

LOUHAJANG RIVER Textile mill fined Tk 51 lakh for pollution

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The Alauddin Textile Mills, which had been polluting the Louhajang River in Tangail for long now, has been fined. Rubina Ferdousee, director (monitoring and enforcement), Department of Environment, slapped Tk 5,184,000 fine to the factory authorities yesterday.

She sent a letter to the managing director of the mill in this connection, Mujahidul Islam, deputy director at the Department of Environment Tangail office, told this paper.

According to the letter, officials of the Department of Environment, Tangail, had visited the mill at Khudirampur village in Tangail sadar on April 15.

During the visit, the officials found that no flow-metre was installed at the inlet and outlet of the effluent treatment plant.

Thus, the liquid wastes were finding ways to the adjacent river Louhajang through the bypass line, causing serious harm to the environment as well as the aquatic life.

Such reluctance is a punishable crime under the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Act 1995. The DoE also assessed the damage yesterday in presence of a representative of the mill. The assessment was done based on information gathered by the officials on April 15, Mujahidul said quoting from the letter.

The mill authorities had been asked to remove the bypass line and keep the parameter of liquid wastes under acceptable level following the Environmental Conservation Rules, 1997, he said.

6 ‘Bangladeshis’ held in India for making fake ID cards

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Six Bangladeshis were arrested in Agra by the Uttar Pradesh Anti-Terror Squad (ATS) for allegedly making fake passports using false documents, a senior official said today.

“The UP ATS were informed that some Bangladeshis, living illegally in Uttar Pradesh, used to call other Bangladeshis and make fake documents [used for identity] such as Aadhaar cards and ration cards, for them. Based on these fake documents, those people used to even get their passports made,” Asim Arun, additional director general of police, UP ATS, said in a statement.

He said those arrested were identified as Habibur Rehman of Madaripur district, Zakir Hussain of Narayanganj, Mohammad Kabil of Dinaipur, Kamaluddin of Sylhet, Taizul Islam of Mymensingh and Liton Miya of Ghazipur. He added that the six were picked up from Agra railway station on Sunday.

“During interrogation, it was revealed that all of them were residents of Bangladesh who were living in India with fake documents. A case was filed against them and

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Tigers’ final

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a promising one as after a cloudy start, it is expected to be sunny for much of the rest of the day. As head coach Steve Rhodes said after the match against Pakistan was washed out, there will be no cause to panic even if the match against India suffers a similar fate.

Bangladesh have been primed for action since their unbeaten run to the tri-nation trophy earlier this month -- their maiden ODI multi-team triumph -- and their practice sessions also appear to have been fruitful so far.

Facing India, however, will be a valuable exercise as playing against arguably the best team in the world will give the Tigers a good idea of where they stand. Although young all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin said yesterday that doing well today will stand them in good stead for the World Cup match against the same opposition near the end of the tournament, it is unlikely that a defeat would hurt the side’s confidence too much. Practice matches, especially before big tournaments, are more about seeing which players are in form and getting some match practice in the prevailing conditions.

In that sense, the match is likely to be very important for pacers Saifuddin, Rubel Hossain and batsmen Sabbir Rahman, Mosaddek Hossain and Liton Das -- players who are not automatic picks in the playing eleven.

It will also be interesting to see if Mahmudullah Riyad, if he plays, has recovered enough from a shoulder injury to bowl his useful, part-time off-spin as that will have a bearing on possible team combinations.

But at the end of today, rain, win or loss, Bangladesh can be expected to emerge from the match undiminished as their preparations have been pretty satisfactory so far.



This photo taken earlier this month shows the water of the Louhajang river turned red due to pollution caused allegedly by a textile mill in Khudirampur village of Tangail.

FILE PHOTO

Farmers lose, millers gain

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gives Tk 5,850 of profit to millers.

Farmer Najir Uddin Sheikh of Mymensingh said, “Millers are buying paddy from us at a low price and selling it to the government at a high price. How is it helping us?”

Talking to The Daily Star, he said, “Please ask the government to buy paddy from us. There is no need to buy rice from millers. After procurement, the government should have the paddy husked by millers. Otherwise, this programme won’t help us.”

“Millers gain both in purchasing paddy and selling rice, and in the process, they eat up the share of farmers’ profit,” said Quazi Shabuddin, former director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

If rice is bought from millers, it would not benefit farmers, said Dr Shormindo Nilormi, an associate professor of economics at Jahangirnagar University. If there is a problem in buying paddy from farmers, the government should remove it, she added.

Sazzad Zahir Chandan, general secretary of Bangladesh Krishak Samity, said the procurement system is

businessmen-friendly; farmers’ benefit is very nominal here.

About the procurement, The Daily Star talked to Zulfiquar Rahman, director of the Procurement Division of Directorate of Food.

When asked why the government does not buy paddy directly from farmers rather than procuring rice from millers, the official said the government does not have enough storage capacity for paddy because it takes more space than rice.

This correspondent then inquired how the government would husk the 1.5 lakh tonnes of paddy to be procured from farmers. “The paddy would be given to listed millers. Husking of each tonne will cost Tk 750-850,” the official replied.

“Initially we store the paddy at our warehouses and then send it to millers for husking. According to the Food Grain Procurement Policy, we cannot send the paddy directly to the millers and receive the rice, which would have solved the problem of low storage capacity. But, I’m not the authority to speak about policy decisions,” he said.

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder said, “Buying of rice from

millers has been going on for a long time. We are doing the same this year.”

The decision on boro paddy procurement was taken in presence of several ministers two months ago; the price started dropping only recently, he added.

“Food grain procurement has little impact on the paddy market, and it was not in focus in the previous years. This year is a bit different because both aman and boro seasons saw bumper yields. Also, there is a carryover of 40 lakh tonnes of rice imported in 2017. All of these contributed to a significant fall in the paddy price.”

The minister said there were years when the government went for procurement but did not get a sufficient number of paddy sellers. “However, if necessary, we will buy more paddy this year after the end of the current procurement term.”

The minister also said one of the reasons the government cannot buy more paddy from farmers is the moisture content of their paddy exceeds the maximum recommended level of 14 percent.

Talking to The Daily Star, Food

Secretary Shahabuddin Ahmed acknowledged, “It would be helpful for farmers if we could buy all the food grain from them.”

He said the government is working on it and planning to establish 200 dryers across the country where farmers could dry the paddy up to the required level before sale.

HOW GOVT BUYS

Firozul Islam, upazila nirbahi officer of Dinaipur sadar, said, “We buy paddy from the farmers following a list, supplied by the agriculture department.”

“During a recent procurement, we found most of the paddy farmers put up for sale had the required level of moisture,” he added.

“We prepare the list of farmers, who want to sell their paddy to our field level officials,” said Aklimuzzaman, upazila agriculture officer of Dinaipur sadar.

According to the food directorate, Bangladesh has a storage capacity of 20.23 lakh tonnes of rice.

Till May 19, the government has bought 72,828 tonnes of rice from millers and 685 tonnes of paddy from farmers across the country, according to the food ministry.

PM flies to Japan today

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will accompany the PM to Japan.

A 53-member delegation of top business leaders will also be part of the PM’s entourage to Japan, the single biggest bilateral development partner of Bangladesh.

Hasina will hold a meeting with her Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe tomorrow.

Dhaka and Tokyo will sign the 40th Official Development Assistance agreement to facilitate a \$2.5 billion loan to Bangladesh for five projects involving power, investment, metro rail, port development and energy efficiency promotion. The loan is 35 percent higher than that of the previous year.

Dhaka will also seek technical and financial assistance of nearly

\$10 billion for 10 future projects on water, land, irrigation, and char development, finance ministry officials said.

Besides, Japanese companies may also ink agreements on investing in Bangladeshi projects, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said at a press conference on Sunday.

In Tokyo, Hasina will hold a meeting with Japan’s top business leaders to discuss trade and investment between the two countries tomorrow.

Japan International Cooperation Agency President Shinichi Kitaoka will meet Hasina on Thursday.

She will attend a meeting with expatriate Bangladeshis as well. She will also meet the relatives of the Japanese citizens who lost their lives

in the terrorist attack on Holey Artisan Bakery in Dhaka in July 2016.

The PM will speak as the keynote speaker at an international conference on “The Future of Asia”, organised by Nikkei Inc, on Thursday. Some 500 delegations from Asian countries, including heads of state, entrepreneurs and business leaders, will be present at the conference.

Malaysian PM Mahathir Mohamad and Filipino President Rodrigo Duterte, among others, will also address the event.

On May 31, Hasina will leave Japan for Saudi Arabia to attend the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation’s conference. There, Gambia’s proposal for taking Myanmar’s atrocities against Rohingya to the International Court

of Justice will be finalised.

The conference will highlight the overall situation of Muslims, especially where they are minorities, including Rohingyas and Palestinians. Global terrorism, Islamophobia, humanitarian crises and economic cooperation among the OIC countries will also be discussed at the event.

After the OIC conference, she will perform the holy Umrah and depart for Finland on June 3. She is scheduled to meet Finland’s President Sauli Niinistö. She will then leave Helsinki for New Delhi.

Hasina has planned to make a 12-hour stopover in New Delhi on June 8 on her way back home and is likely to exchange greetings with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reports UNB.

It was a powerful explosive

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Hours into both the explosions, SITE Intelligence Group, an American company that tracks online activity of white supremacist and jihadist organisations, said the Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Asked if militants were involved in the blasts, DMP Commissioner Asaduzzaman Mia yesterday said, “This cannot be said right now... we have to consider both local and international aspects during the investigation.”

Sohel Rana, assistant inspector general at Police Headquarters, said, “The Malibagh incident was being investigated. The claim for the attack has come to our notice, but we’ve not yet found IS involvement in it.”

He also said the police headquarters issued some instructions in the wake of the incident.

Besides, all police units have been put on alert to take cautionary measures.

Talking about the instructions, at least two police officials said all police members were asked not to leave any of their vehicles unattended. Also, police were ordered to ensure highest level of screening at police establishments and carry out block raids, they said.

Apparently, in both the Malibagh and Gulistan incidents, police were the target. Asked about it, the DMP commissioner said, “It’s still under investigation.”

While visiting the injured from Sunday’s blast at the Dhaka

Medical College Hospital yesterday, Asaduzzaman said the attack was carried out by some vested quarters to instill fear in the public.

“If we look back, we see that [Italian national] Tavella Ceasure was not a target, they just wanted to kill a foreigner to create panic...similarly the attack on the police is aimed at destroying their courage as police have been successful in combating terrorism,” he said.

Tavella was killed in Dhaka’s diplomatic zone in Gulshan on September 28, 2015.

The DMP boss also said, “... Some people of our country living abroad are now spreading various propaganda. We will investigate if they have any links with it [attacks].”

In Sunday’s attack, Assistant Sub-Inspector Rasheda Akhter Babli, 28, and two others sustained injuries. The rear side of the vehicle of the Special Branch (SB) was damaged and caught fire.

Earlier around 3:00pm, SB personnel parked the vehicle at Malibagh intersection and the vehicle was unattended.

“We’ve collected samples from the scene to determine what type of chemical was used,” said Rahmatullah Chowdhury, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of the CTTC.

In the April 29 Gulistan explosion, two policemen and a community policeman were wounded. Explosives used in the crude bomb explosion were poor in quality, but the manufacturing technique was different from that of conventional crude bombs.

CTTC chief Monirul Islam on Sunday said they were yet to trace anyone in connection with that attack.

A number of DMP officials said a “threat” was still there and the DMP commissioner at a meeting with senior officers a couple of weeks ago alerted officials that there was intelligence about a probable attack on the police.

Yesterday the DMP chief again asked officials to remain alert and issued instructions to thwart such possible incidents, including asking officials not to keep their vehicles unattended.

At a programme last month Monirul had said, terrorist groups in Bangladesh did not have the capacity to carry out an organised attack right now.

CASE FILED OVER SUNDAY’S INCIDENT

Shafiq Chowdhury, a constable of the special branch and the driver of the vehicle, filed a case under the Explosives Substances Act with Paltan Police Station accusing unknown criminals of planting the bomb, said Shibli Noman, ADC of DMP’s Motijheel division.

In the case statement, the driver said unknown men or people hurled bombs with an intention to kill on-duty traffic policemen and damage public property.

He also claimed that he was inside the pickup when the bomb exploded.

However, witnesses said there was no one inside during the explosion. The DMP boss also said the vehicle was unattended at that time.

Arrest warrant

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of police of the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI), submitted a probe report in a case confirming the OC’s involvement in the incident.

The tribunal directed the police authorities to submit a report on the execution of the arrest warrant by June 17.

On April 15, Supreme Court lawyer Syed Sayedul Haque Suman filed the case against Moazzem under the Digital Security Act for recording the statement of Nusrat, a victim of sexual harassment, on camera without her consent and circulating the clip on social media.

Following the case, the tribunal had asked the PBI to submit an investigation report.

According to the probe report, the OC himself had recorded the video on camera and later passed the footage to someone else.

The footage show that Moazzem was asking Nusrat “insulting” questions.

Nusrat, a student of Sonagazi Islamia Senior Fazil Madrasa in Feni’s Sonagazi upazila, was set ablaze on April 6 allegedly for refusing to withdraw a case filed against the madrasa Principal Siraj Ud Doula for sexually harassing her on March 27.

She died at Dhaka Medical College Hospital on April 10.

On the same day, the OC was withdrawn as Nusrat’s family alleged that he was not cooperating with them.

The police official was suspended on May 8 over negligence of duty and attached to the office of DIG (Rangpur range).

More yaba godfathers, dealers to surrender

They include a high-profile godfather; Cops prepare for event in Cox’s Bazar after Eid

MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT, Cox’s Bazar

Police are making preparations for a second surrender programme of yaba godfathers and dealers in Cox’s Bazar.

The programme might be held soon after the Eid-ul-Fitr, which would be observed either on June 5 or 6, said police sources.

Some narcotics traders are maintaining contact with law enforcers through a local journalist, who is acting as an intermediary, for the surrender.

Earlier on February 16, as many as 102 narcos had formally surrendered to law enforcers at a programme at Teknaf Pilot High School. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, IGP Mohammad Javed Patwary and other top officials of law enforcement agencies were present.

The home minister and the IGP would also join the second surrender programme, said police officials.

Meanwhile, Hazi Saiful Karim, one of the top yaba dealers of the country, may surrender this time, said sources at Cox’s Bazar police.

Family members claimed that Saiful was already in police custody, but the law enforcers had not disclosed the information.

Mohammad Iqbal Hossain, additional superintendent of police in Cox’s Bazar, said they had no knowledge of Saiful’s arrest.

The narco dealer has been on the run for about a year. His name came to light in 2017 after police recovered a yaba manufacturing machine from a Pajero jeep in the capital’s Shajahanpur area.

Following an investigation, police came to know that the machine was owned by Saiful.

Police and locals said Saiful’s ancestral home is in Myanmar. His father Md Hanif came to Bangladesh before the country’s independence in 1971.

Saiful started work as a day labourer in Chattogram city sometime between 1998 and 1999. At that time, he came in contact with yaba dealers from Myanmar’s Maungdaw.

In 2000, he started a business as a clearing and forwarding (C&F) agent at Teknaf land port. But he mainly ran yaba trade in the name of C&F business, the sources told The Daily Star.

Since then, Saiful created a big network of yaba trade across the country and became a millionaire within a couple of years.

He received backing from some local influential politicians and officials of law enforcement agencies in exchange for money, locals alleged.

Saiful became so dominant that no drug case was filed against him before last year although he had been involved in drug trade since 2000.

Workers to get

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loans to buy food and other necessities.

“Many others suffered like me. Shop keepers have stopped selling things to us on credit,” the 45-year-old woman told The Daily Star, adding that she had not been paid in eight weeks.

However, some 2,600 other employees of the BJMC mills are yet to see any government allocation for their salaries.

The jute ministry in a letter to its chief accountant yesterday said all payment should be made to the workers’ bank accounts through account payee cheques.

A detailed statement that includes the list of workers of the mills has to be sent to the Finance Division within a week after the payment, according to the jute ministry letter.

Nevertheless, some workers are sceptical about the receiving the arrears.

“We have been promised [of arrears] on several occasions in the last two months. How can I believe until I get the money?” said Mohammad Robiul Islam of Khalishpur Jute Mills.

In the face of losses and falling sales, the BJMC earlier sought Tk 337 crore to clear the wages and salaries of nearly 32,000 workers and other employees.

Abdul Maleque, general manager (accounts and finance) at the BJMC, said the fund for the arrears was allocated under the Wage Scale for State Workers 2010.

“We have got the funds to clear the wages until June. We expect that the workers will get their arrears by the end of this week.

“But, we have not received any allocation to pay the salaries of officials and staffers of the mills. This is frustrating.”

He added that the other employees had not been paid in five months.

Maleque, however, said the BJMC would submit to the finance ministry a list of about 1,400 staffers and their arrears today to get the necessary funds.

The finance ministry said the money allocated yesterday was provided as an operational loan to the BJMC.

The BJMC would repay the loan in two instalments a year with 5 percent interest for the next 20 years.