

Commerce ministry

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The DU chemistry department had confirmed that in its tests excessive melamine was found in the eight popular brands of powdered milk—Nido fortified instant, Red Cow, Yashili 1 (China), Sweet Baby (China), Diploma, Anline, Yashili 2 (China) and Dano.

But testing four brands, Plasma Plus found the toxic element in one of them and the BSTI, which also conducted the tests separately, confirmed that it was Yashili 1.

After the nearly two-hour long meeting, Firoze Ahmed said they could not give orders to stop sales of these brands because there are still confusions over the laboratory tests of the deciding factor of melamine's presence in these products.

He said a five-member committee has been formed with representatives from the ministries of commerce, industries and health, the BSTI and the powdered milk companies in question and they will collect samples of the same batches of these brands tested earlier for the further testing.

Another 12-member experts committee was formed yesterday to oversee the tests at the laboratories of Bangladesh Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (BCSIR) and Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission (BAEC) and in an accredited laboratory abroad.

The committee comprised of experts from the DU chemistry department, BAEC, BCSR, Plasma Plus, BSTI and the health ministry will give their opinions on the basis of the tests and then the government will take the final decision in this regard.

The committee will check if melamine is really existent in powdered milk of these brands and, if it is there, the level of its presence—whether tolerable or harmful for human health.

UK pledges

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Asked if the government can trust the results of the DU tests, Firoze said, "It is not a question of trust. In two tests, melamine was found only in one brand while it was found in all the eight brands in another test. So, obviously all parties have their say."

He said yesterday's meeting also decided to gradually conduct tests of other brands of powdered milk.

Meanwhile, parents and consumers' rights activists said the government was playing foul with the people by trying to avoid responsibilities.

Consumers Association of Bangladesh Senior Programme Officer Emdad Hossain Malek said the government cannot avoid the responsibility for two reasons: first, it is the state's duty to protect its citizens and second, confusion has arisen surrounding products approved by the BSTI which controls the standards of all products.

The government must take a clear decision on the issue...As a toxic element has been found in a few brands, it may suggest other brands for the time being, he said.

Sabrina Rahman, a housewife from Mirpur, said she had serious trouble with her two-year-old child as she could not find any safe baby formula.

"I have heard that traders mix toxic chemicals in pasteurised and raw milk too. Please ask the government to arrange import of milk from other countries where it is not tainted," she said. "Or ask the government to provide us with poison and kill us."

Rukhsana Yasmin, a mother from Gendaria, said it is the BSTI that allowed marketing of these eight brands of powdered milk. "Stringent actions should be taken against the officials responsible for it," she said.

tees are reserved for women by 2020.

INTERIM JAMAAT STATUTE
In its provisional charter, Jamaat has been renamed Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami. Before, it was Jamaat-e-Islami Bangladesh.

Besides, the party has included a new section that says, "Jamaat-e-Islami will work to establish an Islamic social system that guarantees justice for all since Bangladesh emerged as the third largest Muslim country through a heroic battle of people and freedom fighters."

False bomb alert
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shortly before takeoff as the detector signalled presence of explosives, said the sources.

Security personnel rushed in and conducted a search inside the aircraft but did not find any bomb or explosives.

Passengers boarded after the check. They had to disembark again as the pilot got yet another signal. Panic spread among the passengers and airport staff at the time.

Officials afterwards became confirmed that the signal was due to the faulty detector.

The plane took off at about 4:15pm.

Civil Aviation Authority Chairman Sakeb Iqbal Khan Majlish admitted the delay but declined to explain the cause.

Household
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Dhanchandi police said household help Sabina found her daughter Bushra dead when she returned from the kitchen to her room, where she had left the baby alone.

Police said Sabina has been working for the family for two months. The commissioner's family declined to comment on the death and advised The Daily Star to contact police.

NGOs vow
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eventually increase poverty in the poor countries," said the statement.

It said the people of the country never nodded to any kind of dictatorship in the past and urged people to get united against the "evil motive" of the multilateral financial institutions.

The forum leaders called on the government to refrain from signing any such agreements further and placed a seven-point charter of demands to the donor agencies and the government.

The major demands include immediate waiver of debts, stopping imposition of hard conditions, refraining from taking any project harmful to the environment, transferring the multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) management to government control, considering the climate change fund out of the foreign development aid and allocating funds to offset loss caused by climate change.

Other demands include providing compensation to those who have been affected by climate change caused by implementing some of the IMF-WB and ADB development projects, and stopping massive privatisation drive in the name of eradicating poverty while simultaneously providing adequate subsidy and increasing government allocation to the government service sectors.

As many as 12 vigilance teams were also formed with 36 officials led by 12 deputy secretaries at the behest of the education ministry to help implement the government decision.

The teams were supposed to make separate visits to the educational institutions and submit their reports to the ministry.

Uniform test charges

| Test | DMCH | Mitford | NIMH | Suhrawardy |
|------------------|------|---------|------|------------|
| Haemoglobin | 5.50 | 11 | 20 | --- |
| TC | 5.50 | 11 | 20 | --- |
| DC | 5.50 | 11 | 20 | --- |
| ESR | 5.50 | 11 | 20 | --- |
| TC, DC, ESR, Hb | 22 | 44 | 50 | 50 |
| BT-CT | 11 | 22 | 40 | 30 |
| Malaria Parasite | 5.50 | 11 | 20 | --- |
| S Creatinine | 14 | 40 | 60 | 60 |
| Blood Sugar | 11 | 33 | 40 | 40 |
| Stool R/E, M/E | 5.50 | 16.50 | 20 | 20 |
| Urine R/E, M/E | 5.50 | 16.50 | 20 | 20 |

All charges in taka

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haemoglobin (Hb) test of blood and Tk 22 for the four combined.

The Mitford Hospital and National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD) charge Tk 11 each for TC and DC tests and Tk 44 for the two combined.

Charges at the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) are higher: Tk 20 each for TC, DC, Hb and ESR tests. The NIMH and Suhrawardy Hospital charge Tk 50 for the four tests done all at a time.

Some staffers at the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation told The Daily Star preferring anonymity that they did not charge for tests before photocopying the Mitford Hospital.

"We pointed to the Mitford Hospital after the in-charge of the clinical pathology department asked us what charges to introduce for diagnostic tests," one staffer said.

Asked about the differences at different hospitals, NIMH Director Prof AHM Firoze claimed that his hospital acted according to the government norm.

Brig Gen M Shahidul Haque Mollick, director at the Mitford

Dr Harunur Rashid

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"But if the parliamentary elections are not held on December 18 or there is any kind of manipulation in the elections or people cannot exercise their right to choose representatives, all these reforms will be counter-productive," he noted.

He said political leaders must learn from the 1/11 changeover and the disagreements among them which led to the stepping in of people "whose intervention we do not want". Such intervention will recur if there is no understanding among the political leaders on the "norms, values and rules of the game," he added.

Terming the "minus-two" formula a major blunder of the caretaker government, he said, "The two leaders have emerged from the country's two main political streams and cannot just be written off. Without realising the political and social reality, the (caretaker) government wanted to change everything using force. If it could be done, Ayub Khan, Yahya Khan and post-independent army rulers could have succeeded."

He said the Awami League and the BNP represent two conflicting political streams and it is unlikely that the confrontational politics would come to an end and political culture would see a major change soon after the election.

Demanding withdrawal of the state of emergency during the elections, Dr Harun said it can be imposed again if the situation demands.

He stressed the need for auditing to ensure transparency in the funding and expenditure of political parties.

Talking on the meeting between the chiefs of the BNP and Awami League, he said the two leaders would have initiated the process themselves if they had realised the need. "We hope it will not be futile like the meeting between Mannan Bhuiyan and Abdul Jalil," said Dr Harun.

Obama wins

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The extravaganza of giving enabled Obama to demolish his previous one-month record of 66 million dollars in August, which had already set him fair to hit McCain hard with a nationwide advertising blitz in the closing stages.

The Republican Powell, on NBC program "Meet the Press," said Obama had "met the standard" to be commander-in-chief "because of his ability to inspire" Americans of all ages and ethnic and political stripes.

"I think he would be a transformational president. For that reason I will be voting for Senator Barack Obama," said Powell, who was the first African-American to serve as chairman of the joint chiefs of staff.

Should the mixed-race Obama win in just over two weeks, "all Americans should be proud, not just African-Americans," he added.

"It would not just electrify our country, it would electrify the world."

It was a stinging rebuff to McCain, the former Vietnam War prisoner and national security veteran whose White House hopes have dimmed as economic crisis has stalked the United States.

Speaking on Fox television, McCain said he had "always admired and respected General Powell."

"We're long-time friends. This doesn't come as a surprise," the Arizona senator said, while touting his endorsement by other former senators of state including Henry Kissinger, James Baker and Lawrence Eagleburger.

Powell had harsh words about the rightward lurch the Republican Party has taken in recent years and extended under McCain and his running mate Sarah Palin -- who he said was not ready to be president.

McCain's shifting positions on the crisis did not reflect well on his calm under fire, and his choice of the Alaska governor as vice presidential nominee "raised in my mind some question as to the judgment that Senator McCain made."

Powell said that Obama, in contrast, had come out of recent weeks looking presidential.

"He displayed a steadiness, an intellectual curiosity, a depth of knowledge and an approach to

looking at (economic) problems like this, and picking a vice president (Joe Biden) that I think is ready to be president on day one."

There was no immediate comment from the Obama campaign to the endorsement from Powell, who was tarnished by his role in promoting the US invasion of Iraq but remains a respected figure among moderates in both parties.

The Democrat's campaign was growing over its September fundraising record, after added 632,000 new donors for a total of more than 3.1 million, as Obama pursued an audacious hunt for votes in Republican states like North Carolina.

"Because of your great generosity we had a record-breaking September," Obama's campaign manager David Plouffe said as he prepared to file the month's fundraising figures with the Federal Election Commission.

"We are going to report tomorrow to the FEC that we raised over 150 million dollars in September, which has allowed us to run such a strong campaign in all of these battleground states," he said in a video message to supporters.

BCL groups clash

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BCL sources said the clash occurred between half unit BCL activist Reazuddin Sumon and Samsul Kabir Rahat and their supporters over a post in the party's hall committee.

Sources said at one point, Sumon group -- with help from BCL activists of other DU dormitories -- forced Rahat and his supporters out from the hall compound at around 3:00pm.

About an hour later, Rahat group returned to the hall compound through a back door, and with help from Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal (JCD) activists of the same hall, ousted Sumon group from the premises.

Hall sources said that Rahat group then took up position at the hall gate to prevent Sumon's group from re-entering the hall.

As Sumon and his group tried to force their way into the hall several times after this, the two groups clashed with each other several times.

Activists from both groups engaged in the clashes with iron rods, sticks and brick pieces.

Hall sources said that police reached the spot at around 4:30pm but did not take any action against the demonstrators. They also said that the general students were not able to leave the hall during the period.

Talking to The Daily Star, hall provost Prof Zahidul Islam said, "I repeatedly asked police to go for some action, but they did not. They just observed the situation."

The OC of Shahbagh police station Rezaul Karim however refuted this claim. He said that the DU authorities asked the police not to take any action against the students. The police team had since left the troubled spot.

Meanwhile, the hall provost Prof Islam told The Daily Star last night that since both groups had still not left their positions at the hall, he appreciated further clashes during the night.

Prof Islam said he has informed the university proctor and Vice-Chancellor Prof SMA Faiz about the situation.

Meanwhile, a tense situation is prevailing at the hall.

At the tie of filing of this report at around 10:00pm last night, clashes and counter-clashes were continuing between the two groups at the hall.

Earlier, in the afternoon BCL leaders and activists staged a demonstration on the university campus demanding unconditional release of Awami League President Sheikh Hasina.

Tamil Tigers stepped up attacks, the ministry said.

"Troops also suffered casualties during those confrontations and were being evacuated for treatment," the statement said.

Government soldiers fell victim to booby-trapped devices, anti-personnel mines and mortar fire, the ministry said.

Battlefield sources confirmed that the terrorists suffered significant attrition in terms of men and material," the ministry said.

Claiming that the LTTE was on the verge of "defeat" after suffering huge casualties at the hands of Sri Lankan security forces, the government has said that the Tamil tigers are making desperate efforts to rope in Indian leaders to stop the ongoing offensives against them.

It is very clear that the LTTE is at a decisive stage. And no one can stop them getting defeated. So, they are trying their maximum to get Tamil Nadu (leaders) to pressure the Indian government to pressure the Sri Lankan government to stop the LTTE's offensives.

That's what the LTTE want and that is why this sudden pressure is coming. The (Sri Lankan) government expects this situation as we know there is no other way for the LTTE. Anyway, the LTTE cannot escape facing military offensives now," he said.

Military officials said both sides continued to trade gunfire and long-range attacks throughout the weekend, but monsoon rains had left heavy weapons ineffective.

Neither side could also use trenches for cover as most were flooded with rainwater.

The Sri Lankan government pulled out of a Norwegian-backed truce with the rebels in January.

Tens of thousands of people have died on both sides since the LTTE launched its campaign for an independent state in 1972.

Shakib bowls, bats

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The Tigers however were coming apart and barring the wicket of Zunaid Siddiqui, all the top-order batsmen got out to impulsive strokeplay. Rajin Saleh (6) played back to a Jeetan Patel delivery that turned and hit him plumb in front and Mohammad Ashraful (0) did his team no favours by giving Aaron Redmond a catch at cover while trying to lob Daniel Vettori over covers. First-innings hero Mehrab Hossain (6) was guilty of swiping at a good length delivery, holing out to Kyle Mills