

2 more die after release by army

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another person died at the Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) yesterday after he was arrested by army on Saturday at Tejgunipara in the city and released after interrogation the following day.

And in Barisal, one Yunus Shikder, who was arrested during the anti-crime drive on October 30 from Jharnabhanga village under Mehendiganj police station, died at the Barisal Medical College Hospital (BMCH) on Wednesday. He was in jail custody.

Meanwhile, army arrested seven people in the capital including the organising secretary of the central committee of the opposition Awami

League's (AL) student front Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL). A ward-level AL leader was also arrested in Malibagh.

The latest deaths pushed the casualty figure in the ongoing Operation Clean Heart up to 22.

The dead, Rashedul Hasan, 33, son of Abdul Khaleque and a resident of 201 Tejgunipara in the city's Tejgaon area, was an assistant film director.

According to family sources, an army team went to the Tejgunipara residence, which is owned by his uncle Abdul Malek and took Rashed for interrogation.

Sources said the army later turned Rashed over to the Tejgaon Police

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ROK PM due tonight, official talks tomorrow

UNB, Dhaka

South Korean Prime Minister Kim Suk-Soo arrives here tonight on a three-day official visit to Bangladesh.

He will hold official talks with Prime Minister Khaleda Zia on Saturday, mainly on bilateral economic cooperation, trade and investment between Dhaka and Seoul.

After the talks, two agreements involving US\$58 million are likely to be signed for telephone and locomotive sectors.

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Politically-pressed PDB seeks Tk 37cr for equipment release

Ghorashal plant to get non-guaranteed machinery

SHARIER KHAN

Under political pressure, the Power Development Board (PDB) has sought Tk 37 crore to release over 1,400 tonnes of non-guaranteed power plant equipment from ports supplied by a Russian company.

The PDB has written to the power division of the energy ministry to get fund allocation from the Planning Commission to pay customs duty and VAT for the equipment lying at the Mongla and Chittagong ports since early last year.

Russian Technopromexport, better known as TPE, supplied the equipment without any inspection or the government's approval early last year for the Ghorashal Power Plants 1 and 2 Rehabilitation Project.

Moreover, the company's contract with the PDB signed in 2000 remained ineffective, as many of the formalities were not complete. As a result, the PDB never accepted the equipment.

The equipment lying at the ports are estimated to be worth \$11 million and the total project involves \$17 million.

The TPE claimed that Russian builders the LMZ and the TKZ -- built the power equipment. But executives of these companies while visiting the PDB earlier denied having supplied any machinery to the TPE for the project.

But business lobbies having strong political clout are trying to convince the government to accept the equipment. Otherwise, they say, relations with Russia would strain.

Following a letter from the Russian Embassy on the issue earlier this year, the energy ministry formed a five-member committee to look into the project implementation problems.

The committee was also asked to inspect the imported power plant equipment at the project site instead of at the ports where they are now lying.

In late September, the PDB in a letter told the ministry that since the contract between the TPE and the PDB was still not effective, the government must approve release and mobilisation of the equipment to the project site.

It said the TPE has to pay the huge port charge and demurrage for having kept the equipment for such a long period. The Russian company agreed to the arrangement at an earlier meeting at the energy ministry. But so far, the minutes of the meeting have not been sent to the PDB.

The PDB does not have the fund to pay the customs duties and VAT on the equipment. The PDB letter also told the ministry that it needed to be officially ensured that the TPE would pay the duties and VAT or any other taxes on the equipment that the PDB might reject after inspection. The TPE would also have to assure that it would take back the rejected equipment at its own cost.

The ministry then told the PDB to inspect the equipment at the Ghorashal site and arrange fund for the taxes.

In such a context, the PDB in its letter last month requested the ministry to request the Planning Commission for Tk 37 crore allocation. At the same time, it reiterated its reservations about the project.

Earlier this year, under political pressure the PDB attached some conditions for its accepting the equipment. It said the TPE would have to take a team of five PDB engineers to Russia to verify the origin of the equipment. Other conditions are that the PDB cannot be held liable 'if any legal proceedings take place in future regarding the TPE project'.

The contract with the TPE signed in May 2000 remains ineffective till date, as the TPE did not pay its first tranche of the supplier's credit. To the contract effective, the contractor needed to pay 10 per cent of the

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PHOTO: AFP

As fasting time nears an end, people in the old part of Dhaka hasten to buy iftar, a combination of traditional food, on the first day of the holy month of Ramadan.

Dhaka dismisses Advani remark on terror link

BSS, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday rejected Indian Deputy Prime Minister Lal Krishna Advani's assertions relating to increased activities of Pakistan's military intelligence ISI and the al-Qaida network on its soil.

A foreign ministry spokesperson, when asked to comment on Advani's remarks, said, "Bangladesh never expected such com-

ments and observation from such a top Indian leader as Mr Advani. What he said is totally baseless, motivated and irresponsible."

"We expect that in future he (Advani) will not make such comments about Bangladesh for the sake of friendship between the two countries," he added.

Earlier the AFP reported that the Indian deputy prime minister had

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Bhuiyan blames AL for forcing army deployment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Secretary General of the BNP Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan said yesterday the government was compelled to deploy troops in the anti-crime drive because the previous Awami League (AL) government had 'directly patronised' crimes and criminals, resulting in the worst possible law and order situation in the country.

Mannan Bhuiyan said the AL government had created many 'godfathers' and given illegal arms to thousands of party cadres besides giving them licensed arms against fake addresses. Against this backdrop, there was no other way but to deploy army to nab the criminals and recover illegal arms, he added.

Bhuiyan was speaking as chief guest at a discussion meeting at Ramna Green in the city yesterday morning, organised by the BNP on the occasion of National Revolution and Solidarity Day.

The local government and rural

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National Solidarity Day observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Revolution and Solidarity Day was observed across the country yesterday at state level. The day was a public holiday.

Marking the day, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) and its partners in the ruling coalition, different front organisations of the BNP and socio-cultural organisations observed various programmes.

The programmes included offering of Fateha at the Mazar of late President Ziaur Rahman, discussions, seminars, Milad Mahfil, and cultural events.

On this day in 1975, people and soldiers unitedly freed the then deputy chief of army staff Ziaur Rahman from captivity inside the Dhaka Cantonment.

The BNP paid rich tributes to its founder late President Ziaur Rahman.

The day's programme began with the hoisting of the national flag atop public and private buildings

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Seed crisis prompts sales control

Officials asked to list needy growers for fixed-price distribution

REAZ AHMAD

The government has asked sales centres and dealers of the Bangladesh Agriculture Development Corporation (BADC) to hold on to their Boro stocks in view of inadequate supply.

They have been instructed not to release their remaining stock unless sanctioned by deputy commissioners (DCs) and district agriculture officers (AOs).

Meanwhile, the DCs and AOs have been asked to prepare lists of needy growers to make sure they get the remaining seeds from dealers and sales centres at the govern-

ment-fixed rate of Tk 15 per kilogram. Instruction, in this regard, has also been conveyed to the BADC dealers and sales centres.

There have been press reports that Boro growers in different districts came out on streets and laid siege to dealers' stores for seeds at government-fixed price.

Refuting the press reports, Agriculture Minister Motiur Rahman Nizami told some newsmen on Wednesday that there was no crisis of Boro seeds in the country. "It is possible to meet the present demand for Boro seeds as the government, NGOs, other voluntary bodies and farmers have huge stocks this year."

He said there was no reason for concern as the private sector and the government have 'produced or procured' more Boro seeds this year than in previous years.

Official sources said, out of 8,000

MT of Boro seeds available with the BADC this year, around 6,500 MT have already been sold to farmers, in many cases at exorbitant prices, due to hoarding by a section of BADC dealers.

Two dealers have been prosecuted in Sunamganj for selling seeds at higher price than fixed by BADC.

Supply of seeds for the ensuing Boro season fell short as the BADC procured 8,000 MT of seeds last year against its target of 10,000 MT as its contract growers produced less due to non-payment of dues for long.

The contract growers may not produce seeds for BADC next year also as the government is yet to clear their Tk 8 crore overdue bills for last year's seed production.

The public sector can meet hardly 10 percent of the demand for over one lakh MT of Boro seeds a

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Sehri, Iftar timings

Ramadan	Nov	Sehri	Iftar
2	8		5-19
3	9	4-47	5-18
4	10	4-48	5-18