrowed channel of the Jamuna River with the help a bamboo and wooden bridge to reach Balashi river port terminal that had to be shifted to half a kilometre away from the western bank due to drying up of the watercourse in Gaibandha district.

# AL cadres loot BNP man's shop in Barisal

UNB, Barisal

A shop of a BNP leader was looted allegedly by ruling Awami League (AL) cadres at Gerakul village in Gournadi upazila Sunday afternoon.

Witnesses said AL cadres led by Saddam Khan, son of AL leader and ward councillor Babul Khan, attacked and looted the shop of Golam Morshed Panna, former ward councillor and assistant secretary of municipal BNP in the evening following previous enmity.

The attackers also injured Panna by chopping him.

They also foiled the annual sports and cultural programme of local Aktarunnesa Secondary School in presence of chief guest AL municipal Mayor Harisur Rahman Haris.

The attackers beat up Panna's relatives---Setu Mia, Swan Ahmed, Sohel Sanyamat, Ripon Sanyamat--- at the programme venue, leaving them injured.

Local people got agitated following the incident and confined AL leader and local councillor Babul Khan and his associate Sekandar Ali Shikdar to a room of the school. Later police rescued them.

The injured were treated at local clinics and hospital.

Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge of Gournadi police station, said police brought the situation under control and arrested five people---Arif Hossain, Saidul Islam, Rahman Bepari, Sahadat Hossain, Suman Hawladar--- from the spot.



PHOTO: STAR

Eleven-year-old schoolboy Abdur Rahim, who had got his left arm (partially covered) appallingly rotten due to 'treatment' by a so-called herbal expert, is receiving treatment at Dimla upazila health complex.

# Quack puts a boy's life in danger

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

A quack has put the life of an eleven-year-old boy in danger in Nuniapara village of Dimla upazila.

Wrong treatment for the broken bone by quack Abu Kabiraj caused serious sepsis in schoolboy Abdur Rahim's arm.

However, Rahim's condition improved after taking treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital. But doctors say it might take at least a year for him to be fully cured.

Victim's father Moksed Ali of Nuniapara village of Dimla upazila said, "My son broke his left arm in cycle accident around two and a half months ago. I took him to Dimla upazila health complex the next day. But at the hospital gate, a few men surrounded us and almost forcibly took us to Abu Kabiraj (herbal expert) of Uttar Titpara village."

"Abu demanded Tk 5000 as first instalment of treatment cost. I could only give Tk 3000. Although it apparently annoyed him but he started my son's treatment", Moksed added.

"Abu Kabiraj at first strongly pressed and pulled Rahim's injured hand causing much pain. Then he began to rub some black, warm oil on the affected part, saying it is very effective for broken bones. He then bandaged the arm with



Quack Abu Kabiraj

a piece of dirty cloth after applying a kind of paste", Moksed said.

Hasina Begum, Rahim's mother informed that her son became sick and depressed from that very day and his condition continued deteriorating. The quack still refused to remove the bandage ignoring our requests, she said.

After 20 days, a relative of Rahim informed the matter to Dr Rezaul Kabir Sajib, residential medical officer (RMO) of Dimla upazila health complex and requested him to visit bed-ridden Rahim.

Dr Sajib said, "I had to enter the patient's room with handkerchief on my nose because of stink. I was horrified to see red and black pus all over the rotten flesh hanging from the child's hand."

"If he were left in such state for some more days it would have been difficult to save his life", the RMO added.

The boy's parents took

him back home due to financial hardship after 45 days of treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital under Professor Dr Zahedul Islam and Dr Momen.

Dr. Sajib is continuing the treatment of Rahim now.

Mohabbat Hossain, who resides near Dimla hospital, said, "Abu Kabiraj keeps his 'agents' at the hospital gate to allure simple hearted patients. He then intentionally worsens the patient's condition to squeeze out more money."

This correspondent's attempts to contact Abu Kabiraj failed as he went into hiding a few days ago.

Civil Surgeon of Nilphamari Abdur Rashid Akond said he could not take any action against the quack as he is 'not empowered to do so'.

Mizanur Rahman, the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Dimla said, "If anybody lodges a complaint then I would definitely take action in this regard."

Hasinur Rahman, eldest brother of Rahim, said, "An attempt to hand over Abu to police made by enraged local youths was thwarted by some of his relatives like Lebu Master, Toibul and Abul."

"They also threatened us with dire consequences if we file any case with the police he said."

# Charges framed against 101 BGB mutineers

STAR NATIONAL DESK

Charges were framed against 101 mutineers in Khulna and Khagrachhari yesterday.

In Khulna, the special court-12 headed by Rajshahi BGB Sector Commander Col Ehia Azam Khan framed charges against 59 jawans of 23 Battalion for their involvement in the mutiny at the battalion headquarters on February 26, 2009, reports our staff correspondent.

All the accused were produced in the court set up at BGB sector headquarters at Goalkhali in Khulna. Ten out of 59 accused confessed to their involvement in the mutiny while the rest claimed innocence.

Those who confessed to their involvement in the mutiny are sepoy Md Saidul Islam, Md Imdadul Huq, Md Faruque Hossain, Noor Alam Babu, Md Anwar Hossain, Abdus Satter, Md Nooruddin, Md Naeem Jahan, Nazrul Islam Khan and Ershad Ali.

The special court yesterday recorded statements of complainant of the case Subedar Major Jalal Ahmad and three accused. Two other members of the court are Lt Col Gazi Md Khalid Hossain and Lt Commander Muhammad Touhidul Islam.

Deputy Attorney General Shansanka Shekhar Sarker represented the attorney general while Lt Col Mahfuzul Huq, Commanding Officer of 23 Battalion acted as prosecutor.

On October 26 last year, the court accused 59 jawans of the battalion of their involvement in the mutiny.

The complainant said the accused took part in the mutiny at the battalion headquar-

ters on February 26 in 2009. They revolted against their officers, looted arms from armoury and torched some private cars on the streets.

Our correspondent from Khagrachhari reported that charges were yesterday framed against 42 accused in the case for mutiny at Khagrachhari sector headquarters.

The special court-15, headed by Khagrachhari Sector Commander Lt Col Abu Wahab Mohammad Hafizul Haque, started trial proceedings at 9:15am and continued until 12:00 noon. Two others member of the court are Lt Col Sayedis Skaline and Major AZM Golam Mostafa AL Mamun.

All the 42 accused in the case were produced before the court. At the beginning, prosecutor Major Zabad Hasan read out the charges against the accused. According to the charges, the rebels looted took control of the sector headquarters on February 26 in 2009 and looted firearms and ammunition from armoury.

Five of the accused-- Lance Nayek Md Monjur Ahmad, Subedar Md Azahar Ali, Nayak Md Sahin, Lance Nayak Md Harunur-Rashid and sepoy Md Shafiqul confessed to their involvement in the mutiny begged for mercy while the remaining 37 claimed innocence.

After hearing, the court framed charges against the accused and adjourned the trial proceedings until 9:30am today. The court also asked the authorities concerned to produce all the 42 accused in the court.

Deputy Attorney General Kazi Mohammad Ejarul Haque Akand, special public prosecutor Md Habebur Rahman and Aminur Rahman Khan were present.