

Toxic food import yet to be banned

Food ministry unconcerned, WHO unaware

By Naimul Haq

The government is yet to ban import of dairy and poultry products from Belgium, France and The Netherlands although cancer-causing dioxin has been detected in those food items there.

Detection of high level of dioxin in Belgian poultry and egg about two weeks ago has caused a food scare across the world and about 30 countries have withdrawn Belgian dairy and poultry products from markets.

Some Asian countries have banned import of these items from those countries.

"We are yet to take a decision on banning dairy and poultry items from those countries. We have sent fax messages to our embassies in Belgium, France and The Netherlands, asking for advice whether to ban import of the items," Fazlur Rahman, Deputy Secretary in the Commerce Ministry told The Daily Star yesterday.

When contacted, the food ministry officials were surprisingly found not concerned about the problem. "It is not our concern. We do not deal with import of dairy and poultry items. We deal with import of

rice and wheat," said a senior official of the ministry.

It is all the more surprising that the World Health Organisation (WHO) office here is not aware of the matter although it is supposed to send warning to the government about the impact of such contaminated food items on public health.

When contacted, a senior WHO official said, "I have no idea about detection of dioxin in food items of those countries. If we get any information, we will let you know."

According to a commerce ministry official, a major por-

tion of the imported dairy products comes from The Netherlands, France and Belgium, mostly at private level.

Supply of Belgian, French and Dutch dairy and poultry products are in plenty in the local markets now.

The health ministry also seems not concerned about the impact on public health.

Asked if the health ministry has instructed testing of samples of the items imported from those countries, Section In-charge of Food Testing Laboratory of the Institute of Public

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Accord signed Bus run to start this month

By Special Correspondent

Bangladesh and India yesterday signed an agreement on Dhaka and Calcutta bus service which is likely to start by the end of this month, officials said.

Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Communications Karar Mahmudul Hasan and his counterpart in the Surface Transport Ministry of India K R Bhatti signed the agreement at the Secretariat.

Earlier, the draft of the agreement was finalised in Delhi in February.

Bhatti said "Full load bus service will be started in foreseeable future." But Hasan said commercial run of the service is expected on or before June 29. The fare would be 22 dollars or Tk 1100 for the round trip by air-conditioned bus.

"We have agreed to complete customs formalities at the starting points — Kamalapur terminal in Dhaka and Salt Lake in Calcutta — and expedite the immigration process at Benapole and Petrapole, by a maximum of one hour to save time for the 359 km trip under escort by two armed guards", Hasan said.

He told newsmen after the signing ceremony that it would be the beginning of the exercise to open up the Trans-Asian Highway from Istanbul to Singapore and the Trans Asian Railway in future. He, however, did not disclose the contents of the agreement.

He avoided a direct reply when asked whether the bus service would be extended to Aijmeer as originally visualised. He said the issue whether commercial operators would use the Indian railway instead for the long journey would be examined.

Opposition's 'protest day' today

By Staff Correspondent

The BNP-led opposition alliance will observe "Protest Day" across the country today to protest the proposed national budget for 1999-2000.

The BNP, Jatiya Party, Jamaat-e-Islami, Islami Oikya Jote and some smaller parties Jagga, Democratic League, Progressive Nationalist Party and Nationalist Democratic Alliance have termed the new budget "anti-people and against the interest of the country".

These parties had also called a countrywide dawn-to-dusk hartal on June 13 protesting the budget.

As part of the "Protest Day" programme, the opposition parties will hold public rallies and bring out processions in the cities and at the district and thana headquarters.

In capital, BNP, JP, Jamaat and IOJ will hold separate public rallies and bring out processions in the afternoon.

BNP will hold a rally at Paltan Maidan at 4.30 pm and bring out a procession. Leaders and activists of BNP and its different front organisations have been asked to join the rally to further strengthen the current movement.

JP will hold a rally at Mukhtangon at 4 pm and bring out a procession. Jamaat will hold a rally at Paltan and IOJ at Pura Paltan in the afternoon. Jamaat and IOJ will also bring out separate processions after the rally.

Prayer Timings		
June 18		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4:20	4:25
Jumma	12:45	1:20
Asr	4:50	5:00
Maghrib	7:00	7:05
Esha	7:55	8:15

Source: Islamic Foundation

Economists doubt 5.2pc growth rate

By Staff Correspondent

Leading economists in the country have expressed doubt about the government's claim of 5.2 per cent GDP growth in the current financial year, as stated in the proposed national budget for the next financial year.

By any estimate, GDP growth rate can not go above five per cent, they said at a discussion organised by Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) at its auditorium in the city yesterday.

Evaluating sectorwise growth, they said it is not possible to achieve many figures shown in the proposed budget.

They also mentioned that the government's claim of more than 10 million tons of Boro production in the last season

was not based on facts.

Director General of BIDS, Abu Abdullah moderated the discussion. BIDS research fellow Omar Haider Chowdhury presented a keynote paper while a panel of BIDS economists including Asaduzzaman, Quazi Shabbuddin, Zaid Bokht, K A S Murshid, Abul Quasem, Mahmudul Alam, Rushidul Islam, Rahman, Atiur Rahman, Sajjad Zohir, and Binayek Sen took part in the discussion.

FBCCI president Abdul Awal Mintoo also participated in the discussion.

"The available data on agricultural and industrial production do not support the projected GDP growth rate," said Asaduzzaman.

He said rice production in the current financial year would not be more than three per cent over last year's.

He however supported widening of the tax net but said the collection system should be improved.

Zaid Bakht said industrial growth would be around one per cent this financial year although the government showed a 2.2 per cent growth.

"If the industrial sector grew as projected by the government, why import of raw materials did not grow accordingly?" he asked.

Binayek Sen said that the massive damage caused to the economy by last year's flood

Success rate goes up 55.48pc pass SSC exams in 5 boards

By Staff Correspondent

The percentage of pass in SSC examinations rose to 55.48 this year from last year's 47.96.

The results of SSC examinations held under the five education boards were announced yesterday.

A total of 20,83,640 candidates appeared at the examinations this year. Of them, 4,57,252 passed; 1,96,263 in first division, 2,24,814 in second division and 5,913 in third division.

Of the successful candidates, 2,62,767 were male with 1,25,394 of them getting first

division and 1,94,485 were female with 70,869 placed in the first division.

Under the Dhaka Board, 1,24,885 out of 2,34,565 passed, the percentage being 53.0. Of the successful candidates, 59,005 got first division, 56,655 second division and 1,067 third division.

A.F.M. Noor-Uz-Zaman of Mirzapur Cadet College topped the combined merit list in Science Group securing 958 marks.

Ahsanul Karim of the same institution stood second with

953 marks. The third position went to Md. Wasi-Ur-Rahman of Udayan Bidyalaya. He scored 951 marks.

Barnali Dey of Ideal School and College secured the first position among female candidates. She scored 940 marks and stood fifth in the combined merit list.

Adnaan Ahsan Khondokar of Mirzapur Cadet College stood first in the combined merit lists in Humanities Group securing 890 marks. Karishma Zaman of Agrani Girl's School stood first

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Barnali Dey: First among girls



Oliur Rahman: Third in Science Group



Fauzia Afroze: First in Humanities Group

Beyond the boundary The Last Tango

By Shakil Kasem

Schopenhauer it was who said, "Against stupidity the gods battle in vain." When Hansie Cronje won the toss and opted to field punters and bookies alike were left biting their nails. Few sides had successfully chased runs batting second. Was Cronje in control of his senses? Remember, this was the point of no return. Was it the time to gamble? The South Africans are probably the dullest clients in any casino, predictable as they have always been when it came to

risks. Ergo, they had a plan in mind.

The plan was put together with a certain degree of class. Mark Waugh was dismissed even before the Headingley crowd had even settled down. The Australians realised, even at that early stage of the match, that they had a match on their hands. There was more than a faint tinge of déjà vu as the Aussies found themselves struggling for runs. 58 for three with more overs gone than

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SHANE WARNE
(Australia)
Man of the Match
Second Semifinal

Gritty Australia hop to final Suicidal South Africa see off WC hopes

EDGBASTON, England, June 17: Australia, inspired by Shane Warne, reached the final of the cricket World Cup here today after tying with South Africa in one of the most extraordinary finishes ever seen in a one-day international, reports AFP.

South Africa, needing one off three balls to win, saw their last man run out after a disastrous mix-up.

The scores were thus tied on 213. Australia going through to take on Pakistan at Lord's on Sunday thanks to their higher

position after the second round. Australia's players exploded with joy as Allan Donald was run out. Lance Klusener, his partner, ran back to the pavilion without looking back, knowing all was lost.

Australia, sent in, had seemed to be out of the game after limping to 213 for seven, with Shaun Pollock grabbing five wickets and Donald four. But a mesmerising spell by

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WITH LONG LASTING MOUTHWASH & FLUORIDE
CLOSE-UP
WHITENING TOOTH PASTE
For Long Lasting Fresh Breath and Sparkling White Teeth



The South Africans are ecstatic after Darren Lehmann was dismissed.

—AFP photo

A view from the Gully

By Tawfiq Aziz Khan

The celebrations started a bit early but was in order. Saeed Anwar and Wajahatullah Wasti carried their team into the final without much fuss at the Old Trafford on Wednesday. The silky Saeed with sublime touches to his strokes interspersed them with the stamp of ruthlessness. The normally aggressive southpaw restrained himself to strokes that were produced straight from the copy book. With this successive century he enters the record book of this all important tournament of the one-day variety.

Wasti was a perfect foil for Saeed once again. He too, excelled himself in stroke play and as the match progressed he grew bold and sent the ball in all parts of the ground. Short on experience the burly 25-year-old Pathan from Peshawar became slightly restive at a time when he was a short distance away from what could be his first ton in World Cup. This was, incidentally, the only success that Cairns and his team could achieve. This was a victory that many captain would dream but very few can hope to achieve. The victory was so emphatic that both Australia or South Africa are bracing them-

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We give you MORE

No match today and tomorrow. The final between Pakistan and Australia will be held at Lord's on Sunday. BTV and ESPN will telecast the match live.

দেশীয় পেইন্টস শিল্পকে রক্ষার জন্যে মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে আকুল আবেদন

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী, দেশ আজ আপনার গতিশীল নেতৃত্বে উন্নয়নের দিকে এগিয়ে চলেছে। আপনার গৃহীত বিভিন্ন পদক্ষেপ যেমন একদিকে দেশকে সমৃদ্ধির দিকে নিয়ে যাচ্ছে, তেমনি বহির্বিধে বাংলাদেশের ভাবমূর্তিকেও করে তুলেছে উজ্জ্বল। বিশেষ করে, বিগত বন্যার ভয়াবহ সংকটকে আপনি যেভাবে অতিক্রম করেছেন, তা দেশ-বিদেশে সর্বমুহুর্তে প্রশংসিত। বন্যার মারাত্মক ক্ষয়-ক্ষতি হওয়া সত্ত্বেও আমরা G.D.P.-তে ভাল প্রবৃদ্ধি দেখাতে সক্ষম হয়েছি। এখন আমাদের প্রয়োজন এই উন্নয়নের ধারাকে ধরে রাখা।

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী, অর্থমন্ত্রী ঘোষিত ১৯৯৯-২০০০ সাল-এর বাজেট ঘোষণায় সরকার স্থানীয়ভাবে উৎপাদিত পেইন্টস এবং বার্নিশের উপর ৫% সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্ক আরোপ করেছে (রেফারেন্স এসআরও- নং ১৪১-আইন/৯৯/২২১ মুশক, ১০ জুন ১৯৯৯)। যা দেশীয় পেইন্টস শিল্পের জন্যে উদ্বেগজনক।

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী, মূল্য সংযোজন কর আইন ১৯৯১-এর ৭(১) ধারা অনুসারে সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্ক আরোপ হওয়ার কথা শুধুমাত্র বিলাসী সামগ্রীর উপর। যেসব পণ্য সমাজের জন্যে অত্যাবশ্যকীয় নয়। সেই অর্থে, পেইন্টস কোনভাবেই বিলাসী পণ্যের মধ্যে পড়ে না। কারণ, বিশ্বজুড়েই এখন পেইন্টসকে বিভিন্ন নির্মাণের একটি অপরিহার্য পণ্য হিসেবে গণ্য করা হয়। পেইন্টস মূলতঃ বিভিন্ন সুরক্ষার জন্যে সর্বস্তরের ব্যবহৃত হয়ে থাকে। পেইন্টস ব্যবহার না করায় প্রতি বছর আমাদের দেশে কোটি কোটি টাকার সম্পদ নষ্ট হয়। তাই, যেখানে পেইন্টস ব্যবহারের জন্যে ব্যাপকভাবে উৎসাহিত করা প্রয়োজন, সেখানে এই সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্ক আরোপের ফলে পেইন্টস শিল্পে স্থবিরতা নেমে আসবে। তাই সংশোধনীর মাধ্যমে উল্লিখিত ধারার সম্পূর্ণরূপে প্রত্যাহার করে পেইন্টস এবং বার্নিশ শিল্পকে সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্কের আওতা থেকে আনানো কৌশলটিই যুক্তিযুক্ত নয়।

পেইন্টস খাতে ৫% সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্ক আরোপের ফলে Out put Tax ৩৮.৩৩% বৃদ্ধি পাবে। এরফলে, দেশে উৎপাদিত পেইন্টস পণ্যের দাম উল্লেখযোগ্য বৃদ্ধি পাবে। যার নেতিবাচক প্রভাব পড়বে ব্যাপক ক্ষেত্রে।

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী, দীর্ঘ এক সপ্তাহের ফসল আজকের এই পেইন্টস শিল্প। অনেক শ্রম এবং ঘামের বিনিময়ে আজ এই শিল্প চড়াবৃত্তিতে বিকাশমান। বাংলাদেশের অগ্রগতিতে পেইন্টস শিল্পের স্বনির্ভরতা অর্জন একটি বড় সাফল্য। দেশের শতাধিক-এর উপর রং উৎপাদনকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান সুস্থ প্রতিযোগিতার মাধ্যমে দেশের সর্বস্তরের গ্রাহকদের কাছে প্রয়োজনীয় রং পৌঁছে দিচ্ছে। সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্ক আরোপ করা হলে এই শিল্পটির অগ্রযাত্রা মারাত্মকভাবে ব্যাহত হবার আশংকা রয়েছে।

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী, আমরা সব সময়ই রাজস্ব বাড়াবার পক্ষে। কিন্তু, রাজস্ব বৃদ্ধির জন্যে যদি পেইন্টস-এর মত একটি অত্যাবশ্যকীয় উপাদান-এর উপর সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্ক আরোপ করা হয় এবং সেকারণে যদি আমাদের পেইন্টস শিল্প মূল্য-যোগ্যতা (Price competitiveness) হারায়, তাহলে দেশীয় পেইন্টস-এর দাম ক্রেতাসাধারণের আয়ত্বের বাইরে চলে যাবে, ফলে দেশীয় পণ্যের বিক্রি কমে যাবে। কাজেই, দেশীয় পণ্যের স্বার্থ সংরক্ষণ এবং এই পণ্যের উপর সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্ক ধার্যকরণ পরস্পর বিরোধী উদ্যোগ বলে প্রতীয়মান হয়।

উল্লেখ্য, কাচা-মালের উপর আমদানি-কর কমানোর ফলে যে সুবিধাগত দিকগুলোর কথা উল্লেখ করা হয়েছে, একই কাচা-মালের উপর সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্ক আরোপের ফলে তা কার্যত পেইন্টস শিল্পে কোন সুবিধা বয়ে আনবে না।

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী, বাজেট ঘোষণায় অর্থমন্ত্রী সুস্পষ্টভাবে উল্লেখ করেছেন, আপনার সরকারের উদ্দেশ্য দেশীয় পণ্যকে রক্ষা করা এবং দেশীয় শিল্পখাতে বিকাশের জন্যে অনুকূল পরিবেশ তৈরি করা। সেজন্য আপনার সরকার বাস্তবসম্মত উদ্যোগ গ্রহণ করেছে। তাই আমরা আশা করছি, আপনার পদক্ষেপে পেইন্টস শিল্পেরও নতুনভাবে উত্তরণ ঘটবে।

তাই, মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর কাছে আমাদের আকুল আবেদন, বিকাশমান পেইন্টস শিল্পের স্বার্থে অবিলম্বে দেশীয় পেইন্টস শিল্পের খাত থেকে সম্পূর্ণরূপে শুল্ক প্রত্যাহার করা হোক।

আমরা আপনার ইতিবাচক পদক্ষেপের পানে চেয়ে রইলাম।

পক্ষে

টিনকো করিম
সভাপতি
বাংলাদেশ পেইন্টস ম্যানুফ্যাকচারার্স এসোসিয়েশন।