

DCC's criminal negligence

Larvicide sample not even sent for approval; last year's warning fell on deaf ears

NAIMUL HAQ

The dengue infection is spreading fast, but the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) is sitting blissfully unmoved and giving out confusing information.

A The Daily Star probe yesterday revealed that the DCC itself has not yet approved purchase of larvicide to kill Aedes mosquito larvae. Neither has it sent any sample of the larvicide to the plant protection wing for approval.

Worse still, the DCC did not have a plan at hand to face this year's dengue attack despite warnings last year that the fatal infection would come in a wave.

Meantime, the number of adult Aedes mosquitoes in the city has risen five to ten times the normal level. And yesterday, two patients, both in their 30s, died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital. At least 34 persons have also been admitted to various hospitals yesterday with dengue fever.

DCC Mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka has not approved the purchase of 8,000 litres of larvicide till yesterday although the DCC in an emergency meeting the same day expressed 'serious concern' at the dengue situation.

Currently, there is no stock of larvicide and although the DCC knew that the dengue outbreak would occur during the monsoon, it did not plan in advance.

And DCC Chief Health Officer Dr Ashraf Ali dished out a ready reply. "Spraying larvicide will not come to any use since we have to spray inside

houses where the mosquitoes lay eggs."

Earlier, the DCC chief health officer told The Daily Star that the plant protection wing has been sitting on the approval for import of larvicide.

Asked why the DCC used larvicide last year to destroy Aedes eggs, Dr Ali said, "We did not use it last year to kill Aedes, but to kill eggs of other species of mosquito."

Asked why the DCC then decided to import larvicide this year again, he said, "The bug killer would be used to destroy eggs of Culex mosquito, not to destroy eggs of Aedes mosquitoes. But in some cases, we are going to spray the larvicide inside houses."

What was even more surprising is that the DCC does not have any approved adulticide in stock to kill adult mosquitoes. It has 15,000 litres of adulticide, but for reasons best known to it, it did not bother to send the adulticide to the plant protection wing for approval.

As a result, the corporation did not go for spraying in the city since March this year, allowing zillions of adult mosquitoes to grow.

"Besides," Dr Ali said, "we don't want people to get addicted to larvicide. This insecticide is highly toxic for humans."

On the contrary, entomologists say the only bail-out at this moment is to go for large-scale larvicide spraying.

"The situation is quite alarming and in the coming days, we may face a

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PHOTO: STAR

Volunteers spray larvicide around the Jatiya Press Club compound yesterday as part of a Dhaka Mariners Young Club programme to exterminate aedis mosquitoes, carriers of the deadly dengue.

Judicial probe House tutors say policemen attacked hall students

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two assistant house tutors of the Shamsunnahar Hall said yesterday that both male and female police personnel attacked female students during the July 24 raid.

Police broke open the main gate and stormed into the women's hall of residence between 2:30am and 2:45am, Shamsunnahar Begum and Suniti Biswas told newsmen minutes before their deposition to the judicial commission.

At around 12.30am, the provost asked them to inspect "the condition of Room No. 235" where students had kept some "outsiders" confined to.

The assistant house tutors found some police officers and assistant

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School kid kidnapped, killed, dumped into river

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A class III student of Armanitola School Rubayet Ahmed Bappi, abducted from the old part of the city Monday, was killed and dumped into the Shitalakhya river the same evening.

This was confessed yesterday by two of the arrested youngsters who were nabbed by the Kotwali Police while probing into the alleged abduction of Bappi, 8.

The main accused Md. Shipon is the first cousin of the minor schoolboy who reportedly abducted Bappi over a family feud.

The murder bore uncanny resemblance with that of Shihab's death in Bashabo in February when the 13-year-old was chopped into pieces when a ransom demand was not met.

Shipon lured Bappi with the promise of a bicycle and held him hostage with the help of his friends and family Monday noon.

Later, one accomplice of Shipon rang up Bappi's father Alfu Mia and demanded a ransom of Tk. 20 lakh to be given at a certain spot by the



Rubayet Ahmed Bappi

Shitalakhya.

Failing to meet the demand, Alfu Mia contacted the police who later arrested Shipon from Demra.

Acting on his statement, police also arrested Shipon's parents Rafiqul Islam and Hena Begum, his associates Ripon, Shanjib and Zahaid Hasan. Two more accused—Shankar and Sharif—are absconding, police said.

The novice criminals could not handle the pressure of the moment and decided to kill their hostage. They strangled him to death and threw the body into the water, police added.

Police is yet to recover the body of Bappi.

Talking to the press, the grief-stricken father of Bappi demanded speedy trial of the murderers.

Meanwhile, on the same day Bappi was found missing, another young boy, Mishu, 11, son of Habibur Rahman, was abducted from the Kotwali area. Mishu is yet to be found.

Father of the victim has filed a general diary with the Kotwali police station in this regard.



PHOTO: STAR

Mother and brother of Rubayet Ahmed Bappi breaks down yesterday upon hearing that his kidnapers has killed the schoolboy (in handcuffs on top right) and dumped his body into the Shitalakhya while their neighbours demand punishment to the culprits during a demonstration.



BAC sues Hasina for 'frigate fraud'

Ex-naval chief, Mintoo implicated among others

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) yesterday filed a case against former prime minister Sheikh Hasina and four others on charges of graft in the purchase of a frigate.

The others are former navy chief real admiral (rt) M Nurul Islam, commodore (rt) AKM Azad, commodore (rt) Harunur Rashid and former FBCCI president Abdul Awal Mintoo. Mintoo joined the BNP before the October elections.

BAC has accused them of buying the frigate from the Daewoo Company of South Korea at a higher price, violating the conditions of the purchase tender. This led to a loss of Tk 447 crore (US\$99.97 million) to the nation, which is tantamount to criminal misappropriation of funds.

BAC further said the tender for the frigate was floated for the first time in fiscal 1995-96 in which a Chinese company, the CSTC, became the lowest bidder with its frigate model F22B.

But later on, this tender was scrapped without showing any reason. In fiscal 1996-97, another tender was floated which called for proposals on frigates of proven design.

Nine firms took part in the bidding and 24 offers were dropped. Again, a Chinese company, BOMETEC PLA, became the lowest bidder with a quoted price of \$68

million. Daewoo came out as the fourth lowest bidder with its unproven frigate design. Moreover, the South Korean company did not comply with 28 specifications and yet the contract was given to Daewoo.

The frigate purchase proposal was sent to Hasina, the then prime minister, on July 1, 1996. However, Hasina signed the file on a back date of June 30 the same year.

BAC also said although Abdul Awal Mintoo did not participate in the tender, he as the owner of Transworld Engineering and Trading Company Ltd. was involved in the frigate purchase process along with other accused for personal gains.

He got Daewoo the contract for supplying the combat system, sonar system and spare parts for the frigate through his connection with Hasina and the former naval chief.

Earlier, Hasina along with some top defence officials were accused of scam in the purchase of MiG-29s in a case filed with the Tejgaon Police Station.

The frigate arrived on June 16 last year and was commissioned on June 20 by the former prime minister. The purchase of the battleship sparked off widespread criticism and the parliamentary standing committee on

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Jailer, 4 others transferred for negligence of duty

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The jailer of Dhaka Central Jail and four other officials were transferred yesterday.

They were transferred after IG Prison Brig. Gen. Jillur Rahman found irregularities during a surprise visit to the jail on Tuesday, sources said. During the visit, he found a mobile phone with Awami League leader and former lawmaker

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Shazneen case Defence lawyer irks spl court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Second Special Court for Prevention of Women and Children Repression, Dhaka, yesterday 'closed' the cross-examination of Latifur Rahman, second prosecution witness in the Shazneen rape case and father of the victim by the defence lawyer of Shahidul Islam alias Shahid, principal accused in the case.

Judge Kazi Rahamat Ullah passed the order following 'indecent behaviour' by the defence lawyer, MA Kamrul Hasan Khan Aslam, with him (the judge).

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Lanka complete clean sweep

SPORT REPORTER

Sri Lanka completed a 3-0 whitewash of Bangladesh when they won the third and final one-day international match by 58 runs at the Premadasa International Stadium in Colombo yesterday.

The home team earlier clinched the two-match Test series 2-0. Bangladesh made sure that they return home empty-handed when they, chasing a fighting Sri Lankan total of 258-8 in the stipulated 50 overs, were bowled out for 200 with sixteen balls to spare.

The match as a contest was all but over when the whipping boys of international cricket were reeling at 48-4 after an inspiring start that produced 22 runs off the first two overs.

Habibul Bashar with a defiant 52 and skipper Khaled Mashud, who made 37, tried to steady the rocking boat by putting on 65 runs for the fifth wicket.

But by the time the two consolidated the innings, Bangladesh were up against an improbable task of scoring 101 runs from the last 10 overs. They could manage half the required runs thanks to a gritty 48-ball 39 by Khaled Mahmud, who was the last batsman out in the 48th over. And it marked Bangladesh's half-century of defeats in their 53rd one-day international appearance.

Sri Lanka skipper Sanath Jayasuriya opted for rest from the third match. So did left-arm paceman Chaminda Vass and young fast bowler Dilhara Fernando. But stand-in captain Marvan Atapattu kept up the demolition job with remarkable efficiency.

Although Sri Lanka failed to excel in the first 15 overs after Khaled Mashud won the toss for a third time but decided to field for the first time. But the home side flourished with Russel Arnold (62) and Dilshan (50) playing with consummate ease.

The left-right combination produced 100 runs off 106 balls for the fifth wicket after Sri Lanka were reduced to 115-4.

Veteran Aravinda de Silva was the other impressive performer with 46 off 58 balls.

Bangladesh, in their chase, started brightly, with Al-Shahriar sending the ball to the rope for five times in his 17-ball 20. He was brilliantly caught by Dilshan, who plucked the ball inches off the ground diving full to his right.

An itchy-feet Ashrafur clipped the ball straight to Upul Chandana at square leg after scoring 10.

Debutant opener Hannan Sarker made 14 before being adjudged leg

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EC for using computerised voting

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) has decided to introduce computerised voting system in a bid to make the election process more transparent.

A pilot project on the planned system would be taken up soon, a joint meeting of the EC and the Local Government Ministry resolved yesterday.

The meeting also decided to issue improved identity cards to the voters, said an EC press release.

At the meeting, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Syed requested Local Government Secretary AYBI Siddiqui to expedite a government decision on the EC's 12-point suggestion seeking reforms of laws relating to the local government bodies.

But the secretary said the government needs time to decide on the proposals, meeting sources said.

The meeting also discussed holding of election to different local government bodies, but no specific decision in this regard was taken.

However, it suggested that election to 4,330 union parshads out of 4,476 could be held between January and March next year when

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AL meet today on Aug 15 programme

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League has convened an emergency meeting of its presidium at 11 am today to discuss the party programmes on the 'national mourning day' on August 15 in view of the government's decision on hoisting of the national flag, party sources said.

An official announcement said Tuesday that the national flag could not be hoisted half-mast on any day other than February 21, the International Mother Language Day or on the government-announced special days.

The ban was imposed through amendment of the national flag

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Lawyers to boycott court today

UNB, Dhaka

Jatiya Ainjeebi Parishad has called upon the lawyers to make its today's court boycott programme, in protest against the increased court fee, a success.

In a statement yesterday, president of the association Habibur Rahman Shawket and secretary Mohibur Rahman urged the government to withdraw its decision immediately.

Wheat scam in Khulna

QUAZI AMANULLAH, Khulna

Distribution of low quality Indian wheat for human consumption, instead of being used as poultry feed, has now added another dimension to the wheat procurement scam now being reported from different areas of the country.

The imported wheat (poultry feed) has been distributed among distressed people in seven unions of Kolaroa upazila in Satkhira district. Those who have got it are the VGD card holders.

Habibul Islam, MP from the area, said the poultry feed was distributed among the VGD card holders in Joy Nagar, Jalalbad, Kerhagachi, Chandanpur, Kupodanga, Dearha and Jugikhal unions. Each of them got 27 kgs of the poultry feed although they are entitled to get 30 kgs of quality wheat.

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Wheatgate probe finds insects in grains

REAZ AHMAD, ANWAR ALI & BINDU SHAHA

The food ministry probe committee on wheat scam returned to the capital yesterday, cutting short its tour to northern districts, due to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's visit to Bogra.

The team's return was decided on, as the officials concerned in Bogra, the team is supposed to talk to, would remain busy with the prime minister's visit, said sources in the food ministry.

Meanwhile, Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman's visit to Pabna on Tuesday, overlapping the visit by the probe committee members, including a chemist, attracted a lot of

flick from the locals.

The team led by Joint Secretary of the food ministry Yakub Ali was scheduled to visit Bogra yesterday and Satkhira today, but it returned to Dhaka, suspending its tour for a week.

The probe committee detected substandard wheat in at least ten warehouses, and the ministry's Chief Chemist Mahmuduzzaman commented on many sample papers that wheat is insect-affected, said the sources.

"It was not impossible to detect instantly if wheat is homegrown or imported. The local wheat is different from the imported one...it will be clear once chemical tests are carried out," Mahmuduzzaman said.

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