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PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

Top ministries oppose new guideline

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Some ministries are putting pressure on the planning ministry to change the Public Procurement Regulations, 2003, which were formulated on donors' insistence to check corruption.

The government will decide about the amendments to the regulations after the planning ministry gets responses from the 27 ministries to which it wrote last month, asking them to specify the problems facing them.

Sources said the communications ministry, Local Government Engineering Department of the local government, rural development and co-operatives ministry, and public works ministry are exerting considerable influence on the planning ministry to get the regula-

tions amended to their liking.

The ministries argue that their compliance with the regulations is putting brakes on the implementation of the Annual Development Programme (ADP). It hampered public purchase even during the floods, they complain.

The planning ministry, however, brushes aside the arguments and points to the clause of the regulations that provides for direct purchase through negotiations in case of exigencies. On the allegation that the regulations are holding back ADP implementation, a planning ministry official said there may be some initial problems in complying with the regulations, which have to be dealt with prudently.

A World Bank estimate says corruption in public expenditure eats away as much as 3 percent of

GDP a year. A planning ministry high official involved with implementation of the procurement regulations told The Daily Star, preferring anonymity, that GDP will double if 35 percent of corruption in public purchase goes.

If the regulations introduced in the middle of last year are properly implemented uninterrupted for two years, Bangladesh can shrug off the label of being the most corrupt country in the world for three consecutive years, the official observed.

The new procurement regulations have abolished the provision of lottery for obtaining work orders, which had provided enough scope for corruption and nepotism, leading to sub-standard work. For instance, the planning ministry official said, corrupt officials used to

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A bird's eye view of Chawkbazar in the capital shows devotees busy buying Iftar in the afternoon yesterday, the first day of Ramadan. Chawkbazar is well-known for delicious Iftar items.

Mob beats two dead after Jubo Dal man's murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barisal

A violent mob beat dead two young men allegedly in reprisal for the killing of a Jatiyatabadi Jubo Dal activist in the city yesterday.

Delwar Hossain, 30, was murdered by gangsters of notorious Selim Member of Amanatganj area in the city in the early hours yesterday. In retaliation for the murder the angry mob chased and caught Kala Babul, 26, and his accomplice Liton, 27. They dragged the two to the house of the slain activist and beat them mercilessly. They died on the spot.

Police and local sources said, Kala Babul and his friend Sayem from Delwar's house at Char Abdani-Beltala area on the northern part of the city at about 10:15pm on Friday night. They chopped Delwar who was found critically injured afterwards near Char Abdani culvert.

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DHAKA CENTRAL JAIL

No probe 54 days into grenade recovery

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The government appears to be trying to bury the August 22 grenade recovery from Dhaka Central Jail that sent a chill across the nation already panicked by the killing of 20 people in a grisly grenade attack on an Awami League rally on the previous day.

Although top government offi-

cial claim that investigation is on to find out the source and people behind despatch of the grenade into the jail, the probe failed to make any headway even in 54 days into the recovery.

A sweeper at the jail found the grenade, same as those found at the AL rally, lying beside a sewer channel between Cell No. 26 and Cell No. 90.

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750 M16 ammo, wireless sets seized

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) yesterday seized huge ammunition of M-16 rifle and 30 high-powered wireless sets from the border area of Naikhangchhari.

The BDR seized 750 M-16 bullets from Baishari and the wireless sets and seven binoculars from Jaruliya during regular patrols, sources said. The criminals might have abandoned them sensing the BDR's

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Costly start to Ramadan

Dwellers grapple with soaring prices, fares

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People in middle and low-income brackets bore the brunt of sky-high prices of essentials in the capital with their suffering exacerbated by a dawn-to-dusk rickshaw strike

yesterday, the first day of Ramadan.

The prices of vegetables rose further by at least Tk 2 to 4 a kg as the wholesalers had to hire CNG-run three-wheelers and taxis because of the unavailability of rickshaws and

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Kushtia outlaw chief killed in 'crossfire'

UNB, Kushtia

A top terror and 'Kasr Bahini' chief was killed in "crossfire" between police and his accomplices at Malihad Canalpara in Mirpur upazila early yesterday.

Police said Kawser alias Kasr, 45, arrested Friday evening, was being taken to Bajitpur area in search of arms following his confessional statement.

On the way, his cohorts opened

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Forestland grabbed

Gazipur gets barren as encroachers bribe officials to take lease of woodland

REZAUL KARIM

Land grabbers have encroached upon around 12,250 acres of forestland under Dhaka Forest Department over the years.

Most of the illegally occupied land is in four forest ranges in Gazipur district. Of them, over 2,526 acres are in Kachighata range, 3,707 acres under Kaliakoir range, 1,330 acres under Rajendrapur range and 4,686 acres in Sreepur range, accord-

ing to an estimate made by the department.

Different private organisations and powerful individuals grabbed forestland in connivance with a section of officials of district administration and forest and land departments, sources said.

Moreover, the armed forces, various government and private organisations and individuals have secured 2,262 acres of forestland

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