

## Chicken culling

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death while the district livestock administration formed 11 teams to investigate the cause.

The farm has been kept under strict observation. The authorities also stopped movement of people near the poultry farm.

The government has also formed monitoring cells and put red alert against the outbreak of bird flu in different poultry farms in Khulna and Chittagong.

Sales of chickens and eggs in the market decreased yesterday significantly.

Agriculture and Livestock Adviser Dr CS Karim yesterday said, "Containment of the situation is our prime task right at this moment."

At a press briefing, Karim said the authorities will immediately cull the infected birds wherever the reports come from while "the compensation process will follow automatically".

The agriculture, livestock and health ministries have already opened round-the-clock control rooms to monitor the developments as the government yesterday took a series of steps including examining people's health at the inflicted farms.

Both the health and agriculture advisers urged the people not to get panicked as no human infliction of avian influenza has been reported yet from anywhere in South Asia.

Health Adviser ASM Matiur Rahaman said three separate wards have been opened at the Asthma Centre of the National Chest Diseases Institute and Hospital for patients of bird flu.

Avian influenza is a disease of the birds first identified in Italy in the early 1900s and is now known to exist worldwide. In the latest outbreak of bird flu, around 60 people died in Asia.

**UNAWARENESS OF SAFETY MEASURES**

Officials and staffs at a poultry farm run by the staffs of the government's Bibi Ayesha (R) Women Training and Production Programme at Jirani were seen culling chickens yesterday without taking any preventive measures.

Visiting the farm yesterday The Daily Star correspondent found that the government and farm staffers were catching chickens, gathering those at a place and killing those without wearing any gloves, masks or aprons needed for staying safe from such deadly virus.

They later buried the chickens and eggs in a hole near the poultry shed before a magistrate and army personnel.

Gazipur DLO Kafiluddin sent a requisition to the civil surgeon for 2,000 preventive capsules for protecting the officials involved in the process of detecting bird flu and treating chickens, but only 100 capsules were supplied.

Meanwhile, an orientation programme has been taken up to check the spread of bird flu virus among the human population.

A two-member team comprising Director of Health Directorate (Disease Control) Dr Abdul Mannan Sarker and Chief Scientific Officer of ICDDR,B Dr Saleh M Rafiq visited Jirani area yesterday. They gave

poultry farm officials suggestions on checking the spread of the disease.

Our staff correspondent in Khulna adds: All 55,000 poultry farms in Khulna city and nine upazilas of the district have been put on red alert following the detection of bird flu.

Khulna DLO office opened a control room to monitor the situation round-the-clock.

Considering the current situation, all officials and staff in the district and upazila headquarters have been asked not to take any leave until further notice.

Sources said Benapole check post has also been put on high alert so that no poultry product from India can enter the country.

UNB adds: A monitoring cell has been formed yesterday for detecting bird flu in the district following the detection of bird flu at Savar in Dhaka.

The cell, headed by District Livestock Officer Dr Fazlul Haque Khan, has asked the upazila livestock officers to submit a report by today after visiting poultry farms and hatcheries in their respective upazilas.

If bird flu virus is detected in any farm or hatchery, the official concerned has been asked to seal it off.

## Dhaka to ratify

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indigenous knowledge, in sustainable development.

The weekly meeting also discussed a proposal by the social welfare ministry to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights and Dignity of Persons With Disability.

The council asked the social welfare ministry to prepare a report within four to five weeks after examining the convention and also with a detailed account of how the handicapped are treated in Bangladesh.

Currently the government budget for providing assistance to the handicapped is Tk 50 crore, Fahim said.

The Family Planning Directorate also made a presentation to the council, outlining the current government policy, projects and their implementation on family planning and health, and population control.

The council asked the directorate to come up with more specific proposals to mitigate the outstanding problems, which would then be mulled in inter-ministerial meetings.

The council stressed Bangladesh's achievement in meeting the population control challenges that stemmed from the process of detecting bird flu and treating chickens, but only 100 capsules were supplied.

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## SMGs

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along with them and raided a garden of village Shimulchhara in Ataikula upazila at noon. They dug a place in the garden and recovered eight China made SMGs (sub machine guns), 1,498 SMG bullets and 25 SMG magazines.

Kamrul Master, the gang's former chief who died in an encounter with Rab last year, used to maintain the store, Rab officials said.

After his death, Faruk became the political chief and Mantu alias Mukul became the commanding chief of the outfit in Pabna region and they started to look after the firearms and ammunition.

Hailing from Baraichora village in Ishwardi upazila of Pabna, Faruq did his masters from the Pabna Edward College in 1997 and joined the outlawed faction in 2000, sources said.

Our staff correspondent reports: A Rab team of intelligence wing raided several JMB dens at Charaibazar village under Melandah upazila in Jamalpur on Friday night and recovered the explosives cache.

The seized cache includes - 13.5 kg power gel, 75 pieces of iron-made improvised grenade body, 80 grenade heads, 117 Islamic books on jihad and four compact disks (CDs), top Rab officials told a press briefing at its headquarters in Dhaka yesterday.

They also captured two JMB Ehsar members Mohammad Sohel and Mohammad Shiekh Mujibur Rahman.

The raid was carried out following the confessions of JMB Ehsar members Habibur Rahman Yusuf and Kamrul Hasan who were arrested on March 21 with three grenades. They were fleeing after hurling a grenade at two on-duty policemen at Bhatarazar in Saribahar upazila of Jamalpur. However, there were no casualties as the grenade did not explode.

At the press briefing the detained JMB members told the journalists that one Abu Zafar Abdullah is now leading them across the country, but they never met him.

## 88 patients

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Detection of MDR cases in the country will be possible after the completion of the government project to develop the laboratory of National TB Hospital in Mohakhali with the technical supervision of University of Endrop, Belgium.

Dr Vikarunnessa expressed hope that the laboratory will start its operation sometime in the next month and those extreme stage patients will be given treatment under Directly Observed Treatment Short Course (DOTS) Plus programme.

"MDR happens when a TB patient does not complete the six-month DOTS treatment," said Dr Vikarunnessa.

There is a close relationship between TB and HIV/AIDS, and considering the threatening fact this year's World TB Day has been observed with the theme, 'TB Anywhere is TB Everywhere' reinforcing the message that TB can spread easily due to the ways it is transmitted.

Brac as a major implementing partner of NTP along with the government and other partner organisations jointly organised a seminar titled 'Tuberculosis Control and Social Participation' at Brac Centre Inn.

Presenting a paper on the occasion, Dr Vikarunnessa said TB patients are 60% more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS than others. She urged social movement through media campaign in combating TB.

"Publicity is essential to make people aware that TB is curable and its treatment is free," she said adding that the disease is not transmitted through the things used by the patients.

Addressing as a special guest, Dr Mahbub Kamal Siddique emphasised community participation in combating TB.

"Social participation is directly related with TB control," she said, adding that at present 99 per cent area of the country is under NTP that has been possible for adequate financial support as well as community mobilisation.

Although the government is claiming success in TB control programme, the real situation is a bit different as WHO puts Bangladesh in the 6th position among the 22 TB-prone countries, said Associated Press bureau chief Farid Hossain, who addressed as a special guest.

Mass media should play due role to raise public awareness for removing social stigma and taboos about TB.

## Foreign drugs

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our presence, they left the suitcases and handbags in the luggage-belt area," he said.

A departmental case was filed in connection with the seizure of the contrabands.

## Rice meets

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"active diplomacy" to the initiative.

She also suggested Arab governments take steps toward reconciliation with Israel before an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement is complete. Their peace plan offers normal relations with Israel after Israel and the Palestinians make peace.

The secretary-general of the Arab League, Amr Moussa, said on Saturday that Arab states have no intention of modifying their initiative to make it more palatable.

After talks with the four Arab foreign ministers, known as the Arab Quartet, Rice will meet the intelligence chiefs of the four Arab countries, a State Department official said.

The four volumes of the collected works are Vol 1 -- Challenging Injustice, Vol 2 -- Milestones to Bangladesh, Vol 3 - The Political Economy of Malgovernance in Bangladesh, and the fourth volume in Bangla titled 'My critic, my friend'.

## Remembering

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unarmed Bangalees by the Pakistani occupation forces in 1971.

On this night in 1971, the Pakistani military rulers launched "Operation Search Light" killing some 7,000 Bangalees.

Dhaka University, being a bastion of protracted struggle of the repressed of the country, faced severe wrath of the Pakistani army and students, teachers and employees were exterminated in the hundreds.

The occupation army also launched special crackdowns on the Bangalee police personnel and EPR members to prevent them from joining the armed struggle for freedom.

Even common people fell victim to the arbitrary operations of the 'death squads' let loose by the Pakistani military junta.

Newspapers will bring out special supplements.

## New UN official

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"We can't leave here because we're scared of the Janjaweed and we have no work to go back to," she said.

U.N. Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes is on his first mission to Darfur to seek better cooperation from the Sudanese government, which has been accused of creating bureaucratic obstacles for aid groups.

Khartoum has come under fresh pressure from Western powers to ease the suffering in Darfur, where experts estimate 200,000 people have been killed and 2.5 million driven from their homes after rebels rose up against the government in 2003 charging the central government neglected the remote region.

## Bapex to repair

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10. So the authorities are going to carry out repairs at well No 10 first, and if that does not solve the problem then they will move on to well No 8 and 9 to repair those.

The authorities have yet to determine how long it will take to stop the leaks. They are also thinking of hiring foreign consultants if necessary.

Meanwhile, the pressure, with which gas is leaking out, is increasing by the day. Some new holes are also being formed on the beds of the Titas river and a vast swamp Loiska Beel, leaking out gas.

The district administration and Bangladesh Gas Field Company Ltd (BGFCL) authorities have jointly taken up a special programme to make the 6000 villagers of Shampur and Anandapur villages aware of possible dangers in the area.

Red flags have already been hoisted at dangerous spots to keep the people alert, discouraging them to ignite fire near the spots. Several guards have been engaged to

maintain vigilance so people do not throw match sticks or burning cigarettes at the leaks.

Several billboards have been set up displaying information about what not to do around the leaks. Announcements have been made through loudspeakers in the area alerting the people about the precarious situation in the area.

The district administration has forbidden villagers to light kerosene lamps and matches even at night.

The holes through which gas is leaking out are gradually becoming larger and there is an acrid smell of gas permeating the air.

Sometimes the volume of flammable gas in the air increases to a dangerous level and turns into fireballs coming in contact with sparks.

Md Shahidul Abedin, managing director of BGFCL who is also an engineer, said they will finance Bapex for repairing the leaking wells.

## Diesel, kerosene

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BPC chief and members from stakeholders to review the prices of petroleum products each month. If the monthly review indicates a variation in the fixed price by more than five percent from that of the previous month, the tariff will be adjusted at that time without waiting for the date fixed for quarterly adjustment.

Back in 2003, the government had decided to introduce a pricing formula. But the decision was not implemented.

Meanwhile, the finance ministry has already agreed to provide the BPC Tk 600 crore as an interim arrangement till the new prices are determined as per the approved formula. The energy ministry had asked for Tk 1,500 crore.

The finance ministry has already released Tk 300 crore for the BPC and decided to give another 300 crore in three monthly instalments from later this month till May.

The BPC's estimated loan from Islamic Development Bank (IDB) amounting to \$234.64 million during the period March to June this year may be repaid by the government.

The World Bank (WB) has been hammering on petroleum price adjustment to reduce the BPC's losses over the last few years. Now, a WB team will visit Bangladesh for three weeks from tomorrow to ensure implementation of various conditions tagged with disbursement of the fourth instalment of its Development Support Credit. One of the conditions on taking measures for macro-economic stability implies fuel price adjustment.

"The problem is that we cannot just increase diesel or kerosene prices because it will affect the poor. This is why we are tilted to increase octane price," noted a top energy ministry official.

"But now we have to do something about it so that the poor is not affected by it. That is where the direct subsidy comes in," he added.

The government would have increased kerosene and diesel prices immediately but considering the present boro cultivation season, it is planning to hike the prices in late April.

"The price adjustment of diesel will slightly affect transport fares. But our estimates show that the impact of this would be negligible on inter-district transport costs," he pointed out.

To keep the poor unaffected, the finance ministry is considering introduction of card system for kerosene for the poor in line with the existing Vulnerable Group Feeding or Vulnerable Group Development programmes.

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The BPC imports 38 lakh tonnes of petroleum oil at a price that is progressively higher than the sale price beginning from 1997-98. And previously it was making profit by hundreds of crores of taka a year besides giving the national exchequer huge import duties.

Coupled with the annual losses, the BPC is now hard-hit with huge non-payment for fuel purchase by Bangladesh Biman. The loss incurring Biman's arrears with the BPC stood at Tk 1,567 crore in December

## History

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against the ICC associate member country will start at 7:30pm Bangladesh time with state-run BTV beaming live coverage from Queen's Park Oval in Port of Spain.

It would be a great achievement in Bangladesh's cricket history if Dav Whatmore's charges can keep their cool against the World Cup debutants, who had earlier suffered two heavy defeats against Sri Lanka and India.

Bangladesh earlier defeated Bermuda by eight wickets in a triangular one-day series in their build-up to the World Cup in Antigua where left-handed opener Shahriar Nafees, who is yet to deliver in the tournament proper, hit a brilliant unbeaten 104.

"It's a win today, which is always on the cards given the strength of the two sides, will mean a lot for the Tigers. It will not only confirm their maiden second round berth but also erase the bitter memories of the 2003 event in South Africa where they failed to win a single match."

Bangladesh boosted their chances of entering the Super Eights after their great five-wicket victory against mighty India but suddenly lost the momentum after suffering a humiliating defeat in the second game. But the odds now look to be stacked in their favour to make history possible.

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