

## Not probing enough

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headed by its joint secretary Yakub Ali inspected the Sathkira Sadar LSD (local supply depot) yesterday. The committee is to submit a report to Food Minister Abdullah Al Noman tomorrow. Earlier, it visited Mymensingh, Bogra and Pabna districts.

Though the committee collected samples from eight separate lots of wheat stocks from four warehouses under the Sathkira Sadar LSD, it did not collect wheat samples from six sacks full of puffed wheat earlier identified by a local probe committee formed by the Sathkira deputy commissioner.

Many of the local wheat traders who talked to The Daily Star in Bogra also questioned the sincerity of the probe body that left Bogra on Sunday without inspecting the six granaries that allegedly procured and stored low quality wheat. In another development, our Sathkira correspondent Abu Ahmed quoted Sathkira Deputy Commissioner A M Chowdhury as acknowledging that an unspecified volume of poor quality wheat was distributed among VGD cardholders in Kolaroa, Panchpota and some other areas of the district.

The press earlier reported that 350 MT of wheat distributed among VGD cardholders in the district was of low quality.

Despite finding insect-infested wheat in some silos in Bogra just two days back, the probe committee was yesterday tight-lipped about the findings while visiting public granaries in Sathkira yesterday on the last leg of its four-district fact-finding mission.

The local administration has confirmed that the wheat bought during the last three days of a 135-day procurement drive was not locally grown.

"We're collecting samples here and we can't say anything until we prepare our probe report after returning to Dhaka," said Yakub Ali, head of the four-man probe body.

Against a procurement target of 2200 MT of wheat, some 808 MT of feed-grade Indian wheat was allegedly sold out to Sathkira Sadar LSD from July 29 to 31, the last three days of the 135-day internal wheat procurement drive carried out by the government.

Following the irregularities at the Sadar LSD, food officials responsible for seven other granaries in Sathkira refused to procure 1800 MT wheat, a target set for them. They surrendered their procurement quota citing that no home-grown wheat was available in Sathkira.

Interestingly, against a production target of 2700 MT of wheat this year, Sathkira produced 1700 MT. But, for unknown reasons Sathkira was asked to procure 4,000 MT of wheat.

Meanwhile, no-one turned up to testify before the probe committee in Sathkira yesterday allegedly in fear of reprisals from politically powerful people responsible for supplying feed-grade wheat to the silos.

During the visit of the probe body members to the Sathkira Sadar LSD at 9:30 am, acting deputy controller (DC) of food, Sathkira, FI Howladar was seen inviting local grain traders and others concerned over mobile phone to appear before the probe committee. However, no-one showed up till late afternoon.

In Bogra, the local unit of the Bangladesh Chhatra League formed a human chain in the town's Satmatha area at 11.30am demanding proper investigation into wheat scam and punishment to the culprits. It also held a rally in front of its office at Temple Road with its joint convener Jubayer Hasan Liton in the chair.

The speakers at the rally blamed mismanagement of the food ministry, corruption of a section of food officials and dishonest profit-hungry suppliers for the wheat scam. A trader of Bogra town's Fateh Ali market talking to The Daily Star wondered why the warehouses were sealed eight days after the allegations surfaced.

He also said news of the alleged scam broke out on August 2 and the local probe committees went into action on August 4. But the warehouses were sealed on August 9, just a day before the food ministry's probe committee arrived here.

"And all the sealed warehouses were opened after the probe team left Bogra...then what's the point sealing six other warehouses which were not inspected at all", said another businessman of Borogola. Before leaving the town on Sunday, the probe team sources informed The Daily Star that there was no puffed wheat in the granaries, but one of them pointed out that the wheat might have been imported from India as poultry feed.

The sources also hinted that they gathered evidences which reinforce the allegation that the wheat was procured after the scheduled date.

"Anyone who is health conscious will buy the wheat for own consumption," one of the local elite who was present during the committee's investigation at the Sadar LSD commented after seeing the black-spotted, broken 'dana' and insect-infested wheat samples. One of the front-ranking BNP leaders also questioned the visit of the First Joint Secretary of the ruling BNP Tarique Rahman in Bogra, just 15 hours before the arrival of the food ministry's probe team.

Tarique, however, came to Bogra to distribute relief goods among the food victims and did not make any comment on the alleged wheat scam, sources said. Moreover, during his tour he did not meet the local BNP leaders with whom he usually roams in the town although he stayed at Champa Mahal, the residence of Helaluzzaman Talukdar Lalu, MP, the sources added.

When asked about their party MP's recommendation to the district administration for an immediate release of Indian wheat sacks belonging to Parimal Kumar Singh, Bogra district BNP General Secretary Rezaul Karim Badsha said the recommendation was made "considering that the wheat was not procured by the government".

Asked about the Sadar thana BNP Organising Secretary Mahidul Islam, who also supplied wheat, he replied that no BNP member was involved in the alleged scam. Sources in a government intelligence branch here said their own investigation found only two out of the 15 people involved in the scam belong to the Awami League (AL), while the rest are either directly involved with or loyal to the ruling BNP.

However, President of the district unit of AL Mamtaz Uddin denied involvement of any of his party leaders or workers in the alleged scam. He also said Parimal was not even a worker of AL and blamed local BNP for the incident.

"Other than the ruling party men who else would dare to commit such a crime?" he asked.

A senior food official while talking to The Daily Star on phone commented, "How long will you write on the issue? The axe will finally fall on some employees and low level officials of the food department. And the main culprits get away somehow."

"Such big crimes as managing fresh allocation for procurement when there was no local wheat in markets and dumping of a big volume of wheat into the granaries within a short time could not be committed by the OC (officer in charge) of a LSD alone... some higher officials and the local influential people have to be involved in it", he said.

The source also informed that the TI (technical inspector) of the LSD did not get enough opportunity to check the quality of wheat since wheat was pouring in heavily.

Hasina

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the killers of Bappi and Ratna, she alleged this government is encouraging the killers by not taking any action against them.

"Almost every day a child is being killed brutally, but the government, instead of taking action against the killers, is running the country by keeping them in its fold," said the Awami League chief.

Hasina, who returned home after a 25-day visit to UK and USA, yesterday visited the house of Bappi at Armanitola in Old Dhaka and the house of Ratna at South Manda in the wake of public outrage caused by the two infanticides.

Braving rains, thousands of people, including children and women, were waiting at both the places.

Hasina first reached Bappi's house at Becharam Deuri Lane in Armanitola area where thousands of people thronged the roads, shops and rooftops chanting slogans demanding death sentence to the killers of the schoolboy.

The protesters wore black badges and hoisted black flags as well as carried banners and posters inscribed with the demand that the killers be sent to the gallows. Bappi, son of a businessman, was kidnapped for ransom on August 5 and later murdered and thrown into river Shitalakkhya.

Bappi's mother Roksana, who has mosty refused to eat anything, was lying down on the bed holding the clothes of her slain son close to her when Hasina arrived at the house at about 11:15am.

"Even I could not see the body of my beloved son. I do not know how many mothers will lose their sons," cried out the mother bereft of her dearest one, the only son.

Hasina consoled her saying that she had also lost her near and dear ones. She offered the distraught mother a glass of milk.

"We don't want a single child to be killed and no mother to lose her son," Hasina said, "but fathers and mothers are living in grave fear whether their children will return alive or not."

From Armanitola Hasina went to Manda and visited the thatched house of the poor parents of Ratna, the girl child of a rickshawpuller, allegedly slaughtered by her neighbours on August 10 following a quarrel with her playmate.

The same tragic scene was created in the small house of Ratna. The wailing mother, demanding punishment to the killers, said, "We had the only daughter, but we lost her...now how we will live."

Ad arrears

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BTV news bulletins. They said BTV could improve its bulletins by skipping such items that do not have much merit and news value.

Tariqul Islam informed them that serious efforts are underway to improve BTV news bulletins in line with the challenges of the day.

Information Secretary Mirza Tasadeq Hossain Beg, Principal Information Officer Fazal M Kamal and senior officials of the ministry attended the meeting.

## Municipality employee chopped to death

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Barisal**

An employee of Bakerganj Poursava office was chopped to death by some unidentified miscreants at his residence in the town in the early hours of yesterday.

Police said, a gang of miscreants broke into the residence of accountant Manjurul Haq, 35, at Baraipara and chopped him to death on the spot at about 2.30 am.

The reason behind the murder is yet to be ascertained, police said.

A case has been filed with Bakerganj thana in this connection. None has been arrested.

## Trisha murder case

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her, the three chased her. Being afraid, Trisha started running through Khanpara and found a pond in front of her. Then in a bid to save herself from the goons, she jumped into the pond. As she did not know how to swim, she drowned. The accused persons just stood beside the pond and watched her tragic death.

One Yousuf Ali then informed police and fire brigade about the incident. Later, fire brigade men along with some others recovered Trisha's body. Local people caught Modern, Shaheen and Asha and handed them over to police, he mentioned.

The other prosecution witness, Afzal Hossain, said that the accused persons often used to tease Trisha and on the day of the incident, they were present in front of his shop and from there, they chased her.

Afzal brushed aside defence lawyer Serajul Islam's contention that his (Afzal's) statement during the cross-examination was false and fabricated.

Public Prosecutor Jahangir Alam Jinnah and Serajul Islam appeared in favour of the accused.

Meanwhile, the accused persons have submitted petition seeking withdrawal of their earlier statements given before a magistrate.

The cross-examination resumes today.

## Alliance plans

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taken up during the one-year period since October 10 last year.

According to Siddiqui's letter, the preparation of the draft of the Bangla booklet will be supervised by the information secretary and also involve the Principal Information Officer of PID, Director Generals of BT, Radio and Department of Films and Publications (DPP).

The final script of the Bangla booklet will be prepared following recommendations by the information minister.

The English booklet, meant primarily to provide information to foreigners, will highlight the development activities and initiatives of the government. Besides, the booklet will contain a summary of the government's achievements during the one-year period.

Director General of External Publicity Wing will assist with the preparation of the English booklet while the foreign secretary will supervise the work. The script will be finalised with the foreign minister's approval.

Political Secretary to the Prime Minister Haris Chowdhury will lay down the overall guidelines on the two booklets.

The letter said the foreign and information secretaries would ensure approval of the scripts of both Bangla and English booklets by September 7 and send those to the DG/DFF for printing.

Meanwhile, sources said the BNP has yet not finalised the programmes for celebration of its one-year rule, but plans to that effect are now underway.

The party also has plans to celebrate the day in all district as well as thana headquarters aiming to apprise the people about the government's various development and welfare programmes.

## Restriction plan for teen use of cell phone irks operators

**MUSTAK HOSSAIN**

The government proposal to restrict use of mobile phones by teenagers on health ground has irked mobile phone providers, industry sources said.

Science and Information Communication Technology (ICT) Minister Dr Abdul Moyeen Khan on Friday said the government is thinking of restricting use of mobile phones by teenagers on health ground. He said the government will review the matter and restrict their use by people below 18 to save them from radiation.

"If required, the government would frame a policy and enact laws to check non-radioactive radiation," Khan had said.

But the companies selling mobiles in the country are unhappy about the proposal.

"There is no conclusive evidence about the impact of use of mobile phone on health," said Jafri Ahmad Tambi, Managing Director of Sheba telecom.

Tambi said, "I don't see it should raise any alarm for the country."

He said if such a decision is taken, it will hinder growth of the telecommunication, considered as a thrust sector in the country.

"There is no scientific proof that radiation from mobile phone damages your brain," a top official of a mobile handset provider told said.

"This can't happen... as there is no hard evidence of radiation generating from mobile handset," said Anwar Hossain, Country Manager of Sony-Ericsson mobile phone company.

Many studies have been done in many developed countries on possible health effect on health from use of mobile phone. But none of the reports proves any direct health risk from use of mobile phones, said Syed Yamin Bakht, Head of Information Department of GrameenPhone Limited, the country's leading mobile phone service provider.

Bakht said some studies recommended that a heavy user should use handsfree earplugs to be on the safe side. Moreover, mobile phone handset manufacturers also abide by the limits on radiation level set by many countries.

Mobile user Tanvir Ahmed wondered how could the government restrict teenagers aged 18 and above from using mobile phone since they are considered adults constitutionally.

Sources in the ICT ministry said the government is seriously thinking of restricting use of mobile phone by teenagers until they are 16 to save them from possible radiation, which might cause brain damage.

Some research shows radiation from mobile phone can affect brain tissue and thought processes.

Experts say children and young people are at more risk because their skulls are thinner.

In developed countries with high rate of mobile phone use, many of the companies target youths in marketing mobile phones.

"As far as we know, use of mobile phone by youths is not

banned anywhere in the world", another official of a mobile phone company said.

Primary customers of mobile phones in Bangladesh are adults, not youths.

One recent study in UK found one in 10 users under 16 spend up to 45 minutes a day making calls on cell phones.

Devices to reduce radiation from mobile handsets are available in the market.

There are over 9 lakh mobile phone users in the country and four providers.

## McKinion

**FROM PAGE 12**  
views on the Commonwealth activities.

Bangladesh always played an active role in the 55-member Commonwealth by upholding the values of the group of former British colonies.

This will be McKinion's first visit to Bangladesh after taking over the office of Commonwealth secretary general in April 2000 by defeating the Bangladesh candidate, former foreign secretary Feroq Sobhan.

McKinion is also expected to visit Islamabad to see for himself the pre-election activities and the situation in Pakistan.

Pakistan's membership in the Commonwealth was suspended after takeover of power by army General Pervez Musharraf in 1999.

The next meeting of the 8-member CMAG, scheduled in October in London, is likely to discuss the issue of restoration of Pakistan's membership.

Chowdhury and SPP Sadhonnay Bhattacharya appeared the case on behalf of the plaintiff while the defense lawyers included Advocate Sharfuddin Mukul, AHM Ehsanul Haq Hena and Nuruchhafa Talukder among others.

Tayaabi's father and wife did not attend the ruling.

## Two-stroke ban

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the decision as well as look into the issue of rehabilitation of those making a living off the two-stroke three-wheelers.

According to sources, leaders of different associations of two-stroke three wheeler owners and their employees have shown interest in the government-proposed ways of their rehabilitation, but they continue to oppose the September 1 deadline.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, Communication Minister Barrister Nazmul Huda said, "If the committee recommends some more time for their rehabilitation, we might give them one or two extra weeks beyond the deadline. I don't think this should create any problem."

In its first meeting yesterday, the 12-member committee, which also include leaders of the owners-employees' associations, formed a nine-member committee headed by BRTA (Bangladesh Road Transport Authority) chairman to specifically work on the issue of rehabilitation.

Both the committees would meet at the communication ministry this afternoon.

Meanwhile, the Communication Ministry has said Bangladesh Railway (BR) would start a shuttle train service on the Tongi-Dhaka route from September 1 as an alternative means of transport for city-dwellers.

A BR official said last night that the BR was yet to receive any official instruction in that regard. He however said the BR was capable of launching a shuttle service on the route whenever authorities want it.

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"PW 48 did not visit Potenga Seabeach area, the alleged first place of conspiracy and also did not visit Mistripara and also did not verify the statements of PW 3, 4, and others regarding their attempt of collecting blood, sending news to Jibran Tayaabi's office and handing over of sunglasses, money (that belonged to the victim) and keys of Jibran's wife's car," the court added.

PW 48 connected and submitted some papers before the court with taking proper permission, the court further said.

The verdict said, "such activities of a senior police officer is unwarranted and he knows well for whose interest he did so."

"If the investigation proceeded more cautiously then it would be easier for the court to make an end of this case more efficiently," the verdict added.

Special Public Prosecutor (SPP) Md. Faruq, SPP Md. Fakhruddin

against eight people on November 25, 1999 under 120/b, 320/109 and 302/34.

A total of 57 witnesses made depositions in the court. Many of whom stated that Tayaabi fell prey to a triangular love affair. It was alleged that Tayaabi had an extra-marital affair with a girl who was loved by Yasin Rahman Titu, son of a well-known garment industrialist Khalilur Rahman. They blamed Titu for masterminding the murder and hiring goons to kill Jibran.

It was alleged that Titu sponsored a five-member killing squad led by Osman. Tayaabi was behind the wheels of his car when the attackers layd him and their leader Osman shot Tayaabi from a close range near Agrabad petrol pump... Fatally injured, Tayaabi was rushed to the Chittagong Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

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