

BIRD FLU

Poultry industry incurs loss of Tk 4100cr

Speakers say at meet the press

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a meet the press yesterday urged the government to prepare a strategic plan categorising the poultry farms through a technical committee to strengthen their biosecurity management and save the country's overall poultry industry.

They also urged the government to strengthen the surveillance system by setting up coordination among the government, private and non-government organisations.

The press meet was organised jointly by Watchdog Bangladesh and Bangladesh branch of World's Poultry Science Association (WAPSA) at the National Press Club in the city with a view to removing bird flu panic from the mind of the consumers by sensitising the media.

Applauding the government for taking all cautionary measures to contain the spread of bird flu, the speakers said all the poultry farms should be registered.

They said as of February 27 last, some 191 poultry farms were affected with Avian Influenza (AI) and 50 percent of the country's total farms were closed down due to bird flu panic and other reasons causing a loss of more than Tk 4100 crore.

The owners of the affected poultry farms should be provided

with soft bank loans so that they can restart their business, the speakers added.

While reading out a written speech, MA Saleque, secretary of WAPSA's Bangladesh branch, said 15 percent of total animal protein in the country comes from poultry.

"There are around 1.5 lakh small, medium and large poultry farms in the country which provide 3.2 lakh metric tons of meat and 5200 million pieces of egg," he said, adding that it is a must to protect the flourishing industry from

ruination.

Moshiur Rahman, president of WAPSA Bangladesh branch, said, "Every month the industry is losing Tk 800 crore. So far 25 lakh people have lost their jobs due to bird flu outbreak and further one lakh will lose their jobs if we fail to take immediate measures to protect the poultry industry."

Sajjad Hossain, chief executive of Watchdog Bangladesh, said as the food security system of our country is very poor, it should be strengthened to save the poultry sector.



Moshiur Rahman addresses 'meet the press' programme at National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his left are MA Saleque and Sajjad Hossain.

Storm disrupts power supply

UNB, Dhaka

A major part of the Dhaka city, including the southeastern area, plunged into darkness as the season's first storm swept through the city early hours of yesterday.

Official sources said three grid sub-stations at Maniknagar, Narinda and Bangabhaban have tripped as soon as the storm started at about 3:00am.

It took several hours to restore power supply to the areas. The consumers in Motijheel, Wari, Tikatoli, Narinda and Lalbagh suffered the worst where electricity was restored after 12 hours at about 3:00pm.

Some areas under Desco also faced the similar sufferings. A top Desco official told UNB that their 19 distribution feeders out of 40, which cover the eastern and northern parts of the city - Mirpur and Gulshan - were tripped by the storm.

"But, within minutes to few hours we have been able to restore the power supply," he said.

A DESA official claimed power supply to the Bangabhaban, the president's house, was restored immediately through alternative arrangement.

GRAFT CASE AGAINST IQBAL Judgment deferred to March 11

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The judgment in a graft case against former Awami League lawmaker HBM Iqbal, which was scheduled to be delivered yesterday, has been deferred to March 11 as the judge of the Special Court-1, Firoz Alam, has been on leave.

The case was filed against Iqbal on charges of amassing huge wealth through illegal means and concealing information in the wealth statement submitted to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

ACC Assistant Director Mohammad Ibrahim filed the case against Iqbal, his wife Dr Momtaj Begum Dolly and other family members with Gulshan police on June 25.

The other accused are their sons Moimuddin Iqbal and Imran Iqbal and daughter Nawrin Iqbal.

According to the case statement, Iqbal concealed information about an illegally acquired Tk 5.3 crore house at Gulshan Avenue, which he registered in his wife's name, and a Tk 5 crore fixed deposit.

Reserve one-third of seats for women in all sectors

Karmojibi Nari urges govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Karmojibi Nari (KN) yesterday urged the caretaker government to reserve one-third of seats for women in all sectors to establish gender equity and dignity in the society.

The KN leaders also called on the government to pay more attention to women's empowerment issue in the National Women Development Policy to be declared on March 8 on the occasion of the International Women's Day.

"We welcome the present government for approving the draft of National Women Development Policy. We also demand for reserving one-third of seats for women in all sectors. We hope that the government will ensure it by declaring

National Women Development Policy on the International Women's Day," said Shireen Akhter, president of KN, while addressing a press conference at Dhaka Reporters Unity in the city.

A month-long programme has been chalked out by KN to hold

discussion and view-exchange meeting in 30 districts across the country to mark the International Women's Day, said the leaders.

KN Executive Director Rokeya Rafiq Babi, Director Mahmuda Imam and Coordinator Arifa Akhtar, Anu were present at the press conference.

Tyre shop gutted in Rajshahi

UNB, Rajshahi

A tyre shop was gutted at Alupatti crossing in the city early yesterday.

Local sources said someone set fire to several tyres kept in front of the shop at about 4:00am and soon it engulfed the shop and nearby trees.

On information, firefighters rushed to the spot and put out the blaze after half an hour of efforts.

The shop owner estimated the damages caused by fire at about Tk one lakh.



Prof Muzafer Ahmad speaks at a roundtable organised by Shushashoner Jannoy Nagorik at National Press Club in the city yesterday. On his right is ASM Shahjahan and on his left are M Hafizuddin Khan, Syed Abul Maksud and Sharmeen Murshid. (Story on page 16)

Garment workers protest layoffs in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Around 3,000 workers of a unit of Padma Garment staged a demonstration in front of the factory at Tejgaon Industrial Area yesterday in protest of layoffs.

The police said the management of Padma Poly Cotton Knit Fabrics Ltd. posted a notice on the factory gate yesterday morning announcing its closure.

Enraged by the notice, the workers who came to their workplace in the morning gathered together to stage a demonstration, but a large contingent of police, deployed

there since early morning, dispersed them.

Shafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Industrial Police Station, said the factory owner announced layoffs as the workers had remained absent for the last three days following a clash between the garment workers and other staffs of the factory.

He also said the garments workers also beat the factory staffers, prompting them to lodge a case with the police station.

Abdul Kader, a worker, said the situation has been tense since Thursday when a workers' leader Azad, who is close to the management, had scuffled with the workers over tiffin.

The scuffle erupted as Azad and his associates were trying to force the workers to have 'low quality' tiffin being served by the management, he added.

Since then, the workers were demanding removal of Azad from the factory, Kader said.

As the workers remained absent from their work on some floors on Monday to press their demand, officials and staffers close to the management beat up at least three workers, Liton, Saiful and Shahinor, prompting the workers on all floors to join the agitation programme.



A manhole with no cover on the footpath along the Secretariat in the city poses danger to pedestrians, but the authorities remain indifferent.

MOMIN MURDER

OC Rafique's name dropped from charge sheet

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Dropping the name of prime accused suspended officer-in-charge (OC) AKM Rafique Islam from the charge sheet, detective branch (DB) of police yesterday pressed charges against eight people for killing college student Kamrul Islam Momin in September 2005.

DB Inspector Forman Ali, who is also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet against the accused to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka showing 24 people as prosecution witnesses.

The chargesheeted accused are Hasibul Haq Jony, Tareq alias Zia, Babu alias 'Thotkata' Babu, Shakhawat Hossain alias Jewel, Mohammad Jafar, Habibur Rahman Taj, Sharif Uddin and Monir Hawlader. Of them, Monir is on the run while the rest are now in jail custody.

The IO dropped names of 20 others as their involvement with the murder was not proved.

The charge sheet will be placed before the court on March 23 for its acceptance.

The CMM's Court on July 22 last year ordered reinvestigation into the matter after Momin's father filed a naraji (no-confidence) petition against the charge sheet submitted by the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

On May 13 last year, CID submitted the probe report dropping OC Rafique's name from the charge sheet, as his involvement with killing was not proved.

Momin, 18, a Commerce College student, was killed by a gang of criminals in front of his house at Kafrul when he was going to college on September 13, 2005.

Following the incident, Momin's father Abdur Razzak had filed a murder case with Kafrul Police Station against OC Rafique and 25 others.

On October 16, 2005, prime accused Rafique was sent to jail after he surrendered to a Dhaka court seeking ad interim bail in connection with the killing. He has been in jail custody since then.

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