

# Family devastated by boiler blast

KONGON KARMAKER, from Dinajpur

Muzam Ali along with his five brothers got out of home on Wednesday morning to go to Jamuna Automatic Rice Mill at Gopalganj in the district.

Sons of 78-year-old Jahir Mohammad of Muzahidpur village under Sadar upazila, all six brothers were workers of the mill.

As rain started, Muzam went back home halfway from the destination.

"Around 12:30pm, some villagers informed me about boiler explosion at the mill. I rushed to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital and found my five brothers there. Four of them were badly burned, while Mokbul Hossain escaped the explosion with minor injuries," he added.

Three of his brothers -- Mokshed Ali, 55, Rustam Ali, 45, and Delwar Hossain, 38, --have died so far at Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) and Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Condition of the fourth brother, Badal Mia, who has been undergoing treatment at RMCH, was stated to be critical.

"Six of my grandchildren have lost their fathers in the boiler blast. I do not

know what will happen to them in future," said Jahir, adding, the sons were the lone bread earners of their respective families.

Mokhiba Khatun, 72, mother of the three deceased brothers, has been in a trauma since their deaths. "She might die from the shock anytime," said Roksana, her daughter.

Villagers gathered around their houses to console the grieved families after hearing the news.

As many as 12 people including a woman have so far died in the blast. Five of them were from Muzahidpur village, three from Rudrapur village and the rest were from Bhabanipur village under Sadar upazila.

Shafiqul Islam, boiler operator who was badly injured when a brick hit him after the blast, told The Daily Star that the boiler was faulty and he had several times warned owner Subal Ghosh in vain.

"The boiler went off with a big bang around 11:30am on Wednesday," Shafiqul said, adding, when he recovered his strength, he came out and saw many people crying for help.

After seeing severed limbs around he fainted and later found himself on

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



An inconsolable 72-year-old Mokhiba Khatun grieves for her three sons who died in a boiler explosion at a rice mill in Dinajpur on April 19. Another son is in critical condition at the Rangpur Medical College Hospital. The death toll from the boiler blast now stands at 12.

PHOTO: STAR

## BNP spreading propaganda about uranium in haor water

Alleges Hasina

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday accused the BNP of spreading propaganda about the existence of uranium in floodwater of haor areas.

"Fishes and other aquatic animals usually die when any area is affected by flood or tidal surges. We're collecting information why fishes and aquatic animals are dying in haor areas. But there are some people who are habituated to spreading propaganda on any issue," she said.

The PM was speaking at a meeting of the Awami League nomination board on local government elections at the Gono Bhaban in the evening.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 5

## Still lost in the depths of sorrow

FROM PAGE 1

Rana Plaza victims by placing wreaths at the sculpture of a hammer and sickle. The structure was built to commemorate the Rana Plaza victims.

In one of the world's worst disasters, over 1,135 workers were killed after the building collapsed near Savar bus stand on the outskirts of the capital.

Their families and the survivors, many of whom were crippled, are still reeling from the shock of the incident that also raised a worldwide hue and cry about workers' safety in Bangladeshi garment factories.

Lipi Akhter, 18, had been working as a helper at a factory housed on the third floor of the Rana Plaza since January 2013.

The night before the tragedy struck, Lipi called her mother, Mazedra, over phone and told her that cracks had developed on some walls of the building.

Lipi also said she would meet her family in Rajbari's Goalanda on receiving her monthly wage for April. She

could not keep the promise.

"My daughter always wanted to see us happy. But sadly, today she is not among us," Mazedra told The Daily Star, after she regained consciousness.

Lipi's body was traced three days after the disaster and was buried in Goalanda later on.

However, many were not that lucky as Mazedra who could see her loved one for the one last time.

Rickshaw-puller Rahim Sheikh, 46, could not even find the body of her daughter Sohima Begum, who used to work at a garment factory in the building.

Officials conducted his DNA tests later and found that his daughter had already been buried in the Jurain graveyard in the capital.

The family used to live in a rented house in Savar. After Sohima's death, they were so disturbed that they left Savar and returned to their village home in Tangail's Nagarpur.

The story of Afroza Begum, 30, is also heartrending. A worker at a gar-

ment factory housed on the seventh floor of the building, Afroza was rescued six hours after it collapsed.

She still suffers from acute pain in her backbone and other parts of her body.

"I cannot sit or walk properly. It is very painful," said Afroza, a jobless mother of four children, who came from Gaibandha.

According to a survey by NGO Action Aid, 42 percent of the Rana Plaza survivors are still unemployed.

Of them, 48.1 percent are physically weak and 33.4 percent psychologically.

Expressing frustration at her current state, Afroza said, "It would have been much better if I had died that day. No one can understand the pain I have been going through."

### POLICE INTERCEPT RALLY

Workers and activists who yesterday went to the Rana Plaza site to pay tribute alleged that police prevented them from forming a human chain there.

"Don't we have the right to mourn? This is unfortunate," said Noor Jahan,

sister of a deceased worker, Al Amin.

Meanwhile, police allegedly baton-charged leaders and activists of Bangladesh Garment Sramik Trade Union Kendra as they gathered near the site to hold a procession in the afternoon.

At least six people were injured. They took primary treatment at a local clinic, said the body's Organising Secretary Khairul Mamun Mintu.

Contacted, Savar's Assistant Superintendent of Police Mahbubur Rahman rejected the allegation. He claimed police removed the activists peacefully from the highway to avoid traffic jam.

The leaders of different trade unions demanded trial for the loss of life in incidents like Rana Plaza collapse and Tazreen fire, safety of garment workers and compensation to the victims.

Meanwhile, relatives and labour activists also went to the Jurain graveyard to pay tribute to 291 unidentified Rana Plaza victims buried there.

## Raudha's body exhumed

### Findings of second autopsy yet to come

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The medical board, which performed a second autopsy on Maldivian medical student and model Raudha Athif yesterday, did not give any opinion on the cause of her death, reasoning that they found the body partially decomposed.

"We could not come up with any opinion immediately as her neck decomposed fast due to its dissection during the first autopsy," said the medical board's chief, Amirul Hossain Chowdhury, coming out of a Rajshahi Medical College morgue after a three-hour autopsy.

A ligature mark was partially visible on the neck while the carotid artery and hyoid bone were intact and soft tissue was decomposed, said

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Druggies beat up schoolgirl at home

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhalakathi

An eight year old girl was assaulted after confronting two young men taking drugs inside the compound of her house on Saturday afternoon at Adakhola village of Rajapur upazila in Jhalakathi.

Abul Kalam, father of the victim, said his younger daughter Ity Aktar, 8, is a student of class-III at the local Adakhola Govt Primary School.

"On Saturday afternoon two local boys Foisal and Altaf entered the compound of our house and started smoking drugs when my parents were away from home," Ity told this correspondent at Rajapur Health Complex where she was undergoing treatment.

"I confronted them and asked them not to do so but they would not listen to me, so I shouted at them to leave our house," she said.

The two men then attacked her when she sat down to lunch.

"They repeatedly hit me and I screamed for help and at one stage lost consciousness. My elder sister who was near about our house rushed home and brought me to Rajapur Health Complex," she said.

Ity has had blurred vision in her left eye since the attack.

Rent-bike riders Altaf and Foisal are known to locals for being "drug addicts", her father said.

Abul Khayer Rasel, residential medical officer of the health complex, said, "Ity is now out of danger. She was attacked on her face and eyes."

"Where will we find safe places? We are not safe even in our house during day time," said Sathi Aktar, Ity's older sister.

"I objected to their using drugs inside our compound because I don't like it and no one is permitted to use our house for drugs," said Ity who is determined to stand against use of drugs.

A written complaint has been filed and proper action will be taken after investigation, said Sheikh Munirul Giash, officer-in-charge of Rajapur Police Station.



Flood water rushes through the breach in the dyke on Sunamganj's Paknar Haor -- the only haor in the district's Jamalganj upazila that remained unaffected until yesterday -- flooding about 8,000 hectares of cropland. Just a day before, floodwater damaged the dyke of Shanir Haor, submerging vast tracts of paddy fields.

PHOTO: STAR

## Radiation not alarming

FROM PAGE 1

embankment at Paknar Haor breached at different points since Sunday night.

Paknar Haor was the lone haor which remained unaffected after onrush of water damaged Shanir Haor in the district's Tahipur upazila on Sunday.

Locals tried to save the embankment at Paknar Haor from breaching, but their efforts were in vain due to excessive rain and onrush of water from hilly areas in the upstream, reports our correspondent, quoting Nurul Huda, chairman of Sunamganj District Council.

About 8,000 hectares of cropland have so far gone under water, according to Prashun Kumar Chakrabarti, upazila nirbahi officer of Jamalganj.

The embankment at Paknar Haor breached at Oraorkandi point. Surges of floodwater submerged boro crop on a large area of land, the UNO said.

Besides, many villages have gone under water too.

An unusual early flashflood struck the entire haor region in the country's northeast late last month and damaged boro crops on nearly two lakh

hectares of land in Sunamganj, Netrokona, Moulvibazar and some other adjoining districts. Conservative estimates put the loss of rice at over half a million tonnes.

According to government statistics, about 1,276 tonnes of fish and 3,844 ducks died in the haors.

### WHAT CAUSED DEATHS?

Media reports in India and Bangladesh over uranium mining in Meghalaya West Khasi Hills region and its exposure on the Ranikor river, just across Sunamganj border, and the subsequent deaths of fish in Sunamganj haors prompted the BAEC to go for tests.

A 10-member BAEC team visited Sunamganj and collected samples. Upon completion of tests, the team leader and a member (physical science) of BAEC, Dilip Kumar Saha, told The Daily Star yesterday that they found the radiation level was within the permissible limits.

Saha said they carried out "Gamma Spectrometry" and "Inductively Coupled Plasma Mass Spectrometry" (ICP-MS) tests at two of their laborato-

ries and found no alarming radioactive materials in haor waters.

Most radioactive sources produce gamma rays, which are of various energies and intensities. When these emissions are detected and analyzed with a spectroscopy system, a gamma-ray energy spectrum can be produced.

ICP-MS is a type of mass spectrometry which is capable of detecting metals and several non-metals at concentrations as low as one part in 1015 (part per quadrillion, ppq) on non-interfered low-background isotopes.

The BAEC member said though they didn't test other aspects of contamination, it was presumed that ammonia gas from submerged rice plants and the dissolved urea and pesticides contaminated the haor waters for a few days, causing deaths of fish and ducks. However, things were improving after fresh rainwater lessened the contamination, he added.

He said the fisheries department identified rotting of submerged rice plants as the cause of deaths of aquatic plants and animals. Earlier, some local

fishermen viewed that rotten rice plants could be a probable reason behind the deaths, said some department officials.

However, Department of Agriculture Extension officials found it difficult to subscribe to this argument as they said rice plants were submerged in the past, but that never caused deaths of fish and ducks.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, former head of the government's haor development board M Inamul Haque said mining of coal in the upstream areas might have some consequences on quality of water in the downstream -- Bangladesh's haor areas.

### CREDIT RECOVERY POSTPONED

Bangladesh Bank yesterday postponed recovery of agriculture credit from farmers in haor regions considering the huge losses they suffered due to the flashflood.

The central bank asked all commercial banks to provide facilities to farmers to reschedule their credit through relaxation of down payment or easy installment.

## China releases

### Findings of second autopsy yet to come

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Manoj Sinha released the coffee-scented stamps at the General Post Office in Bengaluru on Sunday.

Seetharaman also took to Twitter to celebrate the launch of the coffee-flavoured stamps.

The stamps, which are being printed at the India Security Press, will be priced at Rs 100. Already, one lakh stamps have been printed for sale to collectors.

These stamps will be made available at the Philately Bureau, Bangalore General Post Office, and all other head post offices.

Bhutan was the first country to release aromatic stamps in 1973. New Zealand, Thailand and Switzerland joined in later.

In 2006, India introduced its first aromatic stamp, with a Rs 15 sandal-wood-scented stamp where 30 lakh of these sold out within two weeks.

In 2007, rose-scented stamps were released in four varieties of flower- Jawahar, Neelam, Delhi Princess and Bhim- each priced at five bucks and a jasmin fragrance in 2008.