

Seed crisis leaves govt wiser

Contract growers get last year's bills at last

REAZ AHMAD

Jolted by the boro seed crisis, the government has finally paid out some 10,000 contract growers their bills for last year's supply.

Until last week, the contract growers, who had supplied wheat, boro, oil and pulse seeds worth Tk 24 crore to the state-run Bangladesh Agricultural Development Corporation (BADC) in mid-2001, were not paid Tk 8 crore or one third of last year's dues.

Earlier in July this year, they were paid only Tk 5 crore in the first instalment and Tk 9 crore more in late-September following a Daily Star report on non-payment of Tk 19 crore in long overdue bills.

According to the sources in the Ministry of Agriculture, amidst the boro seed crisis this year and

fear of its recurrence next year, the government finally paid out the outstanding bills earlier this week.

However, officials concerned fear that even after the payment the BADC may not get a positive response from the contract growers over supply of seeds to the corporation. It has already earned notoriety as a "lazy paymaster", they said.

On several occasions, the BADC cautioned the agriculture ministry about the hesitancy of the growers to supply seeds to the public sector next year.

Unless the government guaranteed timely payment, the contract growers would not supply to the BADC for low-price sales in support of farmers, the ministry was told.

Because of irregular payment, seed supply to the

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REB (Amend), Depository (Amend) Bills 2002 passed

UNB, Dhaka

Parliament yesterday passed two bills on rural electrification and depository system in share trading, voting down opposition propositions and amendments.

State Minister for Power Iqbal Hasan Mahmud piloted the Rural Electrification Board (Amendment) Bill 2002 changing the definition of "Rural Area" to redefine the responsibilities and scope of work of the Power Development Board and the Rural Electrification Board in distribution of electricity.

Opposition members, including Vice-Principal Abdus Shaheed, Suranjit Sengupta, Shajahan Khan, Atiqur Rahman Atiq, Shamsur Rahman Sharif, Mahbubur Rahman and Col (Rtd) Sawkat Ali, demanded eliciting public opinion before the passage of the Bill.

They criticised the government for continued load shedding and said the Bill would squeeze supply of electricity instead of its expansion in rural areas.

The opposition members also

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PHOTO: STAR

The joint forces of the anticrime operation arrested two persons on charge of possessing unlicensed firearms and Phensidyl, a banned cough syrup, in Sutrapur in the city yesterday.

Girl kidnapped from Dhaka rescued at Barisal, 5 arrested

A CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

Police yesterday rescued a four-year-old girl kidnapped from Dhaka for ransom and arrested the five kidnapers.

Tania, kidnapped from near her house at Adabor in Mohammadpur area on November 13, was rescued from the house of one Jinnat Mallick, who claimed to be a caretaker of a mazar at Chawk Bazar in the town.

The arrested kidnapers are Masum, Shakawat, Shohag, Nasir and Hannan.

Tania is the only daughter of Salamatullah, a car driver at the head office of National Life Insurance company in Dhaka.

After kidnapping, the criminals took her to Barisal the next day and

wrote a letter to her father demanding one lakh taka ransom.

Salamatullah and his brother Solaiman reached Barisal on 18 November and contacted police.

The captors had asked for hand-over of the ransom money to two persons at Park Hotel in the town.

Pretending to be relatives of Tania, police along with her father and uncle went to the hotel and arrested Shohag, Nasir and Hannan.

Acting on their confession, police rescued the girl from the house of Jinnat Mallick and arrested the main culprits—Masum and Shakawat—from there. One Zakir was also held from there for interrogation.

Police said Shakawat claimed

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Hearing on death ref of Ershad Shikder starts Saturday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Hearing on the death reference of condemned prisoner Ershad Shikder, the prime accused in the Jainal Khan murder case will begin in the High Court on Saturday.

This would be the first of seven death references of Khulna's top terror Ershad Shikder who has already been given the death penalty in six other murder cases. Hearings on the other death references are forthcoming.

Shikder, who is also facing trial in four more murder cases in special court, was given the death penalty in the Jainal Khan murder case along with his second-in-command Jamali Faruk. Three other accused in the case — Liqat Lashkar, Thunda Haroon and Jainal Sardar — were given the life term.

The death reference was mentioned in the cause-list in a division bench of the High Court last Sunday. The division bench comprising Justice A K Badrul Huq and Justice Abdul Hye fixed November 23 as the date for hearing the death reference as prayed for by the deputy attorney

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20 hurt as BNP factions clash in Munshiganj

UNB, Munshiganj

At least 22 people were injured in a clash between two factions of the ruling BNP at Mollakandi in Sadar upazila early yesterday.

Supporters of Anu Molla and Aziz Mollik were locked in the clash for establishing supremacy over Kangshapura, Bazar Char, Makhali and Chardumuria villages ahead of UP polls scheduled for early next year.

Leaders of the two groups will contest the election for the post of chairman.

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Vendors lay control over pavements

Brisk business as cops, toll collectors disappear



PHOTO: STAR

Traders sell footwear on the sidewalk in front of the National Sports Council in the city yesterday. Wayside traders have occupied many city footpaths, causing troubles to pedestrians.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Thousands of illegal vendors in the city are doing brisk business in the absence of police-turned-toll-collectors.

Roadside vendors, who had to pay a huge amount of money to the police during Eid in the past, are running their businesses without any undue intervention from the so-called 'linemen', who were in charge of collecting toll money.

Taking advantage of the rare respite, thousands of vendors have set up their shops on both sides of the city roads and pavements.

Usually, extortionists and 'police linemen' start collecting tolls from the vendors and shops ahead of the holy Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Azha. Vendors had to pay a fixed amount of money depending on the area and the nature and volume of their business.

Anyone refusing to pay the fixed amount would immediately face eviction, confiscation of merchandise, and even imprisonment on the basis of fictitious charges.

Besides roadside vendors, thousands of shops have been raised illegally in different parts of the city, including Baitul Mukarram, New Market, Farmgate, Gulistan and Elephant Road. At Baitul Mukarram, each vendor had to pay between Tk 500 and Tk 1,000 a week to the police.

A panjabi seller in front of Baitul Mukarram said, "This time around the situation is totally different. The vendors are not facing any kind of hassle and are running their busi

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Vegetable prices go up despite govt directive

Retailers blame wholesalers for the hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of some essentials like aubergine, tomato and potato shot up in the last few days despite a government directive to keep the prices stable.

Prices of soybean oil and onion - which marked a sharp rise shortly before the Ramadan - have remained unchanged although the government asked traders to lower the prices.

Retailers blame the wholesalers for the price hike while wholesalers pass the blame on to inter-district transportation, which, they say, is delaying the supply process. And this is creating unusual pressure on the

available goods, causing price rise, they say.

However, prices of some seasonal vegetables remained stable while some of those even decreased.

During a visit to the city's New Market, Palashi and Karwan Bazar kitchen markets yesterday, it was found that prices of the some essentials increased during the Ramadan.

Price of aubergine has gone up from Tk 10-12 to Tk 20-24 per kilogram, potato from Tk 12 to 16-18, green chilly from Tk 50 to Tk 60, tomato from Tk 36-37 to Tk 40-42, and okra from Tk 20-22 to Tk 15-18.

Blaming the wholesalers for price manipulation, a

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3 get life term for possessing illegal arms in Kushtia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

The Additional District and Sessions Judge's Court here yesterday awarded life term imprisonment to three people for possessing illegal arms and ammunition.

The convicts are Mahirul Islam, Imdadul Haq and Sirajul Islam of village Asannagar in Mirpur upazila of the district.

According to the prosecution, Mirpur police raided the house of Imdadul Haq at the village on May 22 this year and arrested the three with one Indian made revolver, one rifle and 20 bullets.

After investigation, SI Ferdous Hasan submitted the charge sheet.

Judge Md Anwar Hossain, after examining the records and witnesses pronounced the verdict.

Clarification

On behalf of Ittefaq Executive Director 1 Mainul Hossain, Advocate Azizul Haque protested a news report published in The Daily Star Monday headlined "Ittefaq case: High Court Verdict in favour of Monju".

In the clarification, he said that the High Court order did not have a word regarding any injunction on the use of Anwar Hussain's name as Ittefaq's editor.

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
Nov 20		5-11 pm
Nov 21	5-17 am	

Prayer Timings		
Nov 20		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-54	5-04
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-00	4-15
Maghrib	5-15	5-25
Esha	7-30	7-45

Source: Islamic Foundation