

Toxic fertilizer

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had those (materials) been mentioned in the specifications," he said, adding that there was no way for the supplier to know that the consignment was contaminated.

He noted that the specifications were drawn by the Ministry of Agriculture, along with the recommendation of an expert from the International Fertilizer Development Corporation, to import zinc oxy sulphate fertilizer for the first time into the country.

"We are one of the regular suppliers of zinc fertilizer and we never had a problem," he said "and even if there was a failure (with this particular consignment) it was a collective one."

Meanwhile, the Environment and Forest Ministry has sent a summary on the purchase and distribution of toxic fertilizer, to the Prime Minister's Office proposing various measures including legal actions against the suppliers and identifying the actual areas of distribution.

Despite a very timely warning, well before the said consignment reached Chittagong Port, from the US embassy quoting the US environmental protection agency that it may be contaminated, BADC however went on to distribute 1113 tonnes of the toxic fertilizer before deciding to stop it.

Of the remaining stock, 1.717 tonnes of the toxic fertilizer is being stored at BADC's Shrirmoni godown in Khulna while 267 tonnes remain in Chittagong and the rest scattered in a number of distribution points around the country, according to corporation sources.

The BADC authorities seem to be some what unaware about the exact locations where the fertilizer may have been used. It was mainly distributed in the northern and southern parts of the country.

A Department of Environment source pointed out that when the BADC was asked about the possible areas of distribution, the corporation could only provide a list of thanas where the toxic fertilizer may have been distributed but could not pinpoint the exact locations.

BADC, meanwhile, sent additional samples for testing at the Bangladesh Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, the Rajshahi University and the Dhaka University.

The corporation also asked Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) to find out the long-term effects on crop and land due to the use of the toxic fertilizer and whether the effects could be transferred to humans through the consumption of food products.

BADC had placed the order to procure about 6,000 tonnes of zinc fertilizer at a cost of 298 US dollars per tonne during the later part of 1991. The first consignment arrived the same year and was distributed. The manufacturer was listed as US-based Stoller Inc.

The corporation accepted the first consignment despite various irregularities being detected and the BADC even lodged a claim of 1.69 lakh US dollars, on account of shortage in weight, excess moisture

2 killed, 15 hurt in road mishaps

By DMCH Correspondent

At least two persons were killed and 15 others injured in three separate road accidents in the city last two days.

A pedestrian was killed when a speeding truck ran over him at Danik Bangla Crossing at about 4:00 pm yesterday (Tuesday).

The victim was not immediately identified. He was about 40. He was sent to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where he succumbed to his injuries at about 6:40 pm on the same day.

Police sent the body to the DMCH morgue for autopsy. In another road accident at least 15 persons were injured when a speeding truck overturned at Aminbazar at about 1:30 am yesterday (Tuesday).

Among the victims, two were admitted to the DMCH. They are Satter (30) and Badsha (30). Other injured were admitted to a local clinic.

A housemaid died on the spot when a running tempo knocked her down near Mirpur police box at about 6:00 pm Monday.

The victim was identified as Shahar Bannu and she was about 55. Police sent the body to the DMCH morgue for autopsy.

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After the second consignment arrived, in January this year, samples were collected both by BADC and the US Embassy from the ship M V Viswa Prafulla docked at the outer-anchorage of Chittagong Port.

BADC sent the samples for chemical analysis at the Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI) and to the Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC), the results of which were given during some month. Both tests confirmed the presence of lead and cadmium in the samples.

BARI noted that the quantity of these substances found in the samples were not toxic for plants and would not have any adverse effect on the environment.

The Ministry of Agriculture, meanwhile, allowed BADC to release the consignment and distribute it based on the recommendations of BARI.

However, in April, the US Embassy subsequently confirmed that tests on the samples should high levels of toxic lead and cadmium which far above US regulatory limits.

BADC finally stopped further distribution of the toxic fertilizer following confirmation from the US Embassy.

Earlier this year, a US federal grand jury indicted four US companies on charges of conspiring to dispose of hazardous waste by converting it into fertilizer and shipping it to Bangladesh.

According to the June 24 issue of Chemicalweek, the indictment charged that Stoller's plant in Jericho, South Carolina purchased 1,000 tonnes of contaminated copper-recycler exhaust dust from Hy-tex of Houston, Texas, which it processed — without a permit — to make a zinc micronutrient containing lead and cadmium to be mixed with fertilizer.

The defendants in the case include Gaston Copper Recycling of Gaston, South Carolina and its parent company Southwest Corp of Carrollton, Georgia, which paid Hy-tex to process the dust.

The individuals indicated in the case were the President of Hy-tex, the Hazardous Waste Manager of Southwest and the Plant Manager of Stoller.

The Plant Manager is alleged to have received 50,000 US dollars from Hy-tex as a commission for the sale to Stoller. He faces a maximum 20-year prison term and a 1.75 million US dollar fine while the two other accused face seven-year terms and 500,000 US dollars in fines, the Chemicalweek report noted.

Stoller is currently undergoing liquidation proceedings under the US Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Act filed in March. The Jericho Plant has been closed since February.

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Muggers stab peasant in city

By DMCH Correspondent

Muggers stabbed a peasant Abu Osman and snatched Taka one thousand at Tejgaon Tuesday.

When Osman was going to Gulistan Bus Terminal from his nephew's residence at Nakhla-para, he was waylaid by four muggers near Tejgaon rail crossing at 6:00 am yesterday (Tuesday).

The muggers stabbed Osman on his abdomen and left hand.

Osman was admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) with multiple stab injuries.

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The image of goddess Durga being immersed in the river Buriganga at Waizghat yesterday. — Star photo

Japan links Third World aid to democracy, human rights

TOKYO, Oct 6: Japan proud to be the world's biggest aid donor, warned Monday it might suspend its economic assistance to developing countries where democracy and human rights are stifled and military might is excessive, reports AFP.

In an annual paper on its aid policy, the government said Japan took over from the United States again in 1991 as the world's biggest giver of official economic aid to developing countries after one year as number two.

Japan's such aid, known as Official Development Assistance (ODA), rose from 9.22 billion dollars in 1990 to 11.03 billion dollars in 1991, while that of the United States slumped from 10.17 billion dollars to 9.64 billion dollars.

A summary of the paper said Japan had set down principles of its ODA "drawing upon the bitter experience of the international community having allowed Iraq to become a regional military power."

According to the guidelines, Japan will pay "full attention" to trends in the recipient country in such areas as military expenditure, development and production of mass-destruction weapons, trade in weapons, democratic and human rights.

"Japan will review its aid policy when serious cases occur" in recipient countries, the document said.

It cited such examples as "profound reversals of a democratization process, grave violations of human rights, continuous and excessive military spending and other trends which cannot obviously overlooked by Japan and the international community."

The document said "demarches" of Japan and the international community had helped correct serious situations in Indonesia, Thailand and Peru "without reconsidering Japan's aid policy."

It cited killings by troops of civilians in East Timor in November and in Bangkok in May and emergency measures by Peruvian President Alberto Fujimori in April.

On the other hand, Japan has suspended new aid to Haiti following a military coup in October last year and to Myanmar since the military took over in 1988, the document said. It has also refused aid to Kenya and Malawi for their "disappointing political performances."

But a Foreign Ministry official, charged with dealing with aid questions pointed to the difficulty in obtaining reliable information on military expenditures and determining the relationship between economic aid and defence spending.

Japan may have to reconsider its aid if there is "widely excessive military spending" in recipient countries. "In that case first, we will convey our concern," he said.

The newspaper Sanket has reported Japan would shift the emphasis of its aid to China from infrastructure to living conditions amid fears that the railways, ports and other facilities built in China with massive Japanese aid might be used for military purposes.

Indonesia remained the top recipient of Japan's ODA in 1991, taking 1.07 billion dollars followed by India (891 million dollars) Egypt (620 million dollars) China (585 million dollars) and the Philippines (459 million dollars). Japan is the biggest ODA giver for 28 countries, the document said.

By region, Asia's share of Japan's ODA dropped from 59.3 per cent in 1990 to 51.0 per cent in 1991 while the share for the Middle East jumped from 10.2 per cent to 20.4 per cent. Africa accounted for 10.3 per cent and Latin America 9.5 per cent.

Fall in water level Sirajganj-Bhuapur ferry services face difficulties

SIRAJGANJ, Oct 6: Ferry services between Sirajganj and Bhuapur continued with difficulties for fall in water level in the Jamuna, officials said here today, reports UNB.

Ferrying buses and trucks in different routes connecting capital Dhaka with northern districts has been threatened by quick loss of navigability of the major river, but not yet stopped, they said.

Many shoals have reappeared in the river channels because of fall in the water level no sooner had the monsoon drawn to a close.

Earlier reports said ferry services in the Sirajganj-Bhuapur route had stopped and resumption depended on shifting of the terminal from Bhuapur to Nalchar.

Officials said the water level in the river was today recorded 5 feet 3 inches. Ferry needs at least 5 feet water to ply.

Disruption of ferry services will cause a serious road transportation crisis as private coaches on the Dhaka-Rajshahi highway now run via Bhuapur because of unending dispute among transport owners of Rajshahi, Pabna and Dhaka.

Communications Ministry authorities have tried a negotiated solution to the brawl, but the problem yet dragged on, keeping thousands of passengers hostage, UNB Rajshahi correspondent said.

Journey along the diverted route via Bhuapur takes several hours of additional time, besides other hardships.

Another speaker said that in the last 20 years the housing needs had increased by 350 per cent and if the situation was not checked Dhaka city would become the world's largest "slum city".

The Works Minister said that developed countries as well as donors did not consider the housing sector as a development sector, the country did not get any foreign grants for this sector.

But from now on the government would consider it a major sector and try to sanction a considerable amount of money for it. He said that the preparation of a new housing policy was underway.

Kamayana said that although there was no way in which the bulk of shelter delivery programme could be funded through international grants, the UN agencies could help improve the efficiency of the various components of the government shelter strategy.

Country passing thru' a dark period : Mizan

MYMENSINGH, Oct 6: Jatiya Party acting Chairman Mizanur Rahman Chowdhury today accused the government of its failure to curb terrorism and check lawlessness, reports UNB.

Addressing a public meeting at Baromari High School in Gouripur Mizan said the country is passing through a "dark period" and this anarchic situation cannot be allowed to continue.

Bijoya Dashami celebrated

Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindu community, ended in Dhaka as elsewhere in the country Tuesday with the celebration of 'Bijoya Dashami' and immersion of the images of the Goddess Durga, reports BSS.

'Darpan Bisarjan' a religious rite bidding adieu to the Goddess Durga, was performed by the Hindu devotees on the last day yesterday of the five-day festival.

Tuesday was public holiday on the occasion of Durga Puja. A voluntary blood donation programme was held yesterday at the Dhakeshwari Temple premises.

President Abdur Rahman Biswas inaugurated the programme. He also addressed a big gathering of the members of the Hindu community there.

The Hindu devotees of the city thronged the Dhakeshwari Temple compound with the images of Goddess Durga in colourful processions in the afternoon.

A big procession called 'Bijoya Shobhajatra' with the images of Goddess Durga was brought out from the temple premises. The procession ended at the Dashamighat (Wizeghat) where the images were immersed with due religious fervour and solemnity.

Meanwhile, Jatiya Puja Ujapan Committee President K I Roy Chowdhury and General Secretary Swapan Khmar Saha, in a joint statement, conveyed 'Bijoya Shubchchha' (Greetings) to the countrymen

Next G-7 summit in Tokyo

TOKYO, Oct 6: The next Group of Seven summit will take place in Tokyo in the second week of July and last three days, Foreign Ministry spokesman Michio Watanabe said today. It is likely that Russian President Boris Yeltsin will be invited, as he was to the last G7 summit in Munich, but a final decision will hinge on consultations between G7 members and on developments in Russia, he said. Leaders of the G7 nations — Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States — previously met in Tokyo in 1979 and 1986, reports AFP.

There is also a strong view that payments by the Department of Films and Publications for the government advertisements should be more expeditiously handled.

According to media circles, decentralisation of the public sector advertisement would certainly help in rationalising the present system.

Under the proposed decentralisation each government agency, autonomous corporation and nationalised financial institutions would be responsible for planning its own advertisements and making necessary payments from its own allocated funds.

The newspaper price at the country, lone plant, the Khulna Newspaper Mills, was increased twice during the last three months alone.

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC), the parent company of the plant, increased the price per tonne from Taka 18,000 to Taka 18,860 in July and again increased it to Taka 19,880 in September.

Corporation officials said that the price hike was "unavoidable" due to the increase in the tariff value of chemicals used in the plant, increased cost at extraction point and an 'irrational' high price for furnace oil.

These factors, they added, contributed to the escalation of the production cost at the mill to Taka 25,000. They argued that the rationalisation of the furnace oil price and reducing the tariff value on certain chemicals alone will enable the mill to cut down the production cost substantially.

However, newspaper executives point out that the production costs at the mill is comparatively higher than those in most neighbouring countries.

It is alleged that excess manpower, mismanagement and corruption in the mill have significantly contributed to the escalation of production costs.

Newsprint dealers and carriers also complain that they even have to pay tolls to release their consignments from the mill.

Newspaper industry circles have urged for a two year moratorium on all newsprint prices to allow newspapers to reach a break-even point.

Some newspaper executives are also asking for lifting of the ban on import of newsprint saying if a 'rational' import levy is imposed then the price may be cheaper than the local price.

Observers feel that a complete investigation into the affairs of the country's lone newspaper plant should be conducted immediately and steps should also be taken to ascertain future newsprint requirements and ensure supply.

Otherwise, they added, not only the newspaper industry would suffer but also the entire publication sector, especially the text-book publishing industry, would soon face a severe setback.

The Midnight File

UNSC considers trial for Y'slav war criminals

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 6: After months of rumoured massacres, "ethnic cleansing" and unspeakable crimes against civilians, the UN Security Council is considering punishment for war criminals in former Yugoslavia. On Tuesday, the Council takes up a resolution would set up a commission of lawyers to evaluate evidence for possible trials. Borrowing a page from the history of prosecution of Nazis, the UN Security Council is considering a Nuremberg-like process for those suspected of committing atrocities or other crimes against humanity, reports AP.

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Newsprint price

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25-30 per cent lower rates than that of a private sector company.

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HBFC is a shambles 'Faulty rules have done it'

By Staff Correspondent

Bangladesh Bank and other commercial banks but poor recovery has made this corporation almost paralysed.

The HBFC case dominated the seminar as the Housing Loan Borrowers' Association was one of the organisers with the people's rights council.

Three speakers pointed out that because of its faulty lending rules, the HBFC provided half of the total required loan but the borrower was charged with a lump-sum interest just after completion of his house which was impossible for him to pay thus making himself a defaulter.

One speaker said that a housing policy should be evolved considering the 11 crore population of the country.

Another speaker said that in the last 20 years the housing needs had increased by 350 per cent and if the situation was not checked Dhaka city would become the world's largest "slum city".

The Works Minister said that developed countries as well as donors did not consider the housing sector as a development sector, the country did not get any foreign grants for this sector.

But from now on the government would consider it a major sector and try to sanction a considerable amount of money for it. He said that the preparation of a new housing policy was underway.

Kamayana said that although there was no way in which the bulk of shelter delivery programme could be funded through international grants, the UN agencies could help improve the efficiency of the various components of the government shelter strategy.

Monsoons

From Page 1 Col 5

Indonesia and Australia. Pearce, who is among eminent scientists and meteorologists attending a regional workshop here on the monsoon effect in Asia and Africa, said the breakthrough came after scientists established a strong link between the monsoons and the El Nino effect on temperature in the Pacific Ocean.

El Nino is the name given to a temperature variation over a period of about four years in the Pacific Ocean strongly affecting world weather patterns, particularly in the tropics, said Pearce, a member of the steering committee for monsoons under WOM's Commission for Atmospheric Sciences.

The WMO, a United Nations agency, is coordinating a global programme to unravel the El Nino mystery.

Defaulting borrowers have paralysed the smooth functioning of the Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation (HBFC).

"Faulty" rules and a section of its "corrupt" employees have also been instrumental in making the borrowers defaulters.

Speakers including a minister made this comment at a seminar on World Habitat Day at the auditorium of United Nations Information Centre (UNIC) Tuesday.

The HBFC had lent Taka 1,458 crore until June 1992 of which only 21 per cent was recovered.

On the other hand, 90 per cent of the borrowers did not understand the interest counting system of the corporation, the speakers pointed out adding that the borrowers had to pay what the HBFC demanded.

Works Minister Barrister Rafiqul Islam Mia was the chief guest at the seminar which was addressed by Resident Representative of UNDP Putu Kamayana. Prof Moynuddin Khan of the Dhaka University, Accounting Department, Anil Chandra Das, Director, Town Development Directorate, Dr. Shajahan of the DU, Finance Department, Ferdous Ahmed Koreshi, Editor, Deshbangla, A S M Fakrul Ahsan, former Deputy Governor of Bangladesh Bank and M A Mohtem, Chairman Bangladesh People's Rights Council.

Fazlul Huq, Secretary of the Housing Loan Borrowers' Association presented the keynote papers at the seminar chaired by Justice Abdur Rahman Chowdhury.

The HBFC, the lending corporation in the housing sector borrowed the money from the

Nobel Literature Prize tomorrow

STOCKHOLM, Oct 6: The 1992 Nobel Literature Prize will be announced on Thursday, October 8, the Swedish Academy of Letters announced today, reports Reuter.

The Literature Award is the first of six Nobel Prizes to be announced in October. The others are physiology or medicine on October 12, economics October 13, physics and chemistry both October 14, and peace on October 16.

Israeli plane crash toll may exceed 250

AMSTERDAM, Oct 6: Search crews started a full-scale hunt for bodies Tuesday after stabilizing a 10-storey apartment building that was sliced in two by an Israeli Jumbo jet, reports AP.

Officials feared the death toll from the Sunday evening crash of an El Al cargo plane could exceed 250, most of them residents of the low-income housing project. That would make it the worst plane crash in terms of casualties on the ground.

Only 14 bodies had been recovered from the mountain of rubble by Tuesday morning. Authorities also were looking for the Boeing 747's flight data recorder, which could explain why the plane lost two engines after taking off from Schiphol Airport. It crashed as the pilot tried vainly to return for a landing.

In road accidents in the city, 32 people, including Dr Nurun Naibi, a director of General Pharmaceuticals Limited, were killed and about 200 injured during the last month.

Of the others five people were found mysteriously dead in separate incidents in the city in September.

During his stay here, Premadasa also called on President Abdur Rahman Biswas and discussed SAARC affairs.

Meanwhile, SAARC Chairman President Premadasa who has travelled five south Asian countries including Bangladesh is scheduled to visit Maldives on October 10.

AFP from Colombo adds: Premadasa returned home today after concluding the second leg of his tour of three South Asian capitals as chairman of a regional grouping, officials said.

Tight security marked Premadasa's arrival at Colombo's Katunayake International Airport, with large numbers of armed police deployed along the route from the airport.

Govt-Shantibahini