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95,000 fowls culled in Badda farm

Govt to set up 16 labs for bird flu test
STAR REPORT

Livestock officials culled 95,000 chickens at the bird flu-infected poultry farm at city's Uttar Badda as the culling continued for the second consecutive day yesterday.

The government, meantime, decided to set up 16 more laboratories in the country next month for testing and identifying bird flu viruses as more and more areas are coming under avian influenza infestation.

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Farms in bird flu peril

Chicken goes off menu for most

SOHEL PARVEZ

The country's poultry industry continues to be in grave peril with sales already halved due to panic among consumers in the wake of recent bird flu outbreaks, operators said.

Many restaurants have already taken chicken off their menus while home consumption too has slumped.

"We are going broke. We are selling chicken to poultry farmers at a token price to minimise our losses," said Shah Habibul Haque, director of Aftab Bahumukhi Farm

Ltd, a leading poultry hatchery. He claims their business has incurred on average a loss of Tk 2 crore every month since November last year.

"Things look even grimmer for small farm owners. They are losing their capital," he said adding that currently they charge only Tk 7-8 for a day-old chick, about one third of production cost at Tk 22.

The avian influenza, which broke out in Bangladesh early last year, has now reached epidemic proportions sweeping across the poultry industry that accounts for over 1.6 percent of GDP.

According to official data, the government has detected bird flu virus in 152 farms in 43 districts and culled 6.42 lakh fowls as of February 16.

Operators report a loss of nearly Tk 5,000 crore because of plummeting sales coupled with a steady rise in the prices of poultry feeds.

"At a rough estimate, we have made a loss of nearly Tk 5,000 crore," said Moshir Rahman, convener of Poultry Industries Co-ordination Committee.

Industry sources said thousands of farms have been forced to

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ACC to quiz Khaleda in Niko case

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday granted a petition to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) to interrogate detained former premier Khaleda Zia at the sub-jail gate in connection with the Niko graft case.

Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Golam Rabbani passed the order after ACC Assistant Director SM Sahidur Rahman, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted a petition to interrogate the former premier.

Khaleda was shown arrested in the case on December 30 last year

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NETRAKONA SUICIDE BLASTS

3 JMB men given death

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sentenced three activists of the banned Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) to death on charges of killing eight people including two Udichi leaders by carrying out suicide bomb attacks at Udichi and Shata Dal Shilpi Goshthi offices in Netrakona in December 2005.

The convicts are Salahuddin alias Saleheen, Asaduzzaman Chowdhury alias Panir and Yunus Ali. Saleheen and Panir were in the dock during the delivery of the

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This file photo shows JMB operatives Salahuddin alias Saleheen and Asaduzzaman Chowdhury alias Panir in police custody. They were sentenced to death yesterday. PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA



AUGUST 21 ATTACK Remand hearing for Huji man tomorrow

STAR REPORT

A Dhaka court yesterday fixed tomorrow to hear CID's prayer to take arrested Harkatul Jihad al Islami (Huji) leader Moin Uddin alias Abu Zandal on a 10-day remand.

CID Assistant Superintendent of Police Fazlul Kabir submitted the remand prayer to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court in connection with the grenade attack on an Awami League (AL) rally on August 21, 2004.

Meanwhile, a Sathkira court yesterday ordered the authorities

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Adv Razzaq denies link to al-Badr

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Abdur Razzaq, a senior advocate of the Supreme Court, yesterday denied his involvement in al-Badr, a local militia which helped the Pakistan army carry out mass killings during the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971.

Responding to the list of war criminals drawn by Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) on Saturday, Abdur Razzaq said, "The statement is totally false and motivated one."

"I was never a member of

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PHOTO: STAR

Livestock department officials in protective gear dump chickens culled following bird flu infection at Omega Poultry Farm in Uttar Badda of the capital yesterday.

Edible oil prices shot up by Tk 10 a litre

Syndicate allegedly active in fresh price hiking

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Prices of edible oil at both retail and wholesale levels registered a fresh hike of Tk 7 to Tk 10 in the last couple of days -- apparently due to price manipulation by a section of unscrupulous traders, said market operators.

A litre of non-brand soybean oil was selling at Tk 108 to Tk 115 yesterday at retail outlets, whereas the price was between Tk 98 and Tk

108 only two days ago, said a number of traders.

Retail price of non-brand mustard oil was Tk 120 to Tk 125 per litre yesterday while it was Tk 110 to Tk 115 a litre on Friday.

Soybean oil at wholesale level was selling at Tk 3,880 to Tk 3,920 per maund (37.200 kg) compared with Tk 3,560 to Tk 3,600 per maund two days back, said the market operators.

Super palm oil at wholesale

markets was selling at Tk 3,720 to Tk 3,750 per maund compared with Tk 3,500 to Tk 3,520 per maund previously, traders said.

Palm oil was selling at Tk 3,590 to Tk 3,630 per maund compared with its previous rate of Tk 3,450 per maund.

Price of mustard oil at wholesale markets was Tk 114 a litre yesterday compared with Tk 105 two days ago.

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Experts to verify 42 artefacts on return from Paris

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to form a team of experts to verify 42 artefacts on their return from Guimet Museum in Paris.

The artefacts will be brought back on February 23 after much ado centring the issue, said sources in the cultural affairs ministry. An Air France cargo plane will bring the artefacts back to Bangladesh and is scheduled to land at Zia International Airport (ZIA) around 5:00am.

Rasheda K Choudhury, adviser in charge of the ministry, will

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Pakistan on election alert as rigging fears mount

Blast toll rises to 47

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistani security forces were on high alert yesterday, as violence surged and claims of rigging mounted on the eve of elections that could threaten President Pervez Musharraf's grip on power.

Monday's vote has been overshadowed by the slaying of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto in

December and by a subsequent wave of bloodshed, including a suicide attack on her supporters on Saturday that left 47 dead.

Opposition allegations that the parliamentary polls will be rigged have also raised tensions in the nuclear-armed nation and increased concerns among its foreign backers.

Musharraf said in an interview

with former cricketer Imran Khan's ex-wife published Sunday that the Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) party, which supports him, would "certainly have the majority" after Monday's vote.

But he questioned whether it would be able to form a government.

The former general, who sacked

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STOCK INVESTMENT LOAN Tk 10cr fine slapped on AB Bank

SARWAR A CHOWDHURY

AB Bank's merchant banking wing was fined Tk 10 crore yesterday for disbursing excess margin loans in violation of securities rules.

The penalty is the highest the regulator has imposed on a listed company since 2001.

The Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) also asked the merchant banking wing to submit the fine to the commission within the next 15 days.

Managing director of AB Bank could not be contacted over his cell phone for comments despite repeated attempts.

After an investigation the SEC found AB Bank's merchant banking wing disbursed around Tk 528 crore loans against its paid up capital of only Tk 57 crore during mid 2007 when stock market experienced an abnormal bullish trend due to glut of liquidity stemming from excess margin loans.

The wing mainly disbursed the loans among its employees and their relatives.

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Hasina to consider check-up in country

Says her personal physician

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained Awami League (AL) President Sheikh Hasina has decided to consider positively the suggestions by the jail authorities and her personal doctors to have medical check-ups in the country, her physician said yesterday.

"She [Hasina] has said that she

will think about our proposals positively," Dr ABM Abdullah, one of the personal physicians of the AL chief, told The Daily Star after a meeting with her at the sub-jail on the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban premises.

Hasina had earlier refused to have any medical check-ups,

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