

DRUG CASES

## Majority ends in acquittal

Narcotics officials say faulty charge sheets, lack of witnesses are to blame

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and SHARIFUL ISLAM

In the first nine months of this year, more than 60 percent of the accused got acquitted in drug-related cases, and narcotics control officials blame the poor conviction rate mainly on the faulty charge sheets and a lack of witnesses.

The scenarios were almost similar in the previous two years.

In the circumstances, most of the criminals are going back to the drug trade once they come out of jail, police and narcotics control officials say.

Different courts delivered judgments in 11,862 drug cases between January and September this year, acquitting 9,231 of the 15,212 accused, show data from the Police Headquarters. Around 55 percent suspects were acquitted in 2015 and 56 percent last year.

That happened despite tests, carried out at the labs of Department of Narcotics Control (DNC), confirmed that evidence found in possession of the suspects were indeed drugs, said officials from the department.

In the first six months of this year, the department examined 28,000 samples of evidence collected from law enforcers and all the tests were positive for drugs, Dulal Krishna Saha, chief forensic expert at DNC central laboratory, told The Daily Star.

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Ignoring the danger, a pick-up truck drives against the traffic as other vehicles avoid it in the capital's Hatirjheel area yesterday. Such reckless driving puts lives at risk. Several people were injured in an accident in Hatirjheel only a day ago when a car smashed into a bridge guard rail before falling into a roadside ditch.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Intention is to harass Khaleda

BNP chief's counsel tells court about Zia orphanage graft case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The lawyer of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia yesterday argued that none of the 32 witnesses in the Zia Orphanage Trust graft case could testify that she had abused power when she was in office.

Abdur Rezak Khan, a senior counsel of Khaleda, during the argument also said the Anti-Corruption Commission filed the case "with an intention to harass her".

"The Anti-Corruption Commission has failed to prove any of the allegations brought against her," Rezak Khan added.

The lawyer of the former premier placed the closing arguments before the Dhaka Special Court-5 in Bakshibazar for the third consecutive day.

Judge Md Akhteruzzaman of the makeshift court adjourned the argument hearing for yesterday. The next day for closing arguments is today.

On December 21, the court fixed December 26-28 for placing the defence's closing arguments in the graft cases against Khaleda.

The BNP chief yesterday appeared before the court around 11:30am and stayed there until the adjournment

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## Halda losing fish species

Study says 26 species lost in 7 years due to pollution

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, CG

The Halda river, the lone source of natural carp breeding in South Asia, lost 26 of its fish species in the past seven years because of water pollution and an ailing biotic community due to the dams and dikes built on both sides of the river.

The river in south-eastern Bangladesh originates at the Badnatahi Hill Ranges in Ramgarh upazila in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, and flows through Fatikchhari upazila, Bhujup Thana, Hathazari upazila, Raozan upazila and Chandgaon Thana of the Chittagong, and falls into the Karnaphuli River.

The 98-kilometre long river has a turbulent tributary, the Dhurung River, which joins Purba Dhalai about 48 kilometres downstream. The river is navigable by both big and small boats as it reaches up to 21 feet in depth, reaching even 30 feet at its deepest point.

A study completed last year -- Impact Assessment on Upstream Water Withdrawal to Conserve Natural Breeding Habitat of Major Carps in the River Halda -- looked at the various factors responsible for the loss in its fish species. It pointed at the residue released by factories, siltation, tobacco farming and sand extraction as primary reasons.

The research was financed by the fisheries and livestock ministry and

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The Halda river in Chittagong has lost many of its fish species in recent years, thanks to water pollution and dams built on the river. Water of the 98km-long river gets polluted by waste released from factories. Many local fishermen are leaving their profession as they cannot make a living from the river any more. The photos were taken in Ahmadiapara, some 20km off Chittagong city, on Saturday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Tarique assured Aug 21 attackers of admin's help  
Prosecution tells court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The prosecution in the August 21 attack cases yesterday told a Dhaka court that BNP Senior Vice-Chairman Tarique Rahman had assured Huji leader Mufti Abdul Hannan and his accomplices of all administrative assistance in carrying out the grenade attack on an Awami League rally in 2004.

Syed Rezaur Rahman, chief prosecutor in the August 21 attack cases, said this while reading out the testimony of Abdul Karim Akond, investigation officer of the cases.

Kahar, special superintendent of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), was also the 225th and last prosecution witness in the cases.

Judge Shahed Nuruddin of the Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 of Dhaka heard the arguments of the prosecution for around three hours.

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## India hits back on Kashmir border

Army kills 3 Pakistani soldiers in a 'tactical retaliatory strike'

HINDUSTAN TIMES

Commandos of the Indian Army crossed the Line of Control (LoC) on Monday night and killed at least three Pakistani soldiers in a "tactical retaliatory strike", Indian government sources said yesterday, amid heightened military and diplomatic tension between the two neighbours.

The attack was carried out two days after four Indian Army personnel, including a Major, were killed by Pakistan in an ambush in Kashmir's Kerri-Rajouri sector.

The sources said the military action could not be termed a "surgical strike" -- like the one conducted last September, when Indian army commandos went across the LoC to target alleged terror launch pads operated by Pakistan.

The Indian Army officially declined to confirm or deny whether its commandos had crossed the LoC, but the Pakistan Army on Tuesday confirmed the death of three soldiers at Rukh Chakri sector in Rawlakot, describing it as "unprovoked heavy cross-border shelling by Indian forces".

Monday's raid, conducted 250m across the LoC by five to seven soldiers of an infantry battalion's Ghatak commandos, was planned at the local level.

A defence source said that at 6pm on Monday, the commandos launched the cross-border raid under suppressive fire from the Indian posts and

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You are with every beat of our heart



Aaron H. Chowdhury (Danny)

29th June 1981 - 27th December 2002

Anita Chowdhury (Dida), Bula & Tapan Chowdhury (Parents), Anika Chowdhury (Sister)  
And all loving members of the family