



A Brothers Union fan starts a fire blowing kerosene from mouth while fellow supporters celebrate after the team won the Western Union Premier Division League title beating Muktiyoddha Sangsad-1 at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

Beware! Formalin in fish

MORSHED ALI KHAN

The widespread use of formalin, a chemical that contaminates fish but makes them appear fresh, continues across the country with the authorities seemingly reluctant to stop the practice.

Top officials of the health ministry, Dhaka City Corporation's (DCC) Public Health Laboratory (PHL) and Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institute (BSTI) under the commerce ministry pointed fingers at one another, no-one knowing which body should combat the practice.

Over the last two years, misuse of formalin, which represents a serious health hazard to people,

has been widely reported in the media, including The Daily Star, and yet the authorities are sitting on their hands.

Although there is no statistics available with the fisheries and livestock or industries ministries, an observation revealed that every day some 150 tonnes of fish are sold in the city's 40 kitchen markets and about half a dozen wholesale markets.

Sources at the Directorate of Fisheries said a great amount of the fishes sold in the city is imported from India and Myanmar and might be the source of formalin.

Minister for Health and Family Welfare Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain said it was not the jurisdiction of his ministry to stop the use of formalin.

"Of course we are concerned about the fact but we cannot do anything. It must be the BSTI which should have the mandate to clamp down on formalin use in fish," Mosharraf told The Daily Star.

At the BSTI office in Tejgaon, the director general was not available for comment. A senior official preferring anonymity said the BSTI could only monitor items certified by it prior to production.

"You should talk to the DCC, which has a Public Health Laboratory with mandate to fight

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7 ministries mum over unspent Tk 867cr

CAG audit report for fiscal 2001-2002 reveals

RAFIQ HASAN

Seven ministries did not return to the exchequer as much as Tk 866.92 crore in unspent money at the year-end from the budget allocation in 2001-2002 fiscal year.

The primary and mass education ministry did not return Tk 166.28 crore, health and family welfare Tk 251.73 crore, home affairs Tk 4.20 crore, local government division Tk 364.49 crore, fisheries and livestock Tk 55 crore and law, justice and parliamentary affairs Tk 25.22 crore to the public coffers.

An audit report of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) on the ministries recently revealed this.

The audit also detected other financial irregularities of the ministries totalling Tk 22.40 lakh in the form of mainly over payment of salaries, payment without permission, expenditure on wrong heads and misappropriation and misuse of fund.

The audit report commented that the surplus money should be returned to the exchequer at the end of the fiscal year. Failure in doing so is tantamount to misuse or misappropriation of funds, it also observed.

All this also reflects the weakness in budget preparation and non-implementation of the project within the time frame, the report said, adding that the officials of the ministries could not satisfy the auditors about why the money was not returned.

A high official of the finance

ministry admitted that the trend was 'very bad' and that it reflected an inefficient financial management. He said the government already took some strict measures to put a stop to such practices.

"It happens mainly with the autonomous bodies and corporations where money is disbursed in cash in four instalments. They hesitate to refund the money fearful that they would not get adequate amount in the next fiscal. But they should refund the money at the end of the fiscal," commented the official, preferring anonymity.

Asked to comment on the full-fledged government organisations, the official said though there is a budget allocation they cannot withdraw the money from the exchequer without implementing the project. They are supposed to take money after submitting the bill against the expenditure. The money remains in the government vault but they have to submit papers about the actual account of the money for government estimate, he explained.

The government's recent policy of budgetary allocation for three years would also help discourage the trend of keeping government money in the organisations' account, he observed.

Officials at the finance ministry said the government has prepared a prescribed form to keep a list of the project while disbursing

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THE STRENGTH WITHIN



PHOTO: STAR

Students take computer lessons at the office of the Emergers, a trust that prevents dropout of economically vulnerable and promising students by collecting door-to-door donations.

Emerging from dark

Emergers, a trust, heads off dropouts of economically vulnerable, yet promising students by collecting door-to-door donations for them

ASHEFAQ WARES KHAN

Sitting on one side of a kerosene-lamp lit tiny desk that she shares with her younger brother and sister, Shilpi takes a moment and counts her chances of passing her HSC exams.

Despite a chronic heart ailment and her parents' inability to

cover college fees that arrested her steps through the exhaustive journey of college education, a push of encouragement and a little monetary shove have meant that her chances of scoring Bs are no longer slim.

The encouragement and money for Shilpi came from a group of five young professionals who initiated a trust, The

Emergers, to prevent dropouts of economically vulnerable and promising students by collecting door-to-door donations from sources as varied as housewives to scientists overseas.

Like Shilpi, thousands of youths each year follow the gener

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Intending participants, left, sit on the road in front of the Institute of Cost and Management Accountants of Bangladesh at Nilkhet and a man, right, attends to flattened motorcycles yesterday. A group of youths stormed the institute before a meeting of the Association of Development Agencies in Bangladesh.



PHOTO: STAR

Pick your own ring tone

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Grown tired of stereotype ring tones that came with their sets ages ago? Wonder how much fun it would be to download trendy ring tones on the cellphone? The wait is to be over quite soon.

For the first time in Bangladesh, users would be able to choose and download from as many as 100 ring tones. From March 24, this fabulous facility will be just an SMS away from GrameenPhone (GP) subscribers.

All they need to do is SMS a certain number to select the ring tone from a list that includes popular pop songs to old blues. Each ring tone costs Tk 10.

"Value-added products like short message, ring tones, picture message and logos have become hugely popular all over the world,"

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Young, old divide sharpens in BNP on China policy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

No top policymaker wants to put bilateral relations with China at stake, but some ministers with business ties at the same time are unwilling to miss out on the trade opportunities with Taiwan despite the fear of Chinese retaliation.

A row between the old guards and new blood in the ruling BNP surfaced over the opening of a Taiwanese trade representative office in Dhaka recently that drew angry reaction from China, which is very sensitive about 'one-China policy'.

BNP's young Turks feel that trade venture with Taiwan should not be linked to foreign policy. The old leadership, at odds with the new-generation leaders ever since

the ruling alliance took office in 2001, feels Bangladesh in no way can afford to upset China, however lucrative may trade with Taiwan be.

Dhaka has launched frantic diplomatic efforts to reassure Beijing, which has asked the government to shut down the office immediately as a proof of Bangladesh's 'claimed stance of 'one-China policy'.

Talking to The Daily Star, several top BNP leaders alleged that a few cabinet ministers and some state ministers are only taking care of their own business interest, pushing the country towards an undesirable confrontation with China.

They said China emerged as the

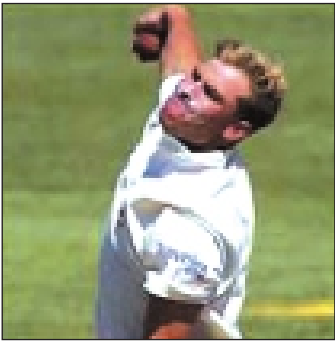
most trusted friend of the BNP and Bangladesh, as well, and that it would not be wise to put the relations on the rocks just to advance business aspirations of a few individuals.

"Let's not forget that China has always been there with assistance in Bangladesh's development endeavours and defence," said a top BNP leader, preferring anonymity.

"The damage will be beyond comprehension if China turns its back on us," he said. "We will be friendless as we do not have strong ties with neighbouring India."

A cabinet minister and several state ministers with business links,

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Warne makes history

BBC ONLINE, Galle

Shane Warne became the first spin bowler in history to take 500 Test wickets as Australia sealed a 197-run win over Sri Lanka in the first Test at Galle.

The Australian star took 5-43 for match figures of 10-159 in his first Test after serving a 12-month drugs ban.

He reached the milestone when he had home skipper Hashan Tillakaratne caught by Andrew Symonds for 25. The batsman skied a sweep shot and Symonds took the catch at mid-wicket.

Warne ended the game with 501 Test victims having beaten Sri Lankan rival Muttiah Muralitharan (496).

He became only the second bowler in history to reach the 500-wicket mark after West Indian Courtney Walsh.

Road accidents kill 7 in three districts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Seven people were killed and 50 others injured in separate road accidents in Narayanganj, Chittagong and Sherpur yesterday.

Of them, three were killed in Narayanganj and two each in Chittagong and Sherpur.

Our Narayanganj Correspondent reported that a road accident on the Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Madaninagar under Siddhirganj Police Station left three people killed and 15 others injured.

Police said the accident took place at noon when a Narsingdi bound bus from Narayanganj overturned after it rammed a road island.

The dead are Helal Box, 18, and Dulal Box, 21, sons of one Mohammad Ali, and Nasiruddin, 22, a student of Madaninagar Madrassah.

Police seized the vehicle, but its driver and helper managed to flee.

In Chittagong, two people were killed and 15 others injured in two separate road accidents.

Police said a Chittagong bound passenger bus from Cox's Bazar fell into a roadside ditch at Maizzartak

under Karnaphuli Police Station at around 1:00pm, killing a passenger on the spot and injuring 15 others, according to BSS.

The dead is Bachchu Miah, 45, son of Arzu Miah of Ranimuharihat under Muradnagar upazila in Comilla.

Four of the injured were admitted to Chittagong Medical College Hospital (CMCH), while the rest released after first aid.

In another accident, Loni Chakma, 18, a garment worker, was crushed under a speeding truck in front of Chittagong Export Processing Zone (CEPZ) in the evening. In Sherpur, a bus veered off

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Attack on B Chy shows PM heads 'goons' not govt, Saber says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Awami League (AL) Organising Secretary Saber Hossain Chowdhury said yesterday with the Thursday's attack on Badruddoza Chowdhury the prime minister made it clear that, instead of running the government, she was directing 'criminals and goons.'

In a statement, Saber, who is also the political secretary to the leader of the opposition in parliament, refuted the claim of Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to the prime minister, that there was no bar to Badruddoza's rally.

How could Harris negate that the attack was carried out in a planned way, when the countrymen

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Clarification

In a rejoinder to yesterday's report headlined "Dr Kamal launches new political platform Sunday", Dr Wajedul Islam Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Trade Union Kendra, known as TUC, said the TUC did not decide on joining the March 14 national convention under Oikya Procheshta, a socio-political organisation.

Quoting convention organisers, The Daily Star named the TUC as a participant of Sunday's convention to be held at Paltan Maidan.

Prayer Timings		
March 13		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fair	5-30	5-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-30	4-45
Maghrib	6-12	6-16
Esha	7-30	8-00
Source: Islamic Foundation		