



The Daily Star



REGD. No. DA 781 | Vol. XXX No. 334 | Poush 11, 1427 BS | www.thedailystar.net | Your Right to Know | JAMADIUL AWAL 10, 1442 HJRI | 12 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00

HARMFUL yet no hurry

Steps to ensure food safety get hamstrung as mandatory test to check import of adulterated pesticide not enforced even in a year

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

Almost a year after harmful heavy metals like cadmium, chromium and lead were found in dozens of pesticides, the government is yet to enforce mandatory tests to prevent imports of the adulterated chemicals, widely used in the country's vast agriculture sector.

Bangladesh Food Safety Authority (BFSA) mandated tests at two designated government laboratories before the release of imported pesticides from ports since February 1 this year. But this date was extended several times following requests from importers.

"They [importers] requested us to suspend the embargo considering the adverse effect on agricultural production," Md Abdul Quayyum Sarkar, chairman of the BFSA, told The Daily Star recently.

He said the importers also urged further research to measure the harmful effects

of heavy metals in pesticides, adding that the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) is the relevant authority in this regard.

The BFSA, on December 8 last year, first requested DAE to ensure every consignment of imported pesticides be released from the port customs based on tests at either the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Centre (BAEC) or the Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR), starting from February 1 this year.

Besides, the BFSA also requested the DAE to penalise companies which marketed contaminated pesticides.

"In tests, there was a high level of heavy metals in these pesticides. Heavy metals are severely polluting the food chain... Most of the pesticides used in the country are imported. There is an obligation to import pesticides free from heavy metals under the Pesticides Act," reads the BFSA letter to the DAE.

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Photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol embracing his son Monorom Polok after being released from Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj yesterday morning. Kajol was arrested on May 4 after having gone missing for 53 days. On December 17, he secured bail in two of the three cases filed against him under the Digital Security Act. He had gotten bail from the other case earlier.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



TIMELINE

MARCH 9: Magura lawmaker files Digital Security Act case against Kajol.

MARCH 10: Kajol goes missing. CCTV footage reveals two unidentified individuals tampered with his bike.

MARCH 10-11: Two more DSA cases filed against Kajol by two Jubo Mahila League activists.

MAY 3: BGB "finds" the photojournalist wandering near the Indian border in the middle of night.

MAY 4: Kajol charged with trespassing and illegal entry; he secures bail but police arrest him under Section 54 of CrPC.

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ZERO BORDER KILLINGS

A promise tangled up in barbed wire

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In talks between India's Border Security Force and Border Guard Bangladesh, the BSF chief yet again promised that there would be no killings on the borders.

The five-day director general-level talks will officially end today.

On Tuesday, the first day of the conference, BSF men shot dead Bangladeshi citizen Khairul Islam, 40, along the border in Mymensingh.

At least 48 Bangladeshi citizens have been killed along the Indo-Bangla border this year, according to Rights Body Ain o Salish Kendra.

At least 15 people were killed in 2018 while the number rose to 43 last year, it said.

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Kajol home after 290 long, bleak days

ZYMA ISLAM

"The day feels unreal," said Monorom Polok after his father, photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol, was released from the Dhaka Central Jail yesterday.

Kajol walked out of the jail in Keraniganj at 11:15am, as a free man, at last.

He was all cleared to be released on December 17, when the High Court granted him bail in two remaining cases filed against him under the Digital Security Act.

Since then, his family had been eagerly waiting to see the execution of the bail and Kajol freed.

Many had expected that the event of

Kajol's release would take place amid fanfare, with huge media presence.

But it happened suddenly and quietly. A blurry photo shot from a distance, with the subject obstructed by bystanders, is all that exists from the moment for which activists and journalists had been waiting so long.

In the photo, Kajol is seen clutching his son in a hug, his eyes closed, his shaggy and unshaven face apparently overwhelmed with the emotion of the moment.

"We got to know late yesterday [Friday] that the bail order was sent to the jail. Father called this morning and we immediately rushed to pick him up," said Polok.

"There was no time to prepare anything

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An amputee driving an overloaded battery-run rickshaw in the capital's Kakrail yesterday. Many in his circumstance resort to begging to make ends meet, but this man, without his left leg, has chosen to overcome his disadvantage and toil for his living. While his is an admirable pursuit, driving a battery-operated rickshaw at high speeds, as he was seen doing yesterday when he was zooming towards Motijheel, exposes him to danger of accidents and further debilitating injuries.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



2 cops arrested for mugging

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A sub-inspector and a constable of Sitakunda Model Police Station were arrested on charges of robbing a driver of Tk 2.8 lakh on Thursday night.

SI Saiful Alam and constable Md Saiful Islam were suspended and a two-member probe committee was formed to investigate the charges after Abu Jafar, the driver, filed a case against them and three police informants on Thursday.

Police said Jafar, 45, went to Sitakunda from Gazipur with the money to buy a pickup on December 20.

But he failed to buy the vehicle and was waiting at the bus station in Sitakunda in the evening for a bus to Gazipur when three police informants confronted him, saying that he was a yaba peddler, according to the case statement.

A little later, the two accused policemen appeared on the scene and introduced themselves as detectives. They then picked up Jafar, saying he had yaba pills in his rectum, police and locals told reporters.

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ADCOMBAT 2020