

No fertiliser crisis, says press note

BSS, Dhaka

The attention of the government has been drawn to the reports carried by a section of the print and electronic media regarding production, stock and supply of fertiliser.

In this context, the government feels it necessary to make it clear to the people as regards exact stock and supply of fertiliser, according to a press note issued by the government yesterday.

The press note gave the following position about the stock and supply of fertiliser.

As per the estimate of the agriculture ministry the current year's

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600 dealers blamed for fertiliser crisis in North

HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU, *Bogra*

Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) and administration in several districts identified

at least 600 fertiliser dealers in 16 northern districts as responsible for allegedly creating artificial crisis of fertiliser in the region.

District administration sources said most of these dealers, including 31 of 163 dealers in Bogra, had been appointed during the tenure of the immediate past four-party coalition government.

Meanwhile, police seized three cargos of TSP fertiliser at Baushia ghat near Meghna-Gomoti bridge in

Gajaria upazila of Munshiganj yesterday.

According to the BCIC and district administration, there are 1,449 fertiliser dealers in the northern districts.

A large number of these dealers—mostly BNP and four-party alliance leaders and activists—were given licence upon consideration of their political identities, sources alleged.

They include BNP leader and Bogra Municipality Ward Commissioner Sifer-Al-Bakhtiar, Sajanpur upazila Jubo Dal Secretary Enamul Haque, BNP leader of the same upazila Shafiqul Islam, and a former woman BNP

lawmaker from Bogra.

When contacted, Bakhtiar denied the allegation of being involved in unlawful marketing and creating artificial crisis of fertiliser. He said he sold the entire allocation of 54 tonnes of fertiliser on open market in Bakshi Bazar area of Bogra town.

The market, however, is a kitchen market.

Jubo Dal leader Enamul admitted that he got the dealership at the fag end of the four-party alliance government's tenure. Claiming himself an "experienced dealer",

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Fahim Munaim CA's press secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Syed Fahim Munaim, managing editor of The Daily Star, has been appointed press secretary to the chief adviser of the caretaker government.

He will brief the press on the decisions of the caretaker government as its official spokesperson.

The council of advisers at a meeting on Tuesday asked all advisers not to talk with the newsmen about details of the advisory council meeting.

Munaim has working experiences in newspapers for over two decades. He was the executive director of the daily Sangbad and managing editor of the daily Morning Sun, news agency UNB and the weekly Dhaka Courier. He worked as press councilor at the Bangladesh embassy in Tokyo. He is also a well-known TV personality.

Munaim has been the managing editor of The Daily Star since 1996.

The Daily Star congratulates him on his new assignment.

Jubo Dal man dies in police custody

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, *Khulna*

A Jubo Dal activist died in police custody at Paikgachha Upazila Health Complex in Khulna district on Wednesday night.

He was identified as Shafiullah Aman, 30, son of Abdur Rahman of Kapilmuni Union under Paikgachha upazila.

The officer-in-charge (OC) of Paikgachha Police Station said Aman was a listed criminal and wanted in five murder cases.

The joint forces of army and police arrested Aman and his three associates— Bashudev, Gafur and Mander—at Kapilmuni Bazar under Paikgachha upazila at about 8:00pm on Wednesday and took them to Paikgachha Police Station for quizzing.

Arman fell sick during interrogation at the police station. He was immediately taken to Paikgachha Upazila Health Complex where he died at 10:30pm.

City walkways freed from hawkers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Pedestrians in the busiest areas of the capital are finally being able to walk freely on the sidewalks designated for them, thanks to an illegal street vendor eviction drive by police yesterday.

The massive drive yesterday by Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) for evicting the street vendors was followed by police announcements over loud speakers in different areas of the capital the day before (Wednesday) asking the street vendors not to occupy the walkways.

DMP Commissioner ABM

Bazlur Rahman said police were planning on this drive for a long time and went ahead with it now since no one would try to resist it by bringing out processions or staging demonstrations as the country is under a state of emergency now. Another drive against violators of traffic rules will be launched soon, he added.

The street vendors occupied and choked up most of the sidewalks in the city, particularly in Gulistan and Farmgate areas. By the afternoon, police cleared up the sidewalks in these areas and pedestrians were walking along those smoothly.

Many city dwellers welcomed the police move. "Usually I was compelled to walk through the main road risking being run over by speeding vehicles as street vendors kept footpaths occupied. I am really happy to see that the footpath at Farmgate is clear," said Saifur Rahman, a resident of East Rajabazar.

The surprise drive has affected around one lakh street vendors as they do not have any other source of income, claimed Bangladesh Sammilito Footpath Hawkers' Parishad.

"I have no savings, since my

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Babar sues Jugantor editor for defamation

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday asked editor, publisher, two news editors and two chief reporters of the Bangla daily Jugantor to appear before it on February 27 after former state minister for home Lutfuzzaman Babar filed a defamation case against them.

Metropolitan Magistrate AJM Abdullah Baqui passed the order when Babar filed the case with Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court for running defamatory news items at different dates casting aspersion on his character.

The defendants are Editor

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BSF kills 1

UNB, *Thakurgaon*

Indian Border Security Force (BSF) shot dead a Bangladeshi farmer near Haripur border under Thakurgaon district yesterday morning.

Locals said the Indian border guards of Bashantipur outpost

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| Prayer Timing | | |
|----------------------------|-------|--------|
| January 19 | | |
| | Azan | Jamaat |
| Fajr | 5-30 | 6-05 |
| Juma | 12-30 | 1-15 |
| Asr | 4-15 | 4-30 |
| Maghrib | 5-40 | 5-44 |
| Esha | 7-00 | 7-30 |
| Source: Islamic Foundation | | |

Nepali Maoists dissolve their 'people's govt'

AFP, *Kathmandu*

Nepal's Maoists yesterday were set to dissolve their "People's Government" and "People's Courts" which ruled large swathes of the country during a decade-long insurgency.

"All our local bodies will be formally dissolved from Thursday," former rebel chief Prachanda told the BBC Nepali Service.

Prachanda, meaning "fierce one", was to issue an official statement later in the day, his officers told

AFP.

"In principle, we (the Maoists), in an accord reached on November 8 with the government, have already agreed to dissolve our local-level governments after the formation of the interim legislature, which took place Monday.

In the BBC interview, the Maoist leader who uses only one name, also denied that he had ordered party cadres to be killed or tortured, but he did admit to "weakness" on the central committee.

"Our party's central committee

meeting recently decided to visit all regions and districts across the country to apologize for weakness during the 10-year-long people's war soon after the formation of the interim government."

Nepal's once feared Maoist forces began putting their weapons under United Nations supervision on Wednesday, a key part of a peace deal in the Himalayan country.

The rebels claim to have 35,000 soldiers in their People's

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Rab busts JMB den in Savar, seizes bomb-making materials

JU CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) seized a huge cache of bomb-making materials from a suspected JMB den in Savar during a raid early yesterday.

However, none could be arrested as four alleged Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) activists escaped sensing the presence of the law enforcers, Rab said.

Ten improvised iron castings for grenades, 11 pieces of power-gel for grenade, sodium sulphide, potassium sulphide, potassium carbonate, chloroform, measuring scale, glass

jar, funnel, dust mask, hand gloves and Bunsen burners were recovered from the third floor of the four-storied building at Mazidpur near Savar bazaar bus stand, Rab said.

The raid was conducted following the information extracted from JMB commander Ayubur Rahman during interrogation. He was arrested on Wednesday at Arai Hazar in Narayanganj.

Ayub told the law enforcers that JMB member Saifullah Rokan and three other JMB operatives have been living in that house in Savar.

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EC not thinking about its reconstitution

Says acting CEC

UNB, *Dhaka*

The acting chief election commissioner and the election commissioners yesterday kept silent over their resignation although there has been a strong suggestion from among the advisers to the caretaker government and also from outside for their exit.

Different circles made a strong plea for overhauling the Election Commission (EC) in line with the changes in the caretaker government.

"There is no news... The Election Commission is not thinking anything about it," Acting CEC

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