

## For 5 months a year the bee house buzzes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Tangail*

Every year before blooming of mustard flowers, several lakh bees come to a house in Pachuria village of Delduar upazila and make around 50 beehives at different places of the concrete building and trees around the house.

They go back after staying at the house for about five months. This has been happening at the house of Badal Chakrabarty for the last seven years.

Locals call the house "Bee House". Many outsiders also visit the house to see the beehives.

Badal, a stationery shop owner at Laohati Bazar, told The Daily Star that the bees come to his house in the Bangla month of Agrayhan (November) and go back in Baishakh (April).

"Every year, they come just in time and build their hives at the previous places. Nobody of my house disturbs the bees and they never harm anyone," he said.

Badal also said he has no training on beekeeping, honey collection and preservation.

"I collect honey from the beehives by the professional honey collectors two to three times in the five months. He gets a large amount of honey when the mustard plants bloom and a little amount when mango and litchi trees are in flower," he said.

SEE PAGE 11 COL 1



Beehives at a house in Pachuria of Delduar in Tangail. The house, locally known as "bee house", has around 50 beehives.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

## Robbers shoot 2 to take Tk 5 lakh in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Armed muggers snatched away around Tk 5 lakh from a woman and her daughter after shooting and injuring them in broad daylight in the capital's Uttara yesterday.

The victims are identified as Shahana Karim, 50, and her daughter Natika Rezwana Karim, 28.

The duo withdrew the money from a bank around noon. On their way home, a gang of four riding on two motorbikes intercepted their car near

SEE PAGE 11 COL 3

## Rab recovers 12 firearms, detains 2

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Cox's Bazar*

Rapid Action Battalion recovered 12 locally made firearms and 85 bullets and arrested two people in this connection in Moheshkhali upazila of Cox's Bazar early yesterday.

The arrestees are Mohammad Selim, 35, of Keruntoli village, and Mohammad Ershadullah, 26, of Kaliakata village, of the upazila.

At a press conference, Maj Ruhul Amin, company commander of Rab-7 in Cox's Bazar, said Rab members,

SEE PAGE 11 COL 6

## Grim days ahead for Sundarbans

FROM PAGE 16

At least 17 research papers were presented at the programme on Friday and Saturday.

Environmental economist Susmita Dasgupta in her presentation said that the river water area could get as low as 17.1 percent by 2050.

World Fish, Bangladesh, conducted a study on five commercially important fish, including Parshey, Dateyna, Vetki, Tengra and Poa, and found that if 47,000 to 89,000 fish were available in low-saline water, the number dropped to 15,000 to 29,000 in high-saline water.

This suggested that the number of fish would reduce if salinity increased, said Golam Mustafa of World Fish, presenting the research.

Researchers there said the availability of slightly saline river water for irrigation would decrease to 11 percent by 2050, which is now around 30 percent.

River water in Barguna, Bhola, Jhalakathi, Khulna, and Patuakhali would not be useable for irrigation. And the Bhola irrigation project would be abandoned as the water of the Tentulia would cross the salinity threshold, according to the presentation on salinity in the coastal zone.

Almost 98 percent river water in Khulna and 97 percent river water in Bhola would exceed the salinity level.

Barisal, Pirojpur, and Bagerhat would face the worst crisis of freshwater. Freshwater zone would reduce by 85, 81, and 71 percent respectively in these three

districts, the experts said.

Prabhat Kumar Mishra, secretary of the Department of Fisheries of West Bengal, and Debal Ray, chief conservator of forest, Department of Forests, West Bengal, and Lia Carol Sieghart, environment programme leader, World Bank, also spoke in the inauguration programme while Prof Emeritus Ainun Nishat summed up the discussion.

Experts said the Sundarbans is of international importance and its conservation is mandated by international conventions and treaties.

They said climate change, in addition to other natural and human factors, would have significant implications for the present and future management of the Sundarbans.

## Fall of a star

FROM PAGE 1

Always a big voice for the religious minority communities in Bangladesh, the AL leader had been put on life support on Saturday night.

As the news of his passing broke, leaders and activists first thronged the hospital and then his Jhigatola residence as well as his ancestral home in Sunamganj, which he represented in the House for decades.

The body of the former railway minister was taken to his residence at 9:00am and from there to Dhakeshwari Temple. Later at 3:00pm, the body was taken to the Jatiya Sangsad premises where his colleagues and comrades paid their homage.

His body will be taken to Sylhet at 9:00am today and then to Sunamganj at 11:00am for people to pay their last respect. He will be cremated in Dirai upazila, his constituency.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury, ministers, BNP chief Khaleda Zia and Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, among others, have expressed deep shock at his death.

"Suranjit Sengupta was not only a political leader but also a veteran parliamentarian. He played a significant role in framing the country's first constitution," the president said in a condolence message.

Hasina said, "The country has lost a dedicated politician, while the Awami League has lost a dedicated leader in his death."

In her condolence message, Khaleda said the nation would not forget his role as an organiser of the Liberation War and

a politician.

"As a seasoned politician, Suranjit Sengupta raised his voice always in favour of the country and its people," she said.

Mirza Fakhrul termed him a "rare leader".

Later at night, parliament adopted a condolence motion and described Suranjit as a towering personality of the parliamentary democracy.

Colleagues remembered him as a parliamentarian who would always make the House floors vibrant. His ready wits and ready references to the constitution would make parliamentary debates, especially on legal and constitutional matters, rich, informative, enlightening, engaging and enjoyable.

The Sunamganj-2 MP was also the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on the law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry as well as a member of Awami League's advisory council.

Born on May 5, 1945, at Anowarpur in Dirai upazila, Suranjit was one of the youngest members of the East Pakistan Provincial Assembly in 1970 from National Awami Party (NAP).

Son of Debendranath Sengupta and Sumati Bala Sengupta, Suranjit completed his graduation and master's from Dhaka University and LLB from Central Law College.

He began his political career as a left ideologue during the turbulent times of 1960s. In student life, he was involved in Chhatra Union politics.

Youngest among four brothers and one sister, he fought the 1971 war as a sub sector commander in Sector 5 which operated in Sylhet region.

He was a vocal member of the

Opposition Bench in the constituent assembly of Bangladesh in 1972 and soon after he led a party called Ekota Party.

He has been an MP in almost all parliaments in the four decades since Bangladesh's independence -- in 1979, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2001, 2009 and 2014.

He was elected lawmaker from Ekota Party in 1979 and from Gonotantri Party in 1991. He then joined Awami League but lost in the 1996 polls, which he contested with AL ticket. Later, he was elected lawmaker through a by-election to that parliament.

He was the parliamentary affairs adviser to PM Hasina during the 1996-2001 Awami League-led government's tenure.

Suranjit became a cabinet member for the first time in 2011, but his short stint as a minister was mired in controversy over the seizure of allegedly some bribe money stashed in a car with one of his aides on board. He denied any wrongdoing, but tendered his resignation. However, the PM did not accept it and made him minister without portfolio instead.

In the previous parliament, he was the chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on law, justice and parliamentary affairs ministry and co-chairman of the constitution amendment committee.

During the 1/11 political changeover of 2007, he was considered a reformist in his party along with some other colleagues. Subsequently, he lost his membership in the AL presidium and was made a member of the party's advisory council, seen as a less powerful committee of the AL.

## Ex-secretary for sure?

FROM PAGE 1

meet President Abdul Hamid at the Bangabhaban at 6:30pm today.

All the commissioners would be below 70, he added.

In 2012, the then search committee proposed the names of two ex-bureaucrats -- Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmed, former parliament affairs secretary, and Ali Imam Majumder, ex-cabinet secretary -- for the CEC post. The then president Zillur Rahman picked Rakibuddin.

The tenure of the Rakibuddin-led EC expires on Wednesday.

On January 25, President Abdul Hamid formed the search panel, headed by Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, after holding talks with 31 political parties on

EC formation.

According to a gazette notification issued that day, the panel would recommend two names each for the posts of CEC and four election commissioners. And it would present its recommendations to the president in 10 working days.

On the PM's advice, the president would then appoint the CEC and the commissioners.

In its first meeting on January 28, the search committee requested 31 political parties to propose five names each for the posts of CEC and commissioners by January 31.

The panel then shortlisted 20 names from 125 names proposed by 26 political parties. It, however, didn't disclose the

names.

Most of the political parties proposed names of former bureaucrats for the CEC post.

Unlike the previous search committee, this panel held meetings with civil society members to get their views on EC formation.

Headed by Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, the search panel includes Justice Obaidul Hassan, a High Court judge; Muhammed Sadique, chairman of Bangladesh Public Service Commission; Masud Ahmed, comptroller and auditor general of Bangladesh; Prof Syed Manzoarul Islam, trustee board member of Transparency International Bangladesh; and Shireen Akhter, pro-vice chancellor of Chittagong University.

## BCIC rejoinder, our reply

FROM PAGE 1

because 16,500 MT urea was not carried by M/S. M Trading Company Pvt. Ltd, ship. It was M/S Swiss Singapore Overseas Enterprises Pte. Ltd, UAE who carried 16,500 MT urea under Bill of Lading (B/L) No. MH-01 dated 10-12-2011. Concern payments were made after completion of Post landing Inspection (PLI), joint survey report and discharge the urea. So the ship vanished without unloading a single bag of fertiliser is totally false and fabricated.

DS: Two departments of BCIC are involved in dealing with urea fertiliser. One department pays money once ships arrive and another receives the material. BCIC rightly claimed that payments were made to the carrier and we have also mentioned this in our story. However, we also mentioned that the fertiliser vanished as no warehouse received that quantity of fertiliser and so far the BCIC has failed to show any proof that they received the fertiliser.

Until the news was published, there was no Material Receive Record in the department concerned. Though there is record of unloading the fertiliser on paper, there is no existence of that fertiliser in reality. We reported M Trading carried the fertiliser but the name of the carrier will be Swiss Singapore Overseas Enterprises Pte. Ltd. We regret the error.

BCIC: M/S Nabab & Co. carried 21,500 MT Urea Fertilizer from MV Ikan Jebhu without BCIC's allocation. Among 21,500 M.ton, he delivered 21,120 M.tons to BCIC's Godown and police seized 380 M.tons in Dinajpur. So no Fertilizer was lost. In spite of that BCIC's branch office sent a letter to the Officer In-Charge of EPZ Thana to file

a case against M/S Nabab & Co. for taking Fertilizer without allotment letter from BCIC. It is mentionable that BCIC still did not pay the concern carrying bill.

M/S Nabab & Co. took 16,275 M.tons from MV Barbaros G with proper documents & did not lift any quantity from M.V. Green Field-1. So the report published regarding taking Fertilizer from MV Barbaros G & M.V. Green Field-1 without allotment is totally false.

DS: A BCIC document signed by four senior officials dated 20 April 2016 said Nabab carried 21,500 tonnes of fertiliser from MV Ikan Jebhu that arrived at Chittagong Port in March last year. We reported that the company escaped punishment by returning the fertiliser.

We regret to have reported the company took fertiliser from Green Field-1. Actually the company carried additional 13,354 tonnes without official allocation from four mother vessels named Ocean Melody, Oriental Harmony, MV Amelie and MV Nats Emperor and BCIC is still to receive that amount. The company got allocation of 50,185 tonnes but it carried 63,539 tonnes.

It also took 6,535 tonnes from another ship named Lord Nelson the same year but still did not hand it over.

We mentioned that the company took over 3,900 tonnes from Barbaros G without official allocation like it did with other ships. Except the amount, the company carried over 12,000 tonnes with documents.

BCIC: Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) imported 33,000 MT Urea from QATAR under Government to Government contract. M/S Sagarship Management Pte Ltd, Singapore was an international carrier and carried 33,000 MT urea per vessel

MV S. Atlantic. But due to failure of M/S Sagarship Management Pte Ltd, Singapore to discharge the Urea, then BCIC as per court order against Admiralty Suit No. 35/2015 discharged the whole urea. BCIC later has taken action against M/S Sagarship Management Pte Ltd, Singapore for this misconduct by debarring through gazette notification from participating any tender of BCIC and taking of legal action against the said company is under process. But M. Trading is not related to MVS. Atlantic Vessel.

DS: We mentioned in our story that the company was later barred from participating in tenders for failing to unload fertiliser from another vessel. We mentioned M. Trading as the company is the local carrier of the Sagarship Management.

BCIC: BCIC has no record to receive bulk Urea instead of bag at warehouse level.

DS: We did not claim so in our story. BCIC board meeting on 21 April observed that M Trading delivered 7827 tonnes of urea fertiliser to Nabab & Company in bulk form which the BCIC itself termed as a clear breach of the contract.

BCIC: No mother Vessel can reach at Chittagong jetty due to its draft. This is why mother Vessel anchors at deep sea. After lightering some quantity in presence of BCIC's officials & surveyors the mother Vessel reaches to Port jetty. There is no scope of stealing Urea Fertilizer.

DS: BCIC officials told this paper that there is scope of stealing urea fertiliser while discharging from mother vessel to lighter vessels.

BCIC: BCIC has to maintain a stock of 6 to 8 lac M.Ton Urea Fertilizer for whole

the year to fulfill demand of the country. But storage capacity of BCIC's factory & Buffer Godowns is only 3 (three) lac M.tons. As a result some portion of Fertilizer remaining on transshipment. It is a continuous process of fertilizer distribution system from the beginning of BCIC. So, Transit quantity stands to 2,58,723 M.T. on 31st December' 16 as per BCIC's daily report. It is being delivered to Godowns & Factories gradually.

For the constraint of space at Godowns & Fertilizer factory, in some cases it is not possible on the part of carrying contractors to deliver the Fertilizer within 21 days. The Godown in charge doesn't receive any underweight bag and so far BCIC did not receive any allegation from any corner that the Godowns In-charge issue MRR having any benefits.

DS: According to the BCIC statistics the closing stock of the urea fertilizer was 4.54 lakh in 2009 which increased to 7.80 lakh in 2014. The amount of fertilizer in stock jumped to 9 lakh in 2015 and 12.93 lakh in 2016.

We mentioned in our story the sudden rise of fertiliser in transit has created further scope of misappropriation. Terming it "serious irregularities", an internal audit of BCIC dated Feb 2, 2016 shows that the record of over 3.25 lakh tonnes in transit fertiliser worth Tk 1515 crore was not kept properly. A commercial audit on October 24 last year said due to mismatch of accounts of fertiliser in transit, BCIC had incurred a loss of Tk 227 crore. We reported that crores of taka had been misappropriated by a syndicate in the name of fertiliser in transit with impunity.

We have also mentioned that the local

transporters are taking advantage of the space shortage in the BCIC warehouses across the country and not delivering the fertiliser within the contracted period of 21 days. There is provision of fine if any carrier company fails to deliver within the timeframe but no action was taken against any company on this ground making it easy for the carriers to continue the malpractice. As per BCIC documents, there are lots of cases where the carriers have not handed over fertiliser year after year. BCIC has poor documentation about the carrier based fertiliser in transit which is making it difficult for it to deal with urea fertiliser in transit, according to a document of the organisation.

BCIC: BCIC have already taken departmental action against those officers who are involved with issuing additional allotment to M/S Surma Banijyik Sangstha without approval from the competent authority.

DS: BCIC's claim about taking departmental action against the officials is not supported by facts. It only suggested taking actions against four of its officials in this connection. So far no action has been taken. Three officials are still working and one has gone on LPR (Leave Prior to Retirement).

M/S SURMA BANIJYIK SANGSTHA'S REJOINDER

In a separate rejoinder, M/S Surma Banijyik Sangstha said the news regarding the company that it transported 10,000 tonnes of fertiliser without approval is completely false and baseless and has been published to tarnish the image of the company.

DS: BCIC's reports show the company did transport the said fertiliser without approval. We stand by our report.

## Pakistan

FROM PAGE 16

The case created a media stir and shone a spotlight on the two countries' decades-long dispute over divided Kashmir, over which they have fought two full-scale wars.

Kiani, a resident of the Pakistani-controlled part of the territory, told AFP yesterday she was overwhelmed with happiness and prepared to forgive her estranged husband, who is from Indian-controlled Kashmir.

"I'm extremely happy and unable to express my joy. I pardon my husband and hope he will also join us soon to live with us here in Pakistan," she told AFP.

Tantray was among thousands who crossed the de facto border into Pakistani Kashmir while an insurgency was at its peak in the Indian sector.

He later married Kiani, but wanted the family to return to his home village following the birth of their son. When Kiani refused, Tantray absconded with the child last March.

Kiani pursued a custody case in an Indian court through the Pakistani embassy in New Delhi, and the court ruled in her favour.

"We are thankful to Indian authorities for their cooperation in this humanitarian matter," Pakistan's high commissioner (ambassador) Abdul Basit tweeted.

Kiani also thanked both governments, and urged them to come together to find a lasting solution to the Kashmir conflict.

"Thousands of people are suffering from grief and sorrow because of this dispute. The Kashmir issue must be solved to end problems of people living on both sides of Kashmir," she said.