

# 40pc food poisonous

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pesticides are probably being smuggled into the country, as import of the highly toxic substances has been banned for long, they say.

Some 50 percent of the vegetable samples and 35 percent of the fruit samples were contaminated with chemical pesticides, which the lab analysts said are unsafe for humans.

These pesticides are toxic to both humans and animals, say food safety and public health experts.

Accumulation of toxic substances in human body over a long period can lead to cancer, neurological and reproductive problems, said Sridhar Dharmapuri, food safety officer of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in Bangladesh.

Heavy metals such as lead, chromium and arsenic also accumulate in the body and may cause kidney and liver failure and abnormality among children, he said.

"It is surprising that these pesticides are found in common food items, despite the fact that these chemicals were banned long ago because of high toxicity," said Syed Nurul Alam, chief scientific officer at Entomology Division of Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI).

A test at the BARI lab also found the presence of banned pesticides in dry fish last year, he said.

The plant protection wing of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) is responsible for regulating and monitoring use of pesticides in farming. Its field offices have specialists and inspectors to look into matters relating to pesticides and plant protection.

DAE Director General Md Abu Hanif Miah told The Daily Star that all field offices have instructions to take action against sales and use of banned and substandard pesticides.

In every upazila, there is a vigilance team to check sales of the prohibited toxic chemicals. It conducts drives with the help of local administration, he said.

"You will not find banned pesticides in stores," he said.

Asked how such pesticides are being used in fruits and vegetables, he said those might have been smuggled into the country.

Ruman Hafiz, chairman of Bangladesh Crop Protection Association (BCPA), claimed, "None of our members deals in banned pesticides, as there is no scope for importing and selling these highly toxic chemicals."

These banned pesticides might be smuggled into Bangladesh from neighbouring countries, said the leader of BCPA, a platform of pesticide marketers in Bangladesh.

"It is the duty of law enforcement agencies to check trade of such prohibited chemicals," he added.

The NFSL also tested samples of rice, turmeric, poultry meat and

# Abductors in action

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Kashem left home for Sylhet on April 22 and had been missing since.

Police suspect Jahirul over the killing. Jahirul and the other accused in the case are on the run.

In Narayanganj, Nazrul Islam, councillor of ward 2, and his aides -- Tajul, Swapan, Liton and Jahangir, Nazrul's driver, were kidnapped from Adalatpara around 1:45pm.

They were leaving the court area after Nazrul, former general secretary of Narayanganj Chhatra League, got bail in a case, said Nazrul's wife Selina Islam.

They were abducted along with the car. Police recovered the car in an abandoned condition at Rajendrapur in Gazipur around 9:00pm.

Selina claimed Nur Hossain, councillor of ward-4, and Haji Mohammad Yasin, general secretary of Siddhirganj unit of Awami League, were behind the abduction.

"They have rivalries with my husband. They picked him up. I want my husband back, safe and unhurt," she said.

But Nur Hossain, also vice-president of Siddhirganj unit of AL,

# Student shot dead

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"Alkama might have been killed by shots fired by villagers. Police are not responsible for that," ASP Md Moktar Hossain said.

Police said they are conducting raids to nab the people involved in the killing.

# Land grabbers attack

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Of them, Alam Majhi has been accused of evicting the Chak families.

Contacted, Alam Majhi denied having anything to do with the eviction of the nine Marma families and said he only helped rubber plantation owners by supplying them with workers and saplings.

Ahmed Jamil, upazila nirkabi officer of Naikkhangchhari, said he had heard of the eviction incident and that action would be taken soon against those involved.

Devdas Bhattacharya, superintendent of police of Bandarban, said police had visited the spot.

Evidence of the involvement of rubber plantation owners in the land grabbing incident had been found, he added.

juices, and found the presence of heavy metals in those.

Arsenic and chromium were present above safe limits in three of 13 samples, and formalin was found in coriander, mango and shrimp, it said.

The presence of lead chromate in turmeric was much higher than the permissible limit set by Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution.

The NFSL also detected presence of antibiotics in chicken and fish samples. "High microbial populations were found in several samples of pasteurised milk indicating poor processing procedures by the manufacturers," it said.

Dr Subimal Sinha Choudhury, director at the Institute of Public Health (IIPH), said the use of pesticide, fertiliser and fish or livestock feeds should come up as a major issue since chemicals or metals start getting into the food chain from production level.

"Regulations should be framed accordingly," he said.

The NFSL test results buttress the previous findings and media reports on widespread food adulteration due to lax monitoring by government agencies.

"The findings are only the tip of the iceberg. The real problem is much bigger," said Dr Mahmudur Rahman, director at the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research.

Of the substances found in food, heavy metals like chromium, arsenic and lead can cause cancer and liver and kidney failure, he said.

Harmful chemicals could be put into food either in a deliberate or unsuspecting way. "Unfortunately, it is done deliberately in most cases, and this is very problematic," said the epidemiologist.

He regretted that the adulterators are hardly punished.

The laboratory could test more food samples, but the most important thing is to enforce related laws, said Rahman.

The government should immediately form the Food Safety Authority to check adulteration and use of harmful chemicals in food, suggested Rahman.

The food ministry said it has drafted rules for implementing the Safe Food Act passed in November last year.

It also wrote to the public administration ministry early this month for appointing chairman and four members for the Food Safety Authority.

"We are trying to go fast," said Food Secretary Mushfeka Ikkfat.

The food ministry has already sent copies of the draft rules to 13 ministries for opinions. It will then finalise the draft and send it to the law ministry for vetting, she said.

It might take three months to finalise the rules, added Ikkfat.

# Ershad yet to reveal polls expenditure

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad has yet to submit his election expenditure details of one constituency from where he had contested the January 5 national polls.

The deadline for submitting expenditure statements to the Election Commission (EC), however, expired around two and half months back.

Ershad contested from two constituencies -- Rangpur-3 and Lalmonirhat-1 in the election.

He submitted the statement of Rangpur-3 constituency where he had spent Tk 38,500 as election expenditure. But he did not submit the electoral expenditure statement of Lalmonirhat-1 constituency, said officials of the EC and the returning officer concerned of the January 5 polls.

As per electoral law, all contesting candidates have to submit their electoral expenditure statements to the respective returning officers of each constituency within 30 days of the publication of the election results in the official gazette. The officers will send a copy to the EC.

If any candidate violates the law, he/she will face punishment of two to seven years' imprisonment along with paying financial penalties, according to the law.

Meanwhile, the EC yesterday validated the candidature of 231 aspirants out of 244 who will contest the sixth phase elections to 13 upazila parishads in 10 districts on May 19.

## Train derails on Bangabandhu bridge

10 injured

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 10 passengers were injured when a Dinajpur-bound train derailed at the west end of the Bangabandhu Multipurpose Bridge last night.

Nine of 12 compartments of Drutojan Express around 11:30pm got off the track and tilted towards the main bridge, said Siddiqui Tanjilur Rahman, superintendent of railway police of west zone. The incident disrupted rail communications between Dhaka and the northern and southwestern districts.

A strong wind was sweeping over the area at the time of the incident, Tanjilur said. The injured include a train guard. The others among nearly 500 passengers safely got off the train.

Salvage trains from Dhaka and Ishwardi rushed to the scene to rescue the derailed train, said officials of the railway control room (west zone).

## GOLD SMUGGLING

# Organised gang at airport involved

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A syndicate of airport and hangar staff are involved in smuggling at Shahjalal International Airport, said a top official of customs intelligence yesterday.

Moinul Khan, director general of customs intelligence, said this after interrogating Mohammad Anisuddin, assistant aircraft mechanic of Biman Bangladesh Airlines, arrested in connection with 106 kilograms of gold found inside the toilets of a Biman aircraft on Saturday.

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Anis on a five-day remand.

A senior technician, whom Anis has named, had employed Anis to get the gold out of the airport, said Moinul.

Customs officials seized a mobile phone containing text messages and information from other airport employees, he added. "We will find the people linked to the smuggling very soon."

"We suspect the gold was supposed to be taken out of the plane in service cars or catering trucks or some other airport vehicles. This indicates that others are involved," he observed.

Anis has been working at the airport for 15 to 18 years. He might have been involved in previous gold smuggling as well, said Moinul.

# They found

FROM PAGE 2  
Tk 150 per day. But his earning is not enough to maintain our five-member family," said the 35-year-old woman, who earns around Tk 80 a day.

However, they all think they are deprived of fair price in the absence of competition among buyers.

"It would be better if they paid us Tk 1 or 2 more per kg," said Meher Nesa Bewa, 55, of Gokunda.

# Obama warns Myanmar

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Obama was referring to Myanmar's Muslim Rohingya minority in Rakhine state which has been subject to persecution at the hands of Buddhist nationalists.

"The danger now that they are democratising is that there are different ethnic groups and different religions inside Myanmar," Obama said.

"If people start organising politically around the religious identity or their ethnic identity... then you can actually start seeing conflicts... that could move Myanmar in a very bad direction."

"In particular, you have a Muslim minority inside Myanmar right now that the broader population has historically looked down upon and whose rights are not fully being protected."

# Abdullah

FROM PAGE 16

Buddhist-dominated Myanmar has been plagued by religious unrest in recent years with at least 250 people killed in Buddhist-Muslim clashes since 2012. Thousands more people have been displaced.

About 1.3 million Rohingya live in the predominantly Buddhist country of 60 million, almost all of them in Rakhine state. Myanmar considers them illegal immigrants from neighbouring Bangladesh, though some families have lived here for generations.

Obama made a triumphant visit to Myanmar in November 2012 and his administration has offered strong support to the government of President Thein Sein as it seeks to cement civilian rule.

AL suffers from inertia

FROM PAGE 16  
grassroots did not pay heed to the central committee's decision as regards the party favourites.

At present, the grassroots, plagued by internal feud, are waiting for the central committee's instructions on the next course of action, while the central leaders are waiting for the AL president's strategy map, say party sources.

The grassroots blame the central leaders for the gap between the central and the grassroots.

They said they had not received any directives from the central committee on what to do after the last parliamentary elections.

Despite various initiatives and warning of stern action, the party could not manage its rebel candidates in the January 5 polls. In the upazila elections, the AL had at least 303 rebel candidates.

Coming to power again, AL President Sheikh Hasina at the first meeting of the party's central working committee on expressed a desire to run the party and the government separately.

She also talked about reorganising the party, but that is yet to materialise.

At the last meeting of the central working committee on April 5, she expressed her annoyance with party colleagues over the organisational weaknesses issue. The meeting, however, ended without any decision.

**Titanic letter**

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Eva and to talk about the trip so far.

The letter was due to be delivered to Hart's mother in Essex when the ship returned to Southampton, but the tragedy meant it was never sent.

Some 1,500 passengers and crew died in the tragedy, including Hart's husband Benjamin. Hart and Eva were rescued by sailors from HMS Carpathia.

Andrew Aldridge, from Henry Aldridge and Son Auctioneers in Devizes, said: "The letter and envelope are in remarkable condition, with an impeccable provenance, and they represent a truly unique opportunity to own the finest example of its genre in existence."

The £119,000 price tag broke the previous record for a Titanic-related letter, which had stood at £94,000.

they were all unregistered so we could not make any headway."

Bangladesh is used as a transit route because of a circle of unscrupulous staff at the airport, who make it a lucrative passage for smugglers, despite the stringent security measures, Moinul said.

The customs got their first heads-up on the syndicate on Saturday when they arrested a Biman aircraft assistant technician for links with smuggling of 106 kilograms of gold bars.

"The arrestee, Mohammad Anisuddin, told us that a technician named Masud had deployed him. Furthermore we got related messages on his mobile phone from many staff inside the airport," Moinul said.

Police sources said the deceased, Aminur, had five cases filed against him.

Two separate cases -- one for possessing arms and another for attacking the law enforcers -- will be filed against the injured activists, police said.

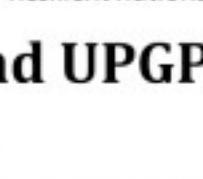
# VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

United Nations Development Programme in Bangladesh announces the requirement of;

1. **RFQ for Designing and Printing of Two (2) Annual Reports for UZGP and UPGP,** Application should be submitted by no later than **May 12, 2014 (2:30 PM)**
2. **RFP for DESIGNING AND DEVELOPING WEBSITES (TWO) FOR UZGP AND UPGP,** Application should be submitted by no later than **May 13, 2014 (4:30 PM)**

For the details job description and instructions to apply for the position, please visit our website: <http://www.bd.undp.org/content/bangladesh/en/home/operations/procurement.html>

Only shortlisted candidates will be contacted.  
Female candidates are encouraged to apply.



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