

WHEATGATE SCAM

Probe again as food officials give clean chit

REAZ AHMAD

While a food ministry probe committee has just revealed irregularities in this year's internal wheat procurement, food officials in nine districts against whom the allegations were levelled claimed that there was no stock of low-quality or insect-infected wheat in the granaries there.

This irked the food ministry and the food directorate alike. The director general (DG) of the food directorate, Abdus Sattar Mia, yesterday constituted yet another committee to verify the district food officials' claim.

After seeing press reports along with pictures of insect-infected wheat in the last two weeks, the DG had asked district controllers (DCs) of food in different districts to report on the low-quality and insect-infected wheat immediately.

To the surprise of the food directorate and the food

ministry, the DCs (food) of all the nine districts—Bogra, Pabna, Satkhira, Dinajpur, Mymensingh, Tangail, Jamalpur, Netrokona and Manikganj—claimed that none of the granaries under their custody had any stock of low-quality and insect-infected wheat.

Following this, the food directorate in consultation with the ministry yesterday formed a committee headed by one of its directors, Aminul Haq, to go and verify the claims of the DCs in all these nine districts.

The committee has been given seven days time to do this.

Assistant chemists from regional food offices in Dhaka and Rajshahi will provide the committee all support in chemical test of the stocks.

The food ministry probe body which submitted its 50-page investigation report on the wheat scam to the ministry on Sunday night found total absence of moni

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Call it a road... the Malibagh Road, full of potholes with stagnated rainwater, aptly sums up the miserable conditions of major thoroughfares in the city. The Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) remains blissfully unaware.

PHOTO: STAR

4 Khulna food officials axed for low-quality wheat purchase

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Four food department officials have been suspended for their alleged involvement in supplying low quality and putrefied wheat from Khulna CSD godown to other godowns in Khulna and Barisal districts.

Eleven other officials have been asked to show cause why departmental action would not be taken against them for negligence to duty.

The suspended officials are manager of Khulna CSD Biswas Zafar Ahmed, food inspector Zahurul Huq Akand, technical food inspectors Abdul Malek Howlader and Mohammad Moktar Ali.

The suspension orders were issued by the DG of Food Directorate, according to sources at the office of Regional Controller (RC) of Food.

Meanwhile, the existing stock of medicines used for killing insects has been shifted from Khulna CSD godown to Jessore CSD godown in view of two big incidents of theft. There is no medicine in the Regional Pest Control Section of CSD.

The first incident of theft was detected on April 22, 2000. Pest control medicines worth over Tk two lakh were stolen from the store

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BANGABANDHU MURDER CASE

Law minister defends govt position

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Moudud Ahmed has said the government should not be held responsible for the delay in the Bangabandhu Murder Case.

"Certain quarters are trying to put the blame on us for no good reason," he told a press briefing, clarifying the government position on the case, at the Bangladesh Secretariat yesterday.

Hearing of the leave to appeal now hinges on appointment of judge to the Appellate Division on an ad hoc basis.

"The government is yet to receive a recommendation from the chief justice in this regard," Moudud said.

Unless a judge is appointed to the Appellate Division on an ad hoc basis, the Bangabandhu Murder Case will not even be on the cause list before February 2004.

Three judges of the seven-man Appellate Division have already said that they are "embarrassed" and thus cannot hear the case. Two others have heard the case at the High Court Division, which means that they cannot hear the appeal.

On the other hand, according to law, at least three judges are required for a full bench of the Appellate Division. Although two remaining judges of the division are willing to hear the case, they cannot unless another judge is appointed.

As a result, hearing of leave to appeal for this case has remained suspended since August last year.

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List prepared for SAPTA benefit

Fourth round of talks in Kathmandu Sept 2-4

RAZIUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh will seek duty benefit for more than 100 items from each of the SAARC members at the final meeting of the fourth round of negotiation on the SAARC Preferential Trading Arrangement (SAPTA).

The meeting scheduled for September 2-4 in Kathmandu is expected to endorse a list of items for duty benefit. The list will however entirely depend on the consensus among the SAARC countries, a commerce ministry official said yesterday.

The Kathmandu meet is also expected to propose a date for implementation of the benefit. The seven countries would enjoy duty benefit once the council of ministers of the SAARC countries endorses the list.

A meeting of the taskforce formed to identify the items

yesterday finalised sets of wish lists, one for each country. Bangladesh would soon request the SAARC members to allow the duty benefit once the commerce ministry approves it.

"Bangladesh will try to get the maximum benefit through the negotiation," Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury told The Daily Star last night.

He also said separate rough lists of items have already been sent to the six other SAARC members. A country delegation headed by a joint secretary of the commerce ministry is expected to attend the meeting.

According to sources, the lists include items which Bangladesh is already exporting to the global market and items like plastic products, UPS, voltage stabiliser hav

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High on disbursement, low on recovery

BKB's classified loans up by Tk 800cr in four years

MONJUR MAHMUD

Curious disbursement policy coupled with rampant corruption by officials has pushed classified loans of the Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) up by around Tk 800 crore in four years.

Latest figures put the bank's

classified loans as of June 30 this year at Tk 2,703.26 crore or 52 per cent of total advances, up from Tk 1,908.84 crore in the 1997-98 fiscal.

"With recovery rate stuck between 10 to 16 per cent, classified amount has steadily gone up. The worst thing is that loans disbursed in recent years have largely

become classified," said a senior official of the bank.

Its disbursement target has nevertheless marked steep rise from year to year and in most cases, actual disbursement has far exceeded the target.

It rose to Tk 1,600 crore in 2001-

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Businessman shot dead at Arambagh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A businessman was shot dead by an armed gang near his residence at Arambagh in the city's Motijheel area yesterday evening.

Farid Hossain, 27, son of Badar Uddin of Arambagh, was shot when he went to see his friend Dipu at around 4:15 pm.

While the two were in a conversation, some unidentified gunmen shot Farid in the chest. He was rushed to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, but the on-duty doctors declared him dead.

Police said Dipu asked Farid to come to his house saying he had an interesting topic to share. Police recovered a holster and spent bullets in front of the house.

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4 more nabbed for Tejgaon killings

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police arrested four persons for their alleged involvement in the killing of a police assistant sub-inspector, a businessman and another person on Saturday.

They are considered to be close accomplices of the most wanted, slain criminal Alauddin. Among those arrested is Swapon alias Kana Swapon alias Sayeed, 28, a close associate of Alauddin and a well known extortionists of the area. The

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DENGUE ALERT

Dengue spreads wings beyond urban areas

3 die in northern districts; 133 hospitalised in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least three persons have died of dengue haemorrhagic fever over the last five days in the northern districts, as the vector-borne disease spreads beyond urban areas.

Meanwhile, in the capital, 133 more dengue patients were admitted to different hospitals and clinics yesterday. The central control room, however, puts the number at 78.

Dengue infection was also reported from Barisal, Chittagong,

Narail and Rajshahi.

Our roving correspondent reports from Natore that Nuri, a three-year-old girl, Abdul Latif, a rickshaw-puller, and Hawa Khatun, a young woman, died of dengue haemorrhagic fever at Kurigram, Rangpur and Sirajganj respectively.

Nuri died on August 14, and Hawa and Latif on August 16 and 18 respectively.

Our Chittagong bureau office reported that five people had been diagnosed for dengue infection over

the last one month. All the victims were aged twenty and above.

According to the Dhaka Control Room, another person was infected with dengue in the port city yesterday.

At least two people were infected with dengue at Barisal town. There was no report of casualty from the district town.

Three persons, suffering from dengue haemorrhagic fever, were admitted to the Rajshahi Medical

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Indian tribesmen kidnap, kill two Bangladeshis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two Bangladeshis were kidnapped and shot dead by Indian Khasias (tribesmen) aided by BSF near Bichhnakandi border under Gowainghat upazila Sunday night.

BDR recovered one of the bodies from near border pillar no.1263. The other body was handed over by BSF

yesterday evening, official sources said.

They said the two Bangladeshis — Aminuddin, 25 and Abdul Karim, 18, were returning home after working in the Bichhnakandi stone quarry near the border. Indian Khasias crossed the border and kidnapped them with the help of

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