

Import of predatory African magur banned

By Inam Ahmed

The government has banned importation of fries, culture and distribution of African catfish, otherwise known as Rakkhuha (predator) magur, in the country.

Different units of the fisheries directorate have been asked to stop distribution of its fries.

Government sources say the decision came in the wake of the all-devouring character of the fish which has affected the other species of the fish population in the country.

The giant African magur which weighs up to 15 kg has become a worry for both scientists and fish farmers as it devours all fishes up to one kg size in the waterbody where it lives.

The government, however, has decided to make a hybrid in combination of the two species—local and African. The fisheries department sources said this new variety would be sterile and, therefore would not cause intensive damage to other fishes. On the other hand, the scientists observed that this step would not reduce the hazards as the hybrid still would be predators and continue to devour other species.

The new breed of catfish was first imported in 1989 after a team of scientists visited Thailand and saw the wonder fish. A private firm first imported it and later it was promoted through gov-

ernment. Dr AKM Nuruzzaman, member-director of the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council (BARC), told this correspondent that any import of fish for aquaculture should be kept in quarantine for a period of five to six years to determine its effect on local varieties before going for allowing its culture. He said such precaution was not taken in this instance.

Narrating his experience on the African magur, he said the farmers who cultured the variety were witnessing near extinction of other species. "This variety not only devours other fishes, but also eats up the feed for other fishes," he said.

Scientist said the winter season is the best time to take a drive to weed out the African magur. They view that once the rainy season starts, the task would be an impossible one.

Dr Nuruzzaman said extinction of other species would make the waterbodies a habitat for insects and aquatic weeds. He views that Bangladesh would become an aquatic desert if the immediate action is not taken.

Scientist now feel that there should be a policy for import of fishes and the quarantine law must be enacted to avoid any such environmental hazard. They view that no fish variety should be allowed to be imported without the consent of a committee of experts.



Ravi Shankar and wife at the Zia International Airport after their arrival yesterday.

—PID photo

Ravi Shankar renders sitar recitals today

World renowned sitarist Pandit Ravi Shankar arrived in city Tuesday on a five-day visit to Bangladesh, reports BSS.

He is accompanied by his wife Sumanly Shankar and four aides. Islamuddin Malik, Additional Secretary in-charge of the Cultural Affairs Ministry received him at the Zia International Airport.

Ravi Shankar will render sitar recitals at the Osmani Memorial Hall today (Wednesday). He will also offer another programme at Shilpakala Academy auditorium tomorrow for raising fund for the artists.

Shilpakala Academy will accord a reception to Pandit Ravi Shankar at its auditorium on Friday.

Kamal Lohani, Director General of Shilpakala Academy and senior officials from Indian High Commission were present at the airport.

Shaheed Day

From Page 1 Col 8

anticipated as the East Pakistan Muslim Chhatra League (EPMCL) expressed strong opposition to any procession being brought out from the university after the strike.

Others, including the influential Jubo League, decided a strike without a procession would leave the job only half-done.

It decided that a way had to be found to make sure no EPMCL leader was able to chair the meeting that was due to take place on the campus, in order to ensure a procession was brought out after meeting.

Badruddin Umar, in his three-volume 'East Bengal Language Movement,' described how the EPMCL was thwarted and a procession brought out on Feb 4:

The meeting on Feb 4 began at 11 am after thousands of students gathered at the Dhaka University campus. But even before the meeting started, some EPMCL leaders were expressing opposition to the idea of a procession. However, before they could propose any of their leader's name to chair the meeting, M R Akhter Mukul got up on a table and loudly proposed the name of Gazul Huq as chairman. Immediately afterwards, Kamruddin Shahid seconded the proposal.

The mood of the meeting then turned in favour of street demonstration despite continued opposition from the EPMCL, and Gazul Huq quickly declared the meeting closed in order to bring out the procession.

During that meeting, and later at a gathering of the All-Party State Language Action Committee (APSLAC), a decision was taken to hold a provincewide general strike on February 21. Leaders of the APSLAC including Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani, former Muslim League leader Abul Hashim and others declared their determination to continue the movement until Bangladesh was recognised as one of Pakistan's state languages.

The success of the Feb 4 strike was not limited only to Dhaka, where students boycotted classes at schools and colleges and gathered at the university. In towns and cities up and down East Bengal, strikes preceded demonstrations, and showed that the language movement had taken on a truly national dimension, in place of the Dhaka-centric character of its early days.

In addition to demanding Bangla as a state language, demonstrators were vocal against the state-sponsored conspiracy to replace the Bangla alphabet with Arabic characters. The plan to Arabise Bangla was not only ludicrous, it was also seen by the public as a first step to deprive the Bengali people of their distinct cultural and national identity based on the language.

Higher pays

From Page 1 Col 3

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mirza Gohar Hafiz, sought to increase the proposed sumptuary allowance for the Chief Justice from Taka 2,500 to Taka 3,000 per month.

Besides, the Chief Justice will also be entitled to a domestic aid allowance of Taka 450 a month and the Judges Taka 425.

Earlier, while taking part in the general discussions on the bill, Opposition members observed that the mere increase in remuneration will not enhance the image and prestige of the Judiciary as long as separation of the judiciary and the executive was not completed.

Opposition MPs made a strong plea for the separation of the judiciary to ensure independence and upholding of the rule of law in the country.

Pointing out that the government officials were given a 67 per cent increase in remuneration while the Judges were given only a 48 per cent increase, AL member Shudhangshu Shekhar Haldar called for a more proportionate increase in the salary of the Judges.

A number of Opposition MPs bitterly criticised the government not confirming the appointment of Justice Hasib who was recommended by the Chief Justice.

This has undermined the Supreme Court as well as encroached upon the independence of the judiciary," declared JP leader Maudud Ahmed.

The Law Minister urged the Opposition members a number of times to limit their comments on the subject of the bill in hand, but added that he would make a statement on the confirmation controversy when and if a motion was

moved in the House.

At one stage the Opposition strongly protested the use of a certain word by the Law Minister while addressing the issue on Justice Hasib.

However, after consultation between the Opposition and the Treasury benches during the break for Maghreb prayers, a compromise was reached.

Following the Maghreb break, Mirza Hafiz told the House that if a certain word was indeed uttered in the House, he urged the chair to expunge it from the proceedings.

Deputy Speaker Humayun Khan Panni said, "I myself wanted to expunge it but as the Law Minister himself wanted it expunged I hope you (the Opposition) will not have any further objections."

Nearly 20 MPs demanded circulation of the bill to elicit public opinion or to send it to the select committee. The MPs included Riasat Ali, Dharendra Nath Shambhu, Nazir Hossain, Mazhar Hossain, Fazel Rabbi, Monirul Huq Chowdhury, Asam Firoz, Shamsul Huq, Matia Chowdhury, Tofael Ahmed, Mohammad Nasim and Suranjit Sengupta.

The Opposition members also suggested increase of remuneration of the Judges at all levels.

Winding up the debate on the bill, Mirza Hafiz said that the government took the step to enhance the remuneration of the Judges so that they could discharge their responsibilities freely and independently.

The Law Minister also assured the House that if necessary the government would consider increasing the remuneration of the Judges in the future.

UNICEF chief due next month

Star Report

James P Grant, the Executive Director of the United Nations Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF), is expected to visit Bangladesh in the last week of March.

The two-day visit will be part of Grant's tour of South Asia to assess the activities of the different regional offices. This will be his first visit to the region since the regional office of UNICEF was shifted from New Delhi to Kathmandu.

During his stay here Grant is likely to call on Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia and will attend a seminar on 'education for all'.

Grant has high expectations about Bangladesh because of the tremendous success of immunization programme, Cole P Dodge, the Country Representative of UNICEF in Bangladesh, told The Daily Star.

Grant hopes 'education for all', which Dodge described as the theme of his forthcoming visit will be achieved in Bangladesh given the strong commitment of people and government to compulsory primary education and the involvement of some NGOs to implement the programme of non-formal education, added Dodge.

UNICEF works with governments in 121 developing countries to help meet the essential needs of all children. Of its total budget, about 45 per cent is devoted to child health and nutrition programmes. The rest goes for improving water supply and sanitation, providing education, community based services and emergency relief.

One arrested for Manab murder

By DU Correspondent

Ahmed Hossain (30), an accused in the Manab Kanti Day murder case, was arrested by the detective branch of the DMP on Tuesday morning from the Shilton Hotel of Nababpur Road in the city.

Khaleda, Schaefer

From Page 1 Col 8

democratic government, headed by Begum Zia.

Begum Zia conveyed her best wishes and felicitations to the Chancellor, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Germany on her personal behalf and on behalf of the people of Bangladesh.

The Principal Secretary to PM and the German Ambassador in Bangladesh were present during the meeting.

The German Minister will call on Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina at her parliament office at 11 am today (Wednesday).

Tinbigha

From Page 1 Col 8

enclaves remained with India while Dahagram and Angarpota enclaves were kept under Bangladesh.

Later, a lease in perpetuity was signed between the foreign ministers of two countries on October 7, 1982, towards leasing out the 'Tinbigha' corridor to Bangladesh for connecting the two enclaves, he said.

The present government raised the issue with India and the matter was now at the final stage of discussions, Rahman said.

Coup attempt in Venezuela

CARACAS, Feb 4: Rebel troops tried to overthrow the troubled administration of President Carlos Andres Perez early Tuesday, attacking his residence and the government palace and blocking main roads into the capital, reports AP.

Hasina

From Page 1 Col 5

ommendations.

The terms of reference of the committee expired on December 31 and no fresh extension was sought by the committee.

Insiders say indications were given to the committee members that the recommendations would be placed before the House on January 6 with an appeal for 'condonation of time.'

But, sources say, 'for obvious reasons the placement of the bill on January 6 has become uncertain and apprehending further delay Sheikh Hasina has opted for the offensive.'

Commenting on the proceedings of the meeting Menon said Sheikh Hasina had sought their cooperation in getting the bill through. She also requested them to use their good offices in winning support of BNP for the bill, Menon added.

Leaders who attended the meeting told The Daily Star that Sheikh Hasina expressed her apprehension that BNP was not going to support the bill though it had been agreed earlier.

The leaders further said, though they were not opposed to the bill, they failed to extend any instant support to the appeal without consulting respective party forums.

Shamsuddoha said that he had told Sheikh Hasina to decide her party's course of action first before seeking combined support of the opposition.

Menon said he had informed the meeting that he was unable to understand why BNP was dilly-dallying on the issue. He even reported to the meeting his bitter exchange of words with BNP leader Majedul Haque on the bill.

Suranjit Sen Gupta said he had suggested to wait another couple of months before taking any hasty decision to press for the passage of the bill.

Manirul Haque Chowdhury of JP said they told the Awami League leader that they were more interested in pegging all other political issues to the question before discussing support for any particular bill. Chowdhury added that they were also not sure about how AL was going to handle the issues of passage of the bill.

Meanwhile, a dramatic development, a meeting of the Special parliamentary committee on the bill has been convened at 11 am today at the Sangsad Bhavan.

Earlier, it was gathered that last Wednesday's one was the concluding meeting of the committee.

Milon murder

From Page 1 Col 8

Fariuk Ovi, Sanaul Huq Niru, Liaquat, Nannu, Kamrul Hassan Sajal, Masud, Sagor alias Liton, Showkat, Morshed, Alauddin, Mirza Masud Liton, Ashis and Hamid.

Of the accused, Ovi, Sajal, Ashfaq and Jewel are absconding while the rest ten are now in jail.

When contacted over telephone, Judge Ismail Hossain told The Daily Star that the hearing would continue until February 19 at a stretch.

Leela Samson

From Page 1 Col 8

Ashtrapadi and Tillana which brought in the jealousy and anger of Radha once again.

Leela Samson is a prominent contemporary exponent of the Indian classical dance style of the Bharat Natyam. She has performed in USSR, UK, Poland and various other European countries. She has been teaching at New Delhi since '76. She was awarded the 'Sanskriti' in '82 and 'Padmashri' in '90.

She was accompanied by five musicians who played with harmony and symphony.

PM: Terrorists

From Page 1 Col 4

enforcing agencies to emulate the new idea in view of the changed context.

"Bridging with the people through services" is the essence of the new concept, she said, adding this could only be achieved by maintaining impartiality and justice.

She asked the police to actively involve the people with the law and order maintenance process. Joint initiatives and close cooperation between people and police can ensure crime control in society, she said.

Begum Zia told the policemen to grasp and apply the concept that they are friends to the peace-loving people. "You have to go to the people, there are many ways open... what needed is the desire only."

She also urged all to put in their all mite for building a happy future where 'there would be no violence, no drug addiction, no crime.'

Referring to the Khulna city, the hinterland of country's second port, Mongla, the Prime Minister hoped the KMP would be able to fulfil the desire of the people by effectively discharging their duties.

The Midnight File

UN-Iraq talks on oil sale cancelled

NEW YORK (United Nations), Feb 4: Talks between the United Nations and Iraq on the sale of Iraqi oil scheduled to resume Wednesday in Vienna have been cancelled, an official source said Tuesday. Francois Giuliani, the spokesman for UN Secretary-General Butros-Ghali, said he had been informed of the decision by Iraq's ambassador to the United Nations, reports AFP.

Bomb blast in Srinagar TV studio complex

SRINAGAR (India), Feb 4: Kashmiri militants breached security to bomb India's television studio complex in the state's summer capital Srinagar today, police said. They said the blast caused no casualties. But witnesses said it killed a policeman guarding the complex, which houses both of India's state-run broadcasting services, Doordarshan Television and All India Radio.

US agrees to French proposal for summit on N-issues

PARIS, Feb 4: The United States has agreed to a French proposal for a summit of nations keeping nuclear arms on European soil, French Foreign Minister Olivier Dumas said Tuesday. Dumas, speaking at the Institute for Superior Studies of National Defense, said that a date and a place for the meeting had not been decided, reports AP.

AL should be careful

From Page 1 Col 7

Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and his family from being tried in a court of law.

The AL Working Committee's decision—the still to be approved by the party boss—could not have pleased the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) more. For nothing can suit it better than to have the biggest opposition party divert public attention from the government's dismal failure so far in controlling price-hike of essentials, restoring law and order and getting the economy geared towards growth again.

The most charitable remark that can be made about the AL's decision is that it has unwittingly fallen into a very intelligently laid political trap by the BNP. The Indemnity (Repeal) Bill issue is one from which the AL can neither retreat without losing face nor go forward without risking public ire.

The Indemnity ordinance is a moral issue and all law abiding citizens will want its repeal. One does not have to be either a supporter of AL or an admirer of Bangabandhu to condemn his murder and that of his family members, along with other innocent victims like servants in the house, children and visiting members of the family not to mention the newly-wedded wives of Bangabandhu's two sons. The act was a crime of the most heinous type and should and must be condemned anywhere at anytime. Its perpetrators must be punished if we are not to destroy whatever semblance of legality we still profess to adhere to. The question is not, therefore, WHETHER, but WHEN. Do we have to resolve this moral and legal issue now, at this very moment? Aren't there more immediate things, more urgent issues, more basic problems facing the nation?

The crime that AL wants to set right is not one that happened yesterday, that we need to solve it tomorrow. The nation has lived with this crime for 16 years without its moral and legal importance suffering the slightest erosion in the public mind. We can therefore conclude that waiting a few more years—till the country begins to make some move towards economic recovery—will not in any way reduce the importance of the issue. As the leading opposition party the AL can keep the issue alive in the public mind through publicity and grassroots propaganda. In fact that is perhaps what it should do at the village level before starting its mass agitation.

What the AL leaders do not seem to understand is that the type of agitation they are planning is more likely to help the BNP than promote their own cause. First, the Indemnity Ordinance (Repeal) Bill-centred agitation will divert public attention from the immediate issues of economic growth, price hike, law and order, campus violence, etc.

Second, mass agitation with its resultant economic dislocation will provide a valid excuse for the BNP to justify its lacklustre performance. Third, to gain support, the AL will naturally play to the gallery, which will include lending support to all sorts of pressure groups whose narrow sectarian interests have so often worked against those of the nation.

The Awami League leaders must weigh a very important point. By going for mass agitation so soon after the restoration of democracy, it runs the risk of the 'Indemnity issue' not being very well accepted by the people. Even a lukewarm support by the people will constitute a moral defeat and will be interpreted by the killers and their lackeys as a tacit support to their crimes of Aug. '75.

If, and only if, the AL can ensure a countrywide, large-scale, spontaneous (not goaded) mass support, should it take this issue to the people. But can it, at this stage? Most political analysts are sceptical.

Awami League insiders say that the issue is too personal and emotional for the party chief and for some other leaders, like Chief Whip Mohammad Nasim to permit any dispassionate and logical discussion of it at any decision-making level, in fact any raising of question against the current line of action may be looked upon as a sign of insufficient respect for Bangabandhu. Which is a 'kiss of death' for any aspiring AL leader.

However, some 'old guards'—who have nothing much to look forward to in terms of rising further in the party—have questioned the wisdom of it all and have been able to initiate some soft of discussion.

What are the options before the Awami League now? Having unwittingly pressed the issue, perhaps encouraged by the BNP's giving false hopes, the AL has today put itself into a corner. If it pushes ahead, there is the definite risk of its appearing to impose its party agenda upon the nation. If it doesn't, then there will be an appearance of retreat and consequent loss of face. However the latter option is a very small price to pay for, what may very well turn out to be, a political blunder.

But everything depends—as it always seems to in the case of both the BNP and the AL—on what the party boss thinks. Much to the credit of Sheikh Hasina, she has not publicly said anything yet. Her not presiding over the ALPP meeting Monday has distanced her from the decision and allows her greater maneuverability. Instead of going to the streets with the Indemnity Ordinance issue, she should play her real role as the Leader of the Opposition and take the government to task, in Parliament, on its performance. She has the ability to expose the inadequacies of this government and in the process build her own reputation and that of her party, as the alternative to the present government.

Nuclear

From Page 1 Col 7

clear experiment in the region, General Matinuddin said that between the 'hawk and dove' Pakistan prefers the middle road of global and regional approach for peace in South Asia.

However, when asked by a questioner if Pakistan owned nuclear weapons, he said "I am not in a position, not anyone ever in Pakistan, to comment on that... I certainly do not know."

India with its nine nuclear reactors and four other processing facilities was far ahead of Pakistan's efforts which, he said, involved huge financial investment. Pakistan is not capable of being a nuclear power in the South Asia, he said pointing out that India had not only weapons but the whole delivery system including satellite and rockets.

The general said that his country had often been linked with having 'Islamic bomb.' But nobody says that there are Christian bomb or Jewish bomb.

Pakistan has survived all opposition against its nuclear programmes, Matinuddin said. "We are now the gainers and they are the losers." The general said referring to the critics.

Pakistan had finally stood on its feet, he added.

Seen from the gallery

From Page 1 Col 4

know where his counterpart was. A treasury bench quipped: 'where are you? We are not the government', quickly came the reply from Mr Mosharraf.

A helpless Deputy Speaker then had to adjourn the House for twenty minutes with an appeal to ensure the quorum.

Thanks God, the quorum was made by the time the House reassembled. But the members were caught unaware as they were not informed earlier of the change in day's agenda.

Deputy Speaker made an instantaneous change and revised the agenda by taking up the Supreme Court Judges (Remuneration and Privileges) (amendment) Bill 1992 for consideration.

Most of the members who moved amendments to the bill and sought to seek public opinion were absent. Even then, the Deputy Speaker had problems in distributing time to the MPs. His decision of minute to each failed to satisfy the Awami League MP, A S M Firoz. When his turn came, Mr Firoz stood up and sat down by saying 'I stood up and again sitting down. This is one minute.'

But he did not forget to mention that he was emotion-

ally hurt. At a later stage when he wanted to speak, the Deputy Speaker was in no mood to allow him and said, 'You have missed the chance.' But the 'prescription' offered by Deputy Leader of the House Prof. Badruddoza Chowdhury was acceptable to the Deputy Speaker and Mr Firoz was allowed two minutes to speak.

Whether it was slip of the tongue or intentional, nobody knows. But an utterance which came from the ageing Law Minister Mirza Gohar Hafiz made the House noisy for about ten minutes. The utterance was made about a former judge. This angered almost all members of the opposition and they started insisting on its withdrawal. Amid the thumping of desks by file covers and angry comments the Law Minister maintained his ego and repeated saying 'I will not withdraw the comment.'

The situation was saved as Magreb break became due and the House was adjourned. During the break the treasury benchers were seen busy patching up the controversy.

Immediately after the break, the Law Minister took the floor and corrected himself by saying that he did not mean that word as asked the Deputy Speaker to expunge and than came back normally

Special Powers Act

From Page 1 Col 7

need for political commitment for upholding democracy and urged opposition parties to extend their cooperation to the government for institutionalising democracy in the country.

He said the government was seeking tolerance, encouragement and cooperation from opposition side which would be very much helpful on its part to run the administration smoothly.

He also urged the opposition leaders to point out wrongs, if there was any, in the government policies which would enable it to run the affairs democratically.

Syed Ishtiaque Ahmad, in his paper on 'constitution and democracy in Bangladesh since 1972,' said democracy had not taken root in the country.

Almost the entire period since independence was the period of constitutional autocracy, he observed.

"The hopes remained unfulfilled as constitutionalism did not thrive the ideals of democracy and rule of law was also frustrated," he said. But, he added, the mass upsurge of December 4, 1990 unmistakably demonstrated massively our people's commitment to democracy and rule of law.

Sayed Ishtiaque Ahmad, who is a lawyer of international repute, said after the 12th amendment, the Constitution was no more a document of doom but a document of hope. He said the cult of violence and use of arms were the greatest threats not only to the

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