

## Breaking a taboo

### Female students in a Pabna school elated as emergency sanitary pad corner opens

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPIU, Pabna

Last month, Ranjita Roy, an eighth grader of Chatmohar Pilot Girls' High School, faced an unavoidable challenge during her half-yearly examinations. Her period began while in the exam hall and she did not have the option to go home and get a sanitary pad.

"I could not go to the invigilator with my problem because he was a man. I quickly excused myself to the washroom, used tissues and went back to the exam hall," she said.

Like her, most school-going girls face a lot of problems during their monthly periods. The lack of sufficient hygiene system and awareness in society are what make matters worse for these girls.

However, the 400 students of Chatmohar Pilot Girls' High School saw a drastic change made yesterday to help this monthly "discomfort" go away - the setting up of an Emergency Pad Corner.

An initiative of a Dhaka-based voluntary organisation Bojromushthi, the pad corner was set up under their 'Donate a Pad for hygiene Bangladesh' programme.

Project Coordinator Marzia Prova, said, "Female students in our country

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Students of Chatmohar Pilot Girls' High School pose for a photo with two volunteers, not in uniform, of Bojromushthi, the organisation that took an initiative to make sanitary napkins available in the school. Inset, Chatmohar Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Sarkar Ashim Kumar inaugurates the programme yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## BNP focuses on national unity before election

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The BNP is focusing on making a success its ongoing efforts to forge a national unity to compel the government to hold an inclusive election under a non-partisan neutral administration.

It has long been working to bring the political parties, which are out of the ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance, under a single platform.

As part of that initiative, its leaders have already held a series of meetings with Bikalpadhara Bangladesh, Jatuya Samajtantrik Dal (Rob), Nagorik Oikya, Gono Forum and some left leaning parties. The party has asked leaders to complete the process soon, insiders say.

The BNP yesterday held a six-hour meeting where its standing committee members discussed a six-point plan.

The six points are about release of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, movement strategy to mount pressure on the government to accept their demand for elections under a non-partisan government, participation in the next parliamentary election, forging national unity with other political parties, pressing for the formation of non partisan neutral administration and dialogues with the government.

The party leaders could not reach any decision and they will sit again tomorrow evening at the party chairperson's Gulshan office.

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## POSSESSING DRUGS Ex-minister's PS, two cops arrested

UNB, Dhaka

Seven people, including former foreign minister Morshed Khan's personal secretary and two policemen, have been arrested allegedly in possession of Phensedyl and yaba tablets in Chittagong and Khulna.

In Chittagong, police picked up Mosharruf Uddin, 43, PS to the former minister, and his accomplice Khalil alias Ahmad Khalil, 41, along with 145 bottles of Phensedyl syrup from a private car in the city's Kadamtali area on Friday night.

Mohammad Mohsin, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station, said a police team signaled for a car to pull over at the BRTC intersection around 11:00pm.

However, the vehicle sped away defying the signal, prompting the law enforcers to chase it.

At one stage, cops managed to catch the car; seized contraband Phensedyl syrup from it and arrested Mosharruf and Khalil. Their other cohort Aminullah, 35, managed to flee.

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## Listed, now 'cleared of' drug links

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Superintendent of Police in Khulna SM Shafiqullah, however, said, "We have transferred some policemen to different police stations as their names appeared on the list."

Brahmanbaria additional SP Iqbal Hossain said they did not find anything against the law enforcers.

Rangpur SP Mizanur Rahman said their investigation was still underway and that they were yet to find any evidence against the cops.

The cases were almost similar in the other districts.

Queried about the names on the PMO list, sources in those districts, however, said most of the law enforcers maintain "underhand deals" with drug dealers.

For example, Mossarraf Hossain Tarafder, the OC of Akhaura Police Station in Brahmanbaria, whose name is on the list, was allegedly close to wanted drug dealer Hannan Mia alias Hannan Member.

Mossarraf never took any action against Hannan. Rather, they were seen roaming together on several occasions, according to top ruling party leaders in Akhaura and other locals.

Ali Arshad, OC of Bijoyagar Police Station in the district, has also been named in the list.

Hossain Mohammad Dulal, joint secretary of Bijoyagar AL, has been

selling Phensedyl for years maintaining close ties with OCArshad, said Al Amin, a former organising secretary of the upazila Chhatra League.

Asked, Md Moniruzzaman, additional deputy inspector general (special affairs and intelligence) at the PHQ, claimed that they took "punitive actions" against most of the listed policemen.

He, however, refused to disclose what those actions were.

Asked about the total number of policemen on the list, he said he could not recall that instantly but said it would be between 200 and 300.

Quite often, arrests of policemen along with yaba tablets make headlines.

In the latest incident, two policemen were arrested for possessing 1,050 yaba pills in Khulna city's Khalishpur area yesterday. They are Assistant Sub-inspector Abdullah Al Mamun of Armed Police Battalion (APBn) and DB police constable Sohanur Rahman.

On June 9, DB police arrested constable Al Amin while he was allegedly selling yaba pills on the premises of a court in Mymensingh.

Earlier on April 23, police arrested DB Assistant Sub-inspector (ASI) Nasir Uddin, posted in Rangamati, along with 4,000 yaba pills. Narayanjanj DB arrested ASI Suhrawardy Rubel with 50,000 yaba pills on March 8.

Several internal reports found cops guilty over such incidents but police negligence in taking appropriate action against them is apparent.

For example, the discipline and professional standard wing of the PHQ submitted a report against Cox's Bazar SP Iqbal Hossain and 11 other cops after its investigation found that the law enforcers were involved in selling some 9.90 lakh yaba tablets. The pills were seized by a DB team on October 27, 2017.

After Bashir Uddin from the DB filed a complaint, the PHQ launched an investigation into the incident.

Wising not to be named, a top official from the PHQ unit said they have submitted their report against the SP, two additional SPs, an OC, four SIs and ASIs, and three constables.

The report suggested departmental action against the SP and the two additional SPs for "misconduct" as they did not supervise the investigation properly and allowed the investigators to submit a charge sheet without checking it properly.

The other officials were charged with yaba sale, conducting a fake investigation and submitting a faulty charge sheet, sources said.

However, the authorities are yet to take any concrete action against the cops. On Wednesday, the two ASPs were transferred

to other police stations, added the sources.

Contacted, Habibur Rahman, deputy inspector general (DIG) at the PHQ, said they received the investigation report and would take action against the culprits soon.

Asked about actions against the 300 policemen on the PMO list, he claimed steps were taken against a number of the cops as per the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC). He, however, would not explain further.

Replying to a query on the issue, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan recently said they were not "sparing anyone".

"Possibly you are not getting all the messages," he said at a programme in the capital, adding that the law enforcers were facing departmental action and suspension.

"One or two have already been sent to jail," he said, without explaining.

Intelligence report suggests over a dozen policemen have links with drug smuggling in Dhaka Metropolitan Police area, said sources.

Asked about it, DB Joint Commissioner Abdul Baten said apart from taking actions against police members, they were also trying to motivate other law enforcers not to get involved in drug crimes.

## SHIMULIA-KATHALBARI Ferry services suspended as water level falls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Ferry service on Shimulia-Kathalbari river route has been suspended due to lack of navigability, affecting people from 21 southern districts and resulting in long tailbacks.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC) stopped the service on the river route at 5:30 pm yesterday and are currently looking for an alternative route.

The current route falls right on the Dhaka-Mawa-Khulna Highway, known as the gateway to the 21 districts.

The suspension has made uncertain the trips of several hundred VIPs who use the ferry to go to Tungipara to offer Fateha at the mazar of Bangabandhu on August 15.

Homebound passengers on the occasion of Eid may also face difficulties if the service remains suspended.

Assistant General Manager (AGM) of BIWTC Khandker Shah Khaled Newaz said a depth of seven to eight feet of water was required for the movement of ferries on the channel, but at

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## People elected me braving conspiracy

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Polling at Gazi Borhan Uddin Garam Dewan Govt Primary School and Habinandi Govt Primary School centres was cancelled on July 30 following allegations of irregularities.

Yesterday, Ariful secured 1,044 and 1,053 votes at the two centres respectively, while Kamran polled 173 and 354 votes.

On July 30, the BNP nominee was leading the mayoral race with 90,496 votes as the AL candidate secured 85,870 votes.

During the polling yesterday, Ariful said people have proved that conspiracies do not work for changing the results of an election.

Referring to the polling on July 30, he said he was leading the mayoral race despite so many conspiracies.

Both Ariful and Kamran expressed satisfaction over holding the re-polling in a free, fair and impartial manner.

No complaints of voting irregularities were filed with the Election Commission yesterday.

Parvez Ahmed, who exercised his franchise at Habinandi Govt Primary School, said, "I could not cast my vote on July 30 as all the ballots were snatched and stuffed into boxes. I cast my vote today [yesterday] peacefully."

'DEV WORKS TO CONTINUE'

Talking to journalists at the returning officer's office after the announcement of unofficial results last night, Ariful said he was grateful to the people of Sylhet city who elected him to serve a second term as mayor.

"I am grateful to the citizens who elected me mayor. They showed the real power of democracy."

Asked if he would be able to continue carrying out development works, the BNP leader said, "I was an elected mayor and the government helped the elected mayor implement the development projects. I believe whichever party forms the next government would help me in this regard in the next five years."

Meanwhile, AL candidate Kamran in a press statement last night wel



BNP mayoral nominee Ariful Haque Choudhury among his party leaders cheer after unofficially winning the Sylhet City Corporation polls yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

comed the polls results.

"I thank everyone who supported me in the election. I will be helping the newly elected mayor," he said.

**FACTORS INFLUENCING RESULTS**

The two leading mayor candidates' approach towards development was one of the key factors in the polls results. Moreover, BNP contesting the polls without the backing of Jamaat had a positive impact on Ariful's success, said AL and BNP leaders.

Kamran had been at the helm of Nagar Bhaban for 17 years since 1996. He was elected chairman of the then Sylhet Municipality. In 2003, he was elected as the first mayor of newly formed SCC.

After serving two terms as Sylhet

mayor, Kamran lost to Ariful in 2013 as the voters rejected him due to his insignificant achievements.

Talking to The Daily Star, Asad Uddin Ahmed, general secretary of Sylhet city AL, said, "People rejected the Awami League candidate in the city polls as he did not think of the city's development. Ariful as a mayor got support from the Awami League government due to his positive approach towards development."

AL Organising Secretary Misbah Uddin Siraj echoed the views of Asad Uddin.

Kamran, however, denied the allegations of his party colleagues. He said Ariful highlighted the development works which was implemented in

Sylhet city by the AL government as part of its national development projects.

Asad Uddin also said the AL didn't have any understanding with Jamaat over the SCC polls, but the party candidate might have had an understanding with the Jamaat-backed mayor candidate.

"As the BNP alleged that Jamaat made a secret deal with the Awami League, it influenced the progressive voters who are anti-Jamaat," he added.

Nasim Hossain, president of Sylhet city BNP, said the SCC polls showed how the ruling AL lost its popularity over the years.

The re-polling at two centres proved that AL would have lost the mayoral polls by huge votes if the July 30 elections were held peacefully, he added.

## Police gather

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news and rumours. And some 150 to 200 of those were violent in nature. Analysing them, we have got details about 100 social media accounts," Najmul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of DMP's cyber security division, told The Daily Star.

He said the usernames could be false but police have identified the IP addresses and mobile phones used for running those accounts.

The police official added that people who just called for the student movement or joined the demonstrations were not the targets as it is their democratic right.

"But we will take action against those who carried out violent activities, incited unrest or tried to divert the movement into some other direction."

As police are arresting people involved in spreading rumours on social media, some went into hiding or undercover and some deactivated their pages, he added.

Asked if officials came to know about any organised group, the ADC said, police have identified some "dissident voices" who had started spreading rumours on Facebook and they are the "real culprits." He didn't make it clear who they are but said police were trying to arrest them.

Meanwhile, Inspector General of Police Mohammad Javed Patwary during a meeting at the Police Headquarters yesterday, asked all to stay alert so that no person or group can cause deterioration of law and order through any sort of propaganda on social media.

On Friday, the police chief in Chandpur said they have identified many who tried to cash in on the recent student protests and create anarchy.

Action has been taken against some of them and the rest will also be brought to book, he said.

Earlier on Thursday, Bangladesh Chhatra League General Secretary Golam Rabbani said they have identified some 700 Facebook profiles that "spread rumours" over the student movement, and he requested the ICT

minister to take action against those account holders.

School and college students began an unprecedented movement demanding concrete government steps to improve road safety following the deaths of two of their peers in a city road crash on July 29.

Dia Khanam Mim and Abdul Karim Rajib were killed on the spot as a Jabal-e-Noor bus ploughed through a crowd while competing with another bus of the same company.

Outraged, thousands of students took to the streets chanting "We Want Justice" and taking it upon themselves to discipline the city's traffic.

On August 4 and 5, the last two days of the protests, the city saw brutal assaults on students staging demonstrations and checking licence and registration of vehicles. Around 250 people, mostly protesters, were injured in clashes and attacks.

Over the incidents of violence, 29 cases have been filed under the Penal Code, and 41 people, including 22 students of private universities, were arrested.

All the 22 students were denied bail and sent to jail on Thursday after being remanded for two days each.

Besides, at least 20 people were arrested under section 57 of the ICT Act in connection with rumours, propaganda and fake news centring the movement. They were shown arrested in nine cases -- six with different police stations in Dhaka and one each in Chittagong, Sirajganj and Bogra.

Noted photographer Shahidul Alam was arrested on Sunday night in a case filed under the controversial section on charges of spreading propaganda and false information against the government.

Besides, actress Quazi Nawshaba Ahmed was detained from Uttara on August 4 on the allegation of spreading rumours on social media. Police said she did so to create anarchy and confuse people.

A Dhaka court on Friday granted her a fresh two-day remand in a case filed under the ICT act.