



As Amar Ekushey Bô Mela, an event people eagerly wait for, begins tomorrow, last minute preparations go on at Bangla Academy yesterday.



PHOTO: RASHED SHUJON

POULTRY, FISH FEED

Factory sealed off for using tannery waste

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A mobile court yesterday sealed off a factory at Hazaribagh in the capital for using toxic tannery waste in poultry and fish feed.

During the drive with Rab, Executive Magistrate AHM Anwar Pasa sentenced Md Abul Kalam, 51, owner of the factory Putul Enterprise, to two years' imprisonment and fined him Tk 2 lakh for using the toxic waste.

Abul Kalam told the court he had been making poultry feed using poisonous tannery waste for the last two years.

He bought meat bones of tannery waste for Tk 10 per kilogram from Keraniganj and sold it to poultry and fish farms in Gazipur and its adjoining areas for Tk 20 to Tk 25 per kg after grinding the bones.

The poultry and fish farmers mix the powder of meat bones with the feed, he said.

But if anyone needs complete poultry or fish feed then he prepares it mixing together maize, meat bones and other ingredients through

mixture machine, Kalam said.

The manufacturers first boil the tannery waste, dry it in the sun, grind and then mix with other materials to make the feed for poultry and fish.

The mobile court also fined each of the three staff of the factory -- Abdul Jalil, 20, Md Hasan Sheikh, 21, and Md Faruk Hawladar, 55 -- Tk 50,000, in default of which they would have to serve one month in jail.

The use of tannery waste in poultry and fish feed poses serious health risk for consumers as the waste that contains hazardous chemical chromium has the possibility of directly entering the food chain.

Recently, a Dhaka University study found chromium, ranging from 249 microgram (mg) to 4,561mg per kg, in chicken that consumed feed made with tannery waste. The permissible limit of chromium in human body is 10-60mg.

Experts say consumption of tannery waste through fish and poultry might cause liver and kidney diseases, even cancer.

TORTURING COLLEGE GIRL

5 policemen closed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, PABNA

Five police officers, including officer-in-charge of Kazipur Police Station of Sirajganj, were closed to district police lines yesterday on charge of torturing a college girl in police custody.

The district police also formed a three-member probe committee to investigate the incident.

The policemen are OC Abdul Jalil, Inspector Abdur Razzak, Sub-inspector Ashfaqur Rahman, constables Rony Khatun and Seema Khatun.

The victim is Shapla Khatun, 20, daughter of Sobhan Ali of Mathailchhap village in Kazipur upazila. She is a third-year student of Tenglahata RIM Degree College.

She was arrested from her home on

January 21 in connection with the murder of one Asiya Khatun. Police tortured her for six days in custody, but did not produce her before the court, sources said.

On January 27, Shapla was produced before the court where she brought the allegation against the cops of inhuman physical and mental torture in custody.

Senior Judicial Magistrate Rubina Parvin of Sirajganj Judicial Magistrate Court asked the district civil surgeon to conduct a medical examination within 24 hours on the girl to determine whether she was tortured.

A medical report of the victim was submitted to the Judicial Magistrate Court on Wednesday, said Shafiqur Rahman, sub-inspector of Kazipur Police Station.

As per the court order, a case was filed against the accused police officers on the same day. Later, they were withdrawn from the police station, said SM Emran Hossain, superintendent of police in Sirajganj.

"A three-member inquiry committee has been formed to investigate the incident. If the police officers are found guilty in departmental inquiry, they will face departmental punishment," the SP said.

SI Shafiqur said Shapla was a suspect in the murder case. She was arrested after police searched her mobile call list. According to her statement, police also arrested Alamgir and Dulal, the prime accused in the case.

Asked about the torture in police custody, he declined to comment.

BSF men kill Bangladeshi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole, Jessore

Indian Border Security Force beat a Bangladeshi cattle trader to death on Putkhali border under Benapole Port Police Station early yesterday.

Deceased Alim Khandoker, 25, was the son of Yusuf Khandoker of Kashiani upazila in Gopalganj.

The BSF men of Angrail camp caught Alim when he along with other traders was returning home from India with cattle through the border around 4:00am. They then tortured Alim to death and dumped his body into the Isamoti river, said Abdul Haque, camp in-charge of Putkhali Border Guard Bangladesh.

Apurba Hasan, officer-in-charge of Benapole Port Police Station, said on information, they recovered the body and sent it to Jessore Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

No gas, power

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12:45pm on February 5.

All vehicles are to honk for two minutes, all shop owners and workers are to play the flute for five minutes and all farmers are to stand up for 15 minutes at 12:45pm on the same day to protest the blockade and hartals, according to the parishad's call.

"We will announce greater programmes from the national convention [Scheduled for Feb 7 in Dhaka]. We will make the BNP-led 20-party alliance withdraw their programme," he said.

He also called upon the people to form a security layer at every locality, prepare a list of arsonists and attackers, cooperate with law enforcers to get the perpetrators arrested, and to keep fire extinguisher in vehicles.

Bangladesh Muktiyoddha Sangsad Central Command Council

Chairman Helal Morshed Khan, and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal Standing Committee member Shirin Akhter, among others, spoke at the rally where several thousand workers from different sectors were brought in.

Over 10,000 workers of garment factories, mostly of Mirpur, Badda, and Kuril areas were taken to the rally, said a garment workers' leader yesterday.

"We have brought them through trade unions at different garment factories. Workers of those factories that are closed on Fridays have been brought to the rally. So, their work was not hampered," claimed the leader seeking anonymity.

Bangladesh Sarak Paribahan Sramik Federation General Secretary Osman Ali told The Daily Star around 15,000 to 20,000 workers from the transport sector had joined the rally.

MEET WITH KHALEDA

Dr Kamal for end to deadlock

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gonoforum President Dr Kamal Hossain called upon all to come forward to find a way out of the ongoing political impasse.

He made the call while the journalists after meeting BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia at her Gulshan Office last night. Convenor of Nagorik Oikya Mahmudur Rahman Manna was with him.

Asked about the purpose of the visit, Kamal said it was only for expressing condolence to the BNP chief following the death of her younger son Arafat Rahman Koko.

"We did not have any discussion regarding the ongoing political stand-off," he added.

Kamal and Manna signed the condolence book kept at the office where Khaleda has been since January 3.

"We all are trying our best to find a solution to the existing political crisis," Kamal said.

He, however, did not elaborate how exactly they were working on it.

No control

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any type of containers.

So, if someone needs fuel for their cars or motorbikes, they have to bring the vehicles to the filling stations, said Nazmul Huq, president of Bangladesh Petrol Pump Owners' Association.

"I received a letter today from New Market Police Station asking me not to sell petrol, octane and diesel in containers," he said.

"Selling petrol or octane by anyone other than authorised dealers and petrol pumps is illegal, and police in yesterday's letter instructed us not to sell petroleum even to dealers," Nazmul added.

Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia of Dhaka Metropolitan Police thinks the step was necessary under the present circumstances.

"We suspect that a portion of petrol and octane sold in containers ends up in the hands of arsonists. So, we have asked them to stop open sale," he told The Daily Star.

SO COMMON, SO EASY

A shop with rows of plastic bottles containing petroleum in the front is a

very common sight in the country.

Our Patuakhali correspondent, during a recent ride on the Patuakhali-Kuakata road, found more than 100 roadside shops selling petrol and octane in bottles of different sizes.

In many cases, there were no shops even. There were only a table, on which the bottles were lined up, and a few drums or jars of petroleum beside it.

Asked if they had taken any permission, a bewildered retailer at Basakbazar said, "What permission? We just buy petrol in jars from a filling station and sell it here to make some profit. This is how it has been going on for years."

Grocer Sirajul Islam of Nayagola in Chapainawabganj said many small shop owners like him sell petrol in bottles for profit.

He, however, claimed he did not sell petrol to unidentified persons, reports our Chapainawabganj correspondent.

Shafiqul sells petrol at Bottalimore in Dinajpur town in a similar way.

"I bought petrol in a container from the nearby Samata Filling Station two days ago and now I am selling it in bottles," he told our correspondent

there yesterday.

However, salesman Milon of the petrol pump denied this, saying they had stopped selling fuels in containers following orders from the district administration three days back.

Hundreds of retailers were found selling petrol and octane in a similar way in almost all the districts of the country.

At least 35 people were killed in violence since January 5 and most of them died in arson attacks allegedly by anti-government blockaders. Fire service officials say at least 360 vehicles were torched during this period. However, the actual number is believed to be much higher.

The president of petrol pump owners' association thinks there is no need for open sale of fuels as the country now has around 550 filling stations, covering 90 percent upazilas.

"At least eight times in the past eight years, we had requested the authorities concerned, including the home ministry and the police headquarters, to take steps for checking unregulated sales of fuel oils. But nothing happened until now," said Nazmul.

Bomb attack kills 60 at Pak mosque

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Sindh Health Minister Jam Mehtab Daher told AFP that "the death toll from the attack has increased to 61".

"There are 54 dead bodies in Shikarpur hospital. Seven others died in Sukkur and Larkana hospitals," he said.

Shaukat Ali Memon, the medical superintendent of Civil Hospital in Shikarpur, earlier gave a death toll of 48.

Hundreds of people rushed to the scene after the blast to try to dig out survivors trapped under the roof of the mosque, which collapsed in the explosion, witness Zahid Noon said.

Television footage of the aftermath showed chaotic rescue scenes as people piled the wounded into cars, motorbikes and rickshaws to take them for treatment.

"The area is scattered with blood and flesh and it smells of burnt meat, people are screaming at each other... it is chaos," Noon told AFP.

"A huge contingent of police and rangers is present here and ambulances from the nearby towns have started to arrive."

Local resident Mohammad Jahangir told AFP he had "felt the earth move beneath my feet" as he prayed at

another mosque around 1.5 kilometres away.

An official with a national Shia Organisation, Rahat Kazmi, told AFP that up to 400 people were worshipping in the mosque when the blast struck.

Sainrakhio Mirani, police chief of the region, told AFP officers were still working to determine whether it was a suicide bombing or whether the 6-7 kilogramme bomb was detonated remotely.

It is the bloodiest single sectarian attack in Pakistan since March 2013, when a car bomb in a Shia neighbourhood of Karachi killed 45.

Locals said many people lost relatives in the attack at the Shia mosque.

Mohabbat Ali Bablani, a Shikarpur local, said four of his cousins, aged between 30 and 40, were killed in the blast while his friend had lost five children, all under 13.

"My friend Nizam-ud-Din Sheikh has lost his five sons. He had taken them with him to offer prayers and all of them were killed in the attack," he told AFP.

The attack came as Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Karachi, the capital of Sindh province, to discuss the law and order situation in the city.

Karachi, Pakistan's biggest city and economic heart, has wrestled for several years with a bloody wave of criminal, sectarian and political murders.

After yesterday's attack, a group of Shia Muslims came out in streets and blocked main traffic artery in the central Karachi city during evening rush hours. They chanted slogans against the attackers and beat their chests in protest.

Anti-Shia attacks have been increasing in recent years in Karachi and also in the southwestern city of Quetta, the northwestern area of Parachinar and the far northeastern town of Gilgit.

Around 1,000 Shias have been killed in the past two years in Pakistan, with many of the attacks claimed by the hardline Sunni group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ).

A report by the US Institute of Peace this week warned that sectarian militant groups were growing in strength in rural areas of Sindh, a province which has escaped much of the worst of the violence that has wrecked Pakistan over the last decade.

Pakistan has stepped up its fight against militants in the past month, following a Taliban massacre at a school in the northwestern city of Peshawar.

Amnesty International

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Referring to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent orders that the police should "do anything to stop violence", Abbas Faiz, Bangladesh researcher of Amnesty, said such remarks "can lead to extrajudicial executions."

At least 35 people, including 23 without links to politics, have died since the trouble first flared early this month, a year after the one-sided January 5 polls.

The main opposition BNP of the last parliament has been pressing hard with countrywide blockade and hartals for talks on a fresh national election under a non-party administration. The indefinite blockade of roads, rail and waterways has entered its 26th day today.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on Wednesday ordered the police to "do whatever needed" to stop the violence.

"Remarks like these carry a high risk of being seen as an open invitation for the police to use unnecessary and excessive force against demonstrators or even to carry out extrajudicial executions -- which Bangladesh security forces have carried out with appalling frequency in the past," said

the report.

It added: "The Bangladeshi authorities risk exacerbating an already violent situation by giving police carte blanche to use excessive force in response to a recent wave of horrific petrol bomb attacks amid ongoing violent political protests."

Deaths during police operations must be thoroughly investigated and those responsible brought to justice, said Abbas Faiz. "The security forces have a duty to maintain law and order, but that does not place them above the law and it is never an excuse to resort to excessive use of force."

The rights watchdog urged all political parties to publicly denounce acts of politically-motivated violence and encourage investigations aimed at bringing perpetrators of petrol bomb attacks to justice.

REACTIONS TO PM'S COMMENT

Rights activists yesterday expressed mixed reactions over the prime minister's recent orders asking the police to stop violence.

Talking to The Daily Star, eminent jurist Shahdeen Malik said the PM might have meant it in the positive

sense, but her statement is being perceived as a licence to the police and other law enforcement agencies to act irresponsibly.

He thought such a perception about the PM's instructions and the law enforcement agencies will result in erosion or loss of public confidence in these institutions.

The PM might better explain her instructions clearly, he added.

Iftekharuzzaman, director of Transparency International Bangladesh, said Hasina's statement came against the backdrop of some similar recent comments by several ministers. It has given rise to a risk of abuse of power and disproportionate use of force by the law enforcement agencies, he observed.

"The perpetrators of violence must be brought to justice, but one brutality cannot justify another."

National Human Rights Commission Chairman Prof Mizanur Rahman said the PM's statement should not be interpreted partially.

It seems that she has made a motivational statement for the police against the backdrop of the ongoing violence, mentioned Mizanur.