



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 Muktijoddha Sangsad 1-0 at Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

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 funds.

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 installments. 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 fully 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 estimation, 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 money.

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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

ASHFAQ 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 scoring 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 her HSC exams 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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Beware! Formalin in fish

MORSHEK 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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formalin," he said.

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.

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