

Indian wheat

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of the district food procurement committee, and Nur Mohammad, member of the Sadar Upazila procurement committee, told The Daily Star that they were not informed when the government went for a fresh wheat procurement in late July.

In Bogra, the 3,910MT target for wheat procurement until June 30 was achieved. And 7617.307 tons of wheat of the 10,000-ton new target was collected between July 25 and July 31.

The allegation of Indian wheat procurement was levelled against seven warehouses -- Sadar Upazila, Belgari, Sherpur, Mirjapur, Shukhanpukur and Sabekpara -- of one central supply depot (CSD) and 22 local supply depots (LSDs) in the district.

Meanwhile, some intriguing moves look set in Bogra to cover up the purchase of wheat from the Punjab Food Industries Corporation of India.

Although the additional district magistrate (ADM) of Bogra sealed off a warehouse in the district, which stockpiled 2,000 sacks with the seal of Punjab Food Industries Corporation of India -- few days back, the supplier, Parimal Shing, now claims that the wheat was homegrown and only the sacks were Indian-made.

Asked about the date-expired (2000-2001) wheat in 2,000 sacks with the Indian seal, Deputy Controller (food) of Bogra Nurul Absar said the officials concerned rejected the consignments.

Asked about how the wheat was stockpiled in a government silo, Absar said, "It was raining when the wheat was rejected by the officer-in-charge of the Bogra Sadar LSD, and the wheat owner appealed to keep the consignment in an abandoned warehouse."

Parimal sponsored an advertisement in a local daily yesterday claiming that the wheat was homegrown and palatable; and the Indian sacks in which the wheat was supplied to the warehouse were bought at the town's Galapotty at Tk 3.25 a bag.

Parimal, a first-class contractor and grains trader, further claimed in the advertisement that he supplied 42 tons wheat by the deadline and later took another consignment of 3,000 sacks to the warehouse but the LSD officer-in-charge declined to procure the wheat and "permitted me to keep the wheat in the abandoned warehouse fearing a possible damage in rain".

The roving correspondent of The Daily Star could not contact Parimal yesterday for comments.

It is widely alleged that Helauzaman Talukdar, a ruling party lawmaker, was involved in the wheat scam. Talukdar, also an advisor on the district procurement committee, told The Daily Star that he advised the DC (Food) to procure wheat as per rules.

Uttara plots cancelled

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BNP-led coalition government is planning to allot those to their own people, the insiders added.

Meanwhile, the Rajuk Board, the highest body to cancel any plots in its territory, is yet to approve the decision to cancel the allotment since it has not received an order to this end from the ministry till yesterday, said a member of the Rajuk Board.

The Rajuk chairman could not be reached on his phone yesterday despite repeated attempts.

The probe body members who recommended the cancellation of the plots were also in the Rajuk committee that allotted the last year, sources said.

After taking office, Minister for Housing and Public Works Mirza Abbas formed a four-member inquiry committee headed by Joint Secretary Shahid Alam to investigate the 'irregularities' in allotting the plots. Other members of the committee were Rajuk Board member, Abdullah Al Mamun (Finance) and Deputy Secretary of the ministry Fazul Karim.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Abdullah Al Mamun, member of Rajuk Board (Finance), said the probe committee found some irregularities in the allotment of plots and recommended their cancellation.

However, he declined to say what kinds of 'irregularities' were there.

Also a member of Rajuk's allotment committee of these plots, Al Mamun said, "We did not find any irregularities when we allotted these last year as it was a big project. But, I believed there were some irregularities."

When asked if the probe body has suggested any punitive action against the Rajuk officials who committed the 'irregularities and corruption' in allotting the plots, he said, "I don't know of anything like this".

Meanwhile, the persons who were nominated for the plots have already collected their primary allotment letters from Rajuk.

It was learnt that about 15,000 people applied for 226 plots at sectors 9,10,11,12,13 and 14 of Uttara in 1997 after Rajuk invited bids for the plots.

The applicants deposited Tk 50,000 each against their applications. Rajuk selected names of 301 people including ministers of the AL government, MPs, leaders of the AL and Rajuk officials on July 9, 1999.

The plots were allotted to 11 AL ministers, 61 MPs of different parties, nine justices, 58 journalists, 71 freedom fighters, 30 poets and artists, 139 Rajuk and government officials, 618 businessmen, 161 expatriates, 31 affected land owners and 390 to others.

However, former prime minister Sheikh Hasina on her return from the US cancelled the allotments and asked for re-allotment of the plots as it created public outcry since most of the plots were allotted to the people loyal to the AL.

On May 4, 2001, Rajuk published a fresh list of plot allotment in national dailies including the names of the 301 people. Later, the Estate Department of Rajuk sent allotment letters to the persons separately.

Sources said there were only 246 plots in the Uttara project and Rajuk is acquiring about 700 acres of land for the rest 2441 plots. Rajuk also planned to get bank loans worth about Tk 400 crore for development of the lands.

AL to defy flag law

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half-mast was part of the state programmes.

But after succeeding the AL government, the coalition government of Prime Minister Khaleda Zia has meantime scrapped the mourning day and all its official programmes.

On Tuesday, a government announcement said the national flag rules have been amended banning hoisting of the national flag at half-mast on any day other than February 21, the International Mother Language Day, and other government-announced special days.

More cell phone companies

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Ministries concerned have been asked to "immediately enforce" the Cyber Act and the Software Copyright Act.

The meeting finalised a guideline for prompt action, bringing the function of all the ministries under e-governance.

A committee will be formed to make recommendations for further development of fixed line phones and infrastructure of the BTTB as well as improvement of its services so that subscribers can get BTTB service "easily, quickly and cheap".

The Awami League government allowed WorldTel to provide three lakh fixed line phones in private sector but the deal was delayed after the Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) found irregularities in the deal.

The country has an estimated demand of 35 lakh telephones in the next five years.

According to an estimate, about 85 per cent of the country's total population have no telecommunication access. The country has some 7.5 lakh fixed line telephones and

2 gunned down

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Thony was sent to the DMCH in a critical condition.

The OC of Narayanganj police station, Mizanur Rahman, told our correspondent that Rabi and Thony were listed snatchers and toll collectors. Rabi, son of one Kala Amir Ali, was a resident of Golachipa area in the town. Thony is the son of one Harun-Ul-Rashid of Jamtala area in the town.

Narayanganj police arrested four persons in connection with the incident. They are Fazlu, Selim, Babul and Alamgir. No case was filed in connection with the incident till yesterday evening, our correspondent reported quoting police.

Kala Amir claimed that his son Rabi was a small trader and not a snatcher or toll collector. He was killed because of old rivalry, he claimed.

Reazul Karim, a worker of Latif Bawani Jute Mill, and his friend Tapash had gone to Bhanga Bazar at Demra in the city Wednesday

One gets life term for killing wife in Sirajganj

BSS, Sirajganj
Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court here yesterday sentenced Tofazzal Hossain Fakir to life term imprisonment for killing his wife Jamela Khatun.

Judge Abu Ahmed Jamader also fined him Taka 10,000, in default, to suffer another year of imprisonment.

According to prosecution, Jamela Khatun, 25, daughter of Kobad Ali Fakir of village south Bhormohini under Ullapara upazila, was murdered by her husband Tofazzal Hossain of the same village on January 9 in 1996.

Victim's father Kobad Ali Fakir filed a case with Ullapara police station the following day.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Sirajganj General Hospital for autopsy. Resident Medical Officer of Sirajganj General Hospital submitted autopsy report stating that Jamela Khatun was tortured to death and marks and injury were found in her body.

Police submitted charge sheet against husband Tofazzal Hossain on August 29, 96.

24-hr transport strike in Ctg, Sylhet divns tomorrow

UNB, Chittagong
Sarak Paribahan Malik Sramik Oikya Parisad has called a 24-hour transport strike on 174 routes in Chittagong and Sylhet divisions from 6am tomorrow to press home their 6-point demand, including withdrawal of increased tax on transport sector imposed in the national budget.

The owners and workers of some 73 organisations under Oikya Parisad brought out a procession in the city yesterday in support of the strike.

Meanwhile, Oil-Gas and Road-Shipping Sramik Karmachari Parisad has decided to go for a 72-hour countrywide strike from September 7 demanding withdrawal of the government's decision to sell out oil and LP gas companies.

Light

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mysteries of cosmology," he said.

"If the speed of light were nearly infinite in the first split second it would explain why the universe is so uniform, for example, on a large scale," he said.

If his theory stands up, Davies said, it would be the biggest scientific revolution since Albert Einstein's theory of relativity -- which the new hypothesis would demolish.

One of the most important elements of Einstein's theory that energy equals mass multiplied by the speed of light squared (E=MC²) is that the speed of light - 'C' in the equation - is an absolute constant.

"Einstein would have absolutely hated this," Davies said. "His entire theory of relativity was founded on the notion that the speed of light is an absolute fixed universal number."

"If these results hold out, we need to start re-examining the very nature of space and time," he said.

"It also affects other branches of physics like thermodynamics and quantum physics, the very basis of all our fundamental physical theories - if these observations are correct - seem to be in the melting pot," he said.

Davies said it also needed to be tested whether light was continuing to slow or whether it had hit a cosmological "speed bump" billions of years ago.

NSU VC for colleges conducting exams, giving certificates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT
By allowing the colleges in the country to conduct examinations and award degrees on their own will bring a radical change in the education sector since it is a hard task for the country fairly," said Moslehuddin Ahmad, founder president and vice-chancellor of North South University.

He was speaking at a press conference to disseminate his proposal for decentralisation of educational authorities in the city yesterday.

"This is obviously an unmanageable task for NU to conduct examinations and award degrees to all affiliated degree colleges in the country fairly," said Moslehuddin Ahmad adding "Discrimination in assessment by different examiners or losing the examination scripts during their transportation is a common incident when (NU) conducts the examination."

The process, however, should begin on selective basis in both

Ex-VC, proctor blamed

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refused and requested for female police to look into the matter," he continued.

Along with female police and two male police officers, the assistant proctors then went to room No. 235 where angry students held the JCD activists captive. "We were also confined inside that room for three hours," he maintained.

Talking to the journalists, Dr Kalimullah mentioned that the JCD leader Halima Begum Lucy rang up the VC from her mobile phone at around 1:48am. and talked for over nine minutes.

Dr. Kalimullah stated that while in confinement in Room 235, he saw the residents of the room boiling water in a pan. Asked why, Shanta, the general secretary of JCD hall unit, explained that they plan to throw the hot water on the agitating students in their defence.

"The situation could have been averted had the university authorities dealt the matter apolitically," he observed in retrospect.

Mohammad Shafiullah also accused the erstwhile DU authorities of issuing a press release on their behalf of which they had no knowledge.

Shafiullah also refuted the charge of ordering the police to arrest some female students.

The female students who were arrested on the eventful night and a JCD activist in their statements earlier alleged that Shafiullah asked the police to arrest the agitating students.

Former VC Prof. AK Azad Chowdhury, acting president and general secretary of DU Teacher's Association (DUTA) Abul Khaer and Sharifullah Bhuiyan also appeared before the commission yesterday to give their opinions.

Sharifullah Bhuiyan later told journalists that the commission in particular asked them about the

Shrimp lords destroy

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and a worse impact on the fragile ecosystem in case of a cyclone like that of 1991.

Sources in the district administration and the Forest Department said thousands of acres of forestry have been plundered over the last few years.

They said influential people always played the key role in manipulating the laws at the local level to obtain long- or short-term leases of the lands for projects.

Lack of awareness among the local people and a promise of cash incentives for shrimp cultivation have encouraged the trend, they said.

Moreover, these islands are so remote that the ever-constrained local administration is unable to monitor and guard the forests.

The grabbers first obtain a map of the area and submit a prayer to the district administrator saying the land is state-owned and barren, and a lease could be issued for cultivation of shrimps, which could earn the country foreign currency.

"The district administrator or the deputy commissioner then sends the file to the assistant commissioner (AC) (land) at the thana level to investigate the matter and report back. In turn, the AC asks the tahshildar, the petty official under him, to investigate," explained a

Search for Bappi's body continues in Shitalakhya

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herlap.

"If Shipon (the cousin of Bappi who killed the boy) needed the money, he could have told me so. I would have given him whatever he needed. But he snatched away my only son," said a grieving Rokhana.

"I have lost everything. Life has no meaning for me," the mother whined, lovingly clutching a dress of her dead son. "Please, let me see my Lulu once more." And then she fainted.

As the mother mourned, Bappi's father Alfu Mia encountered another trauma. He had no time for grief, or tears for the son who would never come back to their life, was busy searching for the body of his child in the river Shitalakhya.

A team of Kotwali police was also looking for the body. Police circulated messages through walkie-talkie to the police stations around the Shitalakhya.

To mourn their schoolmate, students of the Armentitola Govt. High School did not attend classes yesterday.

The students brought out a mourning procession at about 11:45am and marched to the Court Building. They demonstrated on the court premises, shouting slogans and demanding punishment to the killers of Bappi.

Some students told The Daily Star that they demanded the trial of Bappi murder case the way the Shihab murder case was done.

"How can an innocent boy like Bappi be killed in such a cruel way," said a shell-shocked student. "Our only sorrow is that we will never get Bappi back in classroom. He will never play again on the field."

Another student procession went to the Jatiya Press Club after parading different city streets. The Metal Businessmen Association also brought out a procession in Armentitola to condemn and protest the killing. They also demanded exemplary punishment to the killers.

Numerous posters and banners, decrying the killing were hung in the school and other parts of the Old Dhaka.

Bappi, a class III student of the Armentitola Govt. High School, was abducted by his first cousin Shipon from his Becharam Deuri residence on Monday noon. Shipon took him to an unknown hideout. At about the 5:00pm, he called Bappi's father to his shop and demanded Tk 20 lakh. Shipon told him that Bappi was confined in a staff quarter at Jatrabari and would be killed unless the money was given.

Family members said Alfu Mia agreed to pay but asked Shipon to hand his son first before handing over the money. But Shipon refused to do so. A shattered Alfu Mia could not take any decision and went to his shop to talk to his friends. Later, he informed the Kotwali police.

Sources said Shipon and his gang decided to kill Bappi after failing to get the money. They first took the boy to the residence of his friend Ranjeet at Demra Dellapara and later to the residence of another gang member, Shankar, at Chanpara and confined him there.

In the evening, Shipon and his accomplices took Bappi on a boat ride on the Shitalakhya. Sometime later, a starving Bappi fell asleep on

Homeward

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tional flights or divert other flights to touch Kuala Lumpur for carrying Bangladeshi workers, meeting sources said.

Asked whether the Bangladeshis would be given free ticket to come home, a high official at the expatriate welfare ministry replied in the negative. They do not need free ticket because they worked there for several years and earned lot of money, he pointed out.

The government is thinking of providing logistic support to those workers who went there through legal procedures, the official said.

The Malaysian government has given an ultimatum that all workers staying in that country without valid documents after August 31 would face severe punishment including imprisonment, physical assault and fine. It has decided to send back around half a million foreign workers this year, most of them from Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Pakistan and Bangladesh.

In Dhaka, Minister for Environment and Forest Shahjahan Siraj told The Daily Star that he would soon visit Sonadia to see for himself the extent of environmental degradation. He said that he would consider the interest of the people while protecting the environment.

Alamgir Farid MP could not be reached for comments despite repeated attempts.

Two cops hurt in attack by accused in criminal case

UNB, Gazipur
Two policemen were critically injured in an attack by an accused in a criminal case at village Tekipara in Sadar upazila in the early hours of yesterday.

Police said Shah Jamal, 30, the accused, attacked SIs Moksedul Momin and Sultanuddin with a kitchen knife when they along with their five other colleagues from Joydevpur thana went to his house to arrest four accused, including Jamal, at about 2:30am.

In the face of attack, police fired a shot but failed to arrest Jamal.

They however, arrested Jamal's two brothers -- Yusuf Ali and Ayub Ali -- who were among the accused.

Police arrested Ismat Ara, wife of Jamal, and Parveen Akhter, wife of another accused, Marfat, in connection with the attack.

Three cases were filed against seven people, including father and wife of Jamal.

The injured policemen were rushed to Sadar Hospital and later shifted to Pangu Hospital in Dhaka.

M-16

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Lablu, 32, -- were arrested at the Uttara Model Town Sunday night by detectives who recovered an M-16 rifle from their possession. Police said the rifle was purchased a year ago and kept in Chittagong.

A pall of gloom descended on the school and the locality where Bappi lived. And obviously, his killing figured in any gathering either at tea stalls or business establishments.

The teachers of the Armentitola Govt. High School held a meeting yesterday to express concern at the incident and stressed increasing security of the students of the school.

Head Mistress Obaida Banu told this correspondent that they have taken up a number of steps to ensure security for the students. She said no student would be allowed to go outside the gate during school hours.

State Minister for Home Lutfuzzaman Babar visited Bappi's residence yesterday evening and ordered the investigating authorities to submit the chargesheet of the case within a week.

Dhaka City Mayor Sadeq Hossain Khoka also visited the residence of Bappi in the morning.

Meanwhile, our Narayanganj correspondent in a late night despatch reported that Shankar was arrested from Chanpara at Rugganj at 7:30 last night. Later on, he was sent to Dhaka.

Under waste siege

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system in Uttara Model Town, rain water flowing into the lake during the rainy season carry pollutants into it.

The Bangladesh Fisheries Development Corporation (BFDC) is cultivating fish in the lake without taking any steps to clean the water. The southern part of the lake in Sector No. 3 and 5 is being severely polluted as pollutants are flowing into the water through a sewer pipe.

An official of BFDC said they have already requested the Department of Environment (DoE) to take necessary steps to stop flow of waste into the lake.

"But, the DoE has failed to take any step to check pollution of the lake water," he added.

He however said lack of co-ordination among different bodies including Rajuk, DoE, and BFDC has thwarted implementation of any project to keep the water clean.

On the other hand, the WASA is yet to take up any project for construction of a sewerage network in the area, sources said.

When contacted, WASA Chief Engineer Kazi Mohammad Sheesh, said WASA has a plan to construct

sewerage network in the area. But it will take time as it needs proper planning and a huge amount of money, he added.

Local residents blame the Rajuk for not taking necessary steps to save the lake water from contamination. Lack of initiatives by Rajuk will increase the contamination, they said.

Kashmir

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them seriously, police said.

Police said no pilgrims were passing in the area when the explosion took place.

Three more militants were killed in a fierce encounter in the Nowgam sector of northern Baramulla district Thursday, while another died in neighbouring Kupwara district, police said.

More than 36,500 people have died in Kashmir since the eruption of an insurgency against Indian rule in 1989. Separatists put the death toll twice as high.