

## BNP man, 3 others arrested over snatching convicts

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Four individuals, including a local BNP leader, have been arrested over the snatching of two convicts from police custody following an attack on Patgram Police Station in Lalmonirhat on Wednesday night.

The arrestees are Mahidul Islam, organising secretary of the ward unit BNP; Abdur Rashid of Sohagpur village; Habibur Rahman of Bauara; and Abul Kalam, 52, of Sohagpur.

A joint team of police and Rab arrested them in different areas of Patgram upazila yesterday, said Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Patgram Police Station.

"We have identified several attackers from the video footage."

He said they were trying to arrest the two convicts and other accused.

Meanwhile, BNP leaders, at a press conference at the Patgram upazila BNP office yesterday, denied the party's involvement in the incident.

Hasan Rajib Prodhon, member of BNP's central executive committee, claimed that the incident stemmed from a dispute between police and local stone quarry leaseholders. "Some of our activists went to the police station to help bring the situation under control...", he said.

He said the district BNP has formed a three-member investigation committee to look into the matter and vowed organisational action if any party member is found involved.

On Wednesday night, a mob attacked the police station and snatched two convicts from police custody.

## 4 held with yaba, crystal meth

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrested four youths along with 73 yaba tablets and 52 grammes of crystal meth in Kuakata of Patuakhali on Thursday night.

At a press briefing at Kuakata Press Club on the same night, Mohammad Hamimur Rashid, deputy director of the DNC in Patuakhali, said the seized drugs have an estimated market value of around Tk 3.3 lakh.

The arrestees -- Russel Mallik, 32, Abdur Rahman, 30, Rakib, 29; and Mehedi Hasan, 25 -- are residents of different areas under Mohipur Police Station. Among them, Rakib used to work as a room boy at a hotel in Kuakata.

The official said the four were caught red-handed while preparing to supply the drugs.

They were handed over to Mohipur Police Station, the official said.



Workers plant Aman seeds in the Lakutia area of Barishal Sadar under the supervision of the Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation. A worker can earn around Tk 700 for an eight-hour workday, from 8:00am to 3:00pm. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

### BARISHAL HOSPITAL

# Overcrowded medicine ward puts patients at risk

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Patients and their families have alleged severe mismanagement, overcrowding, and poor healthcare services at the medicine ward of Barishal's Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital (SBMCH), which is currently operating out of a cramped five-storey building not originally designed to serve patients.

Harunur Rashid from Jurakathi village in Jhalakathi's Rajapur upazila brought a stroke patient to SBMCH on Monday. By Tuesday afternoon, he had yet to secure a bed for the critically ill patient, who was instead placed on the second floor of the makeshift medicine ward.

Another attendant, Abdur Razzak from Mehendiganj, said he had been desperately searching for a bed for two days without success. "The elevators rarely work, and the number of patients is overwhelming. The bathrooms are filthy, and the entire ward feels like a garbage dump," he said.

Although the ward has a capacity of 300, it currently houses between 700 and 800 patients on a daily basis, several patients and hospital staff said.

The overcrowding has resulted in a serious decline in healthcare standards,

with many patients receiving little to no medical attention, they alleged.

On June 30, family members of several patients formed a human chain in front of the hospital, demanding the medicine ward be relocated to the hospital's main building. They claimed the ward's current location is unsafe and unfit to handle such a large volume of patients.



According to hospital sources, the ward currently accommodates patients suffering from dengue, kidney ailments, abdominal pain, and a variety of other conditions.

Initially set up in 2022 to treat Covid-19 patients temporarily, the five-storey building was later converted into the medicine ward. However, it

lacks the necessary infrastructure and environmental standards for patient care.

"The building was originally intended for administrative use, operation theatres, and storage," said a hospital official.

Hospital Director Brig Gen AKM Mashiul Munir said while some improvements have been made, including adding new windows, the ward remains ill-suited for patient care.

"This building was never meant for housing patients. Around half of the hospital's total patients are currently in this ward. It lacks natural light and airflow, making it an unhealthy environment," he said.

He said the issue will be placed before the hospital's academic council and governing committee to explore possible solutions.

According to the Divisional Health Office, 442 dengue patients were admitted across Barishal division in the last 24 hours, of whom 79 are currently being treated at SBMCH.

Hospital sources confirmed that at least 700 patients including all dengue patients are being treated in the medicine ward, further straining the already overwhelmed facility.

## Cop attends Jamaat event

FROM PAGE 3  
make them understand," he continued.

"As members of the police service, our duty is to serve the people -- those who are patriotic. We are not here for those who are pushing the country towards fascism. We are here for peace-loving people," he also said.

"I am assigned to this area. Stay connected with me -- I will do my best from my position. A new opportunity has emerged through this revolution, allowing us to elect honest and capable individuals... We pray for the success of this programme," he

added.

His remarks, captured in a video clip that went viral on social media, triggered a backlash, with many questioning the political neutrality of the police.

Some compared it to previous instances in which law enforcers under the then Awami League government were seen participating in political programmes.

Asked about the matter, AC Shah Alam claimed that the video clip circulating on social media did not include his full speech and only showed the part where he spoke about elections.

"I attended the programme because it was held at an orphanage. I spoke after they [Jamaat leaders] insisted. At first I talked about the orphans and the food distribution, but that part wasn't included in the clip," he claimed.

"Only the segment where I spoke about electing honest people got shared, portraying the remark as political," he added.

Contacted, Jashim Uddin, deputy commissioner of DMP's Lalbagh Division, said they were aware of the incident and were looking into the matter.

## The forgotten boys of Mirpur

FROM PAGE 3  
report saying it was indeed a murder, but no suspects could be identified.

One of the families, losing faith in the investigation, filed another murder case with a Dhaka court in December 2015, hoping the court would be able to deliver justice. But it was "summarily dismissed" in April 2018, as per the court records.

Sub-Inspector Md Rafiquzzaman Mia of the Detective Branch, who investigated the case, wrote in his May 2017 final report, "The names and addresses of the perpetrators could not be identified, and the chances of locating and arresting them in the near future are very slim."

The court accepted the report but said the police would reopen the case and press charges if suspects were identified.

According to the final report, the victims were caught in a shooting by their own group while targeting a chasing mob. They were then allegedly beaten by the mob before police rescued them and took them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where they later died.

The report claimed that a group of 10 miscreants, including the victims, opened fire on locals as they were being chased during an attempted arson attack on vehicles using petrol and cocktail bombs amid a hartal called by the BNP-led 20-party alliance.

The police report labeled the boys as "mischievous bombers".

However, several media outlets, quoting eyewitnesses, said no mob beating occurred around the area that day.

Meanwhile, family

members and locals claimed the boys occasionally attended political programmes but insisted they had no criminal history.

Police initially told the media the boys were critically injured in a mob beating and died early on February 23 at DMCH. The case filed by police, however, stated that three "unidentified arsonists" were beaten and shot dead by a mob.

### Key roads lie

FROM PAGE 4

Contacted, Md Mizanur Rahman, incumbent administrator of the municipality, said, "The previous mayor left the municipality's fund nearly exhausted. We are working to repair all the damaged roads in phases. Repair works have already been initiated for several roads."

## Biodiversity entangled in deadly

FROM PAGE 3  
campus), Dairy Farm, Bishmille Lake, and other surrounding low-lying wetlands.

Auritro Sattar, an environmental science student at JU and a wildlife photographer who has extensively researched the issue, shared alarming findings.

His surveys recorded 25 China Duari nets in the Gerua-Sindhuria area between September and December 2023. By August 2024, the number had risen to 45.

"A significant number of snakes -- including Painted Keelbacks, Smooth-scaled Water Snakes, Checkered Keelbacks, and even Monocled Cobras -- were found fatally trapped," said Auritro. "The fine mesh tears their bodies as they try to escape, causing a slow, painful death.

Thousands of snakes die this way, especially during the monsoon when water levels fluctuate."

He also noted that the nets endanger different fish species by capturing fish hatchlings and juveniles, disrupting breeding cycles and population recovery. Fish-eating birds like pond herons and kingfishers have also been found fatally entangled.

The impact on migratory birds has been no less severe. "In 2023, I documented the first-ever sighting of an Eastern Water Rail in Savar, but it never returned later.

Illegal fishing practices like these are driving migratory birds away from our wetlands," Auritro said.

Some locals, however, defended the use of these nets. A fisherman from Sindhuria, speaking anonymously, said, "These nets can catch fish of all sizes

and are easy to use. My catch has increased significantly since I started using this."

Several JU staff members were also seen using these nets within campus lakes.

Contacted, Abul Kashem, deputy registrar of JU's estate branch, acknowledged the issue. "Some of the university lakes are leased for fish farming, and some leaseholders are using China Duari nets. Since this poses a serious ecological threat, we plan to issue a notice instructing them to stop," he said.

Prof Amir Hossain Bhuiyan of Environmental Science Department at JU said, "Our aquatic habitats are deteriorating rapidly due to the widespread use of these nets. Without immediate action, the biodiversity and ecological balance of the JU campus will be irreversibly damaged," he warned.

## Can Bangladesh retain its foothold

FROM PAGE 1  
MORE THAN JUST TRADE

Bangladesh, unlike Vietnam, has been negotiating under a multilateral framework, seeking lower duties on the basis of WTO's Most Favoured Nation (MFN) principles. But the US appears to prefer bilateral deals that mix trade policy with broader strategic alignment.

"The tariff negotiations aren't solely about trade," Razzaque noted. "Geopolitical considerations are also part of the equation."

"The US import volume will decline if the tariff rate increases," Razzaque

added, cautioning that the consequences of inaction would be felt on both sides.

If the worst-case scenario materialises and the tariff hits 53 percent, Bangladeshi suppliers -- many of whom send 40-80 percent of their production to the US -- would find themselves in an unsustainable position. Margins are already razor-thin, and production costs are rising.

To survive, "garment suppliers must be more strategic in marketing and secure better prices from buyers," said Ehsan. "That's the only way to remain competitive in the current supply chain environment."

But pricing leverage is difficult to obtain without certainty. Importers are wary of taking long-term positions when the tariff regime is in flux. US retailers, who bear the brunt of tariffs, may also pass on higher costs to consumers -- fueling inflation and dragging down demand.

To avoid this, Bangladesh must urgently pivot its strategy. That includes mobilising US-based lobby groups, engaging retailers and sourcing associations, and directly appealing to decision-makers in Washington. So far, offers to lift import duties on US cotton, LNG, aircraft, and other products have failed

## 3 killed, 10 injured in Pabna road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

At least three people were killed and 10 others were injured when a passenger bus collided head on with a truck on Dhaka-Pabna highway at Puba Banagram in Shanthia upazila of Pabna yesterday morning.

Of the deceased two are identified. They are Md Abed Ali, 38, of village Shantipur, Monsur Ali, 40, of Ataikula in Shanthia upazila.

The accident took place at the Purbo Banogram area of the highway around 5:30am, said police.

Madhupur Highway Police Station Officer-in-Charge of Md Mostafizur Rahman said the driver was driving bus in sleepy mood.

## Reforms must

FROM PAGE 1

"People and properties are falling victim to mob violence. People are now killing their own party men over personal interest."

Outlining his vision of governance, he said, "We want to build Bangladesh in the spirit of the Charter of Madinah. We want a Shariah-based governance system where justice and humanity will be the cornerstone."

The Jamaat chief also issued a warning against authoritarianism. "The people have already toppled one fascist regime. They will not allow another to rise."

Pointing to the condition of women, he said, "Today, women have neither dignity nor security. If we come to power, they will have both. Our ultimate goal is to establish a humane Bangladesh."

Coming down heavily on the former regime, Shafiqur said, "Awami League is a group devoid of political etiquette. Their downfall was the result of their misdeeds. If others

fail to learn from this, they will meet an even worse fate."

He warned that any associates of AL who dream of taking part in election would be disappointed. "Such dreams will turn into nightmares."

"We will continue our fight against fascism ...," he said.

Calling for unity, the Jamaat chief urged the youth to stand at the forefront of the movement. "We want to move forward with people from all communities and faiths. We reject the politics of minority versus majority."

"Those who talked about minority rights looted their assets. Every person born in this land is an equal and proud citizen of Bangladesh. We don't want to be rulers -- we want to be public servants."

Several top central and local leaders of Jamaat also spoke at the rally attended by Jamaat leaders and activists from all eight districts of the Rangpur division.

## CU teacher's

FROM PAGE 2

arrange a promotion board for Dr Kushal despite there being allegations against him.

"When we attempted to meet the vice chancellor, we were told that we could not enter without Dr Kushal's permission. This alone raised serious concerns. It proves that the current administration does not believe in the ideals of the July movement."

After around three hours, the agitating students withdrew the protest when the administration announced that the promotion board for Dr Kushal was suspended.

Contacted, Dr Kushal Chakraborty said, "The allegations brought by students against me are completely baseless. I was not involved in any criminal offence. It seems someone is instigating the students."

Speaking on the matter, CU Pro-VC (Academic) Prof Dr Shamim Uddin said, "A university board was scheduled to meet to consider the promotion of Dr Kushal Chakraborty. When students began protesting against his promotion, saying he was named in an attempted murder case, we decided to suspend the board meeting."

## Fear grips Cumilla

FROM PAGE 2

said, on Thursday, an announcement was made from the loudspeaker of the local mosque, instigating the attack.

"The announcement urged people to evict the drug den from the area," said Moshir.

Abdul Wahab, another villager, claimed the same.

No case was filed and no arrest was made until the filing of this report at 9:00pm yesterday.

However, the OC said the victims' family members were preparing to file one.

Cumilla Medical College Hospital sources said the bodies of the victims were handed over to the family members after autopsies.

On Thursday morning, a mob beat three members of a family to death and left another injured for their alleged involvement in drug trading.

The injured person is now undergoing treatment at the CMCH in a critical condition.

Locals alleged that the family had long been involved in drug trading. Around 9:30am, a group of villagers attacked their house.

However, the victims' family members claimed the attack followed a long-standing feud with some of their neighbours. A recent incident of an alleged mobile phone theft fuelled the feud.

### Wrongdoers

FROM PAGE 3

leaders and activists from different wings of the party for involvement in criminal groups or dishonest acts.

"As soon as we found out, we took action right away," he said, stressing that the party leadership is firmly following a zero-tolerance policy.

"Anyone who uses violence -- whether inside the party or with others -- will face punishment. Since August 5, we have responded quickly to such cases," he added.

Demanding fair elections as soon as possible, Rizvi said, "Only a free and fair election can show how much support the BNP really has."