

Rains leave 26 dead, 45 missing in China

AFP, Beijing

Massive downpours in southwest China have killed 26 people -- many buried in landslides -- left 45 missing and damaged thousands of homes, the government and reports said yesterday.

Rains that have drenched Yunnan province since October 24 have triggered a series of landslides in the mountainous region, which borders on the Himalayas, affecting up to 410,000 people, the provincial government said on its website.

In the hardest hit area, Chuxiong prefecture, four more bodies were found yesterday bringing the toll there to 20 confirmed dead and 41 missing, Xinhua news agency said.

"We must ensure that those in disaster areas have food to eat, clothes to wear and a place to stay with clean water and medical aid," Chuxiong vice prefectural head Fa Yubing said in a statement.

"We must ensure that students can attend classes and that no epidemics break out in disaster areas."

More than 1,000 homes have collapsed and some 2,300 others were damaged in the mud and rock slides, with rescue teams and local officials frantically seeking to ascertain the exact number of dead and missing.

Roads, electricity and telecommunications have all been disrupted, while outlying regions have reported damage to schools and medical clinics.

With more rain forecast for the coming two days, rescue efforts will likely face continued difficulties, the government said.

The torrential rains have also hit the provincial capital of Kunming, where four people were reported dead and 1,000 people have been evacuated, it added. The two other fatalities occurred in Lincang city.

Yunnan sits just to the south of Sichuan province, where an 8.0-magnitude earthquake left over 87,000 people dead or missing in May this year.

In September, 276 people were killed in northern China's Shanxi province when an industrial waste reservoir situated on a mountainside collapsed and engulfed a village in a sea of mud, rocks and mine debris.

NAT'L SOLIDARITY DAY Show cause notice served on govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court (HC) yesterday issued a rule upon the government to show cause as to why it should not be directed to observe November 7 as "National Revolution and Solidarity Day" with due respect.

After hearing a writ petition, the HC bench comprised of Justice Nazmun Ara Sultana and Justice Md Rezaul Haque asked the government to explain why its gazette notification scrapping the public holiday on November 7 should not be declared without lawful authority.

Cabinet secretary, principal secretary to the Chief Adviser's Office, law secretary, information secretary, education secretary and deputy secretary to the establishment ministry have been made respondents and asked to reply within four weeks.

Abu Naşer M Rahmatullah, president of Swadhinata Forum, filed the writ petition as public interest litigation (PIL) with the HC in this regard.

The petition challenged the gazette notification issued by the deputy secretary to the establishment ministry scrapping the November 7 "National Revolution and Solidarity Day" as a public holiday.

Advocate Tajul Islam, who appeared for the petitioner, told the court that November 7 was a very important day in the history of the nation, since the nation has been saved from a serious catastrophe on this day in 1975.

If this day is not celebrated with due respect, the spirit of the constitution will be undermined, he said.

Khaleda to visit Ctg on Friday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will visit Chittagong on Friday on the occasion of the National Revolution and Solidarity Day.

This will be her first visit outside Dhaka since her release on September 11.

"Madam (Khaleda Zia) will come Chittagong for a one-day visit on the occasion of National Revolution and Solidarity Day," former minister and BNP leader Abdullah Al Noman told The Daily Star last night.

"As Chittagong bears many historic memory of late president Ziaur Rahman, madam has decided to come here on the occasion," Noman added.

Details of her tour, however, could not be known.

CU third convocation tomorrow

CU CORRESPONDENT

The third convocation of Chittagong University (CU) will be held tomorrow.

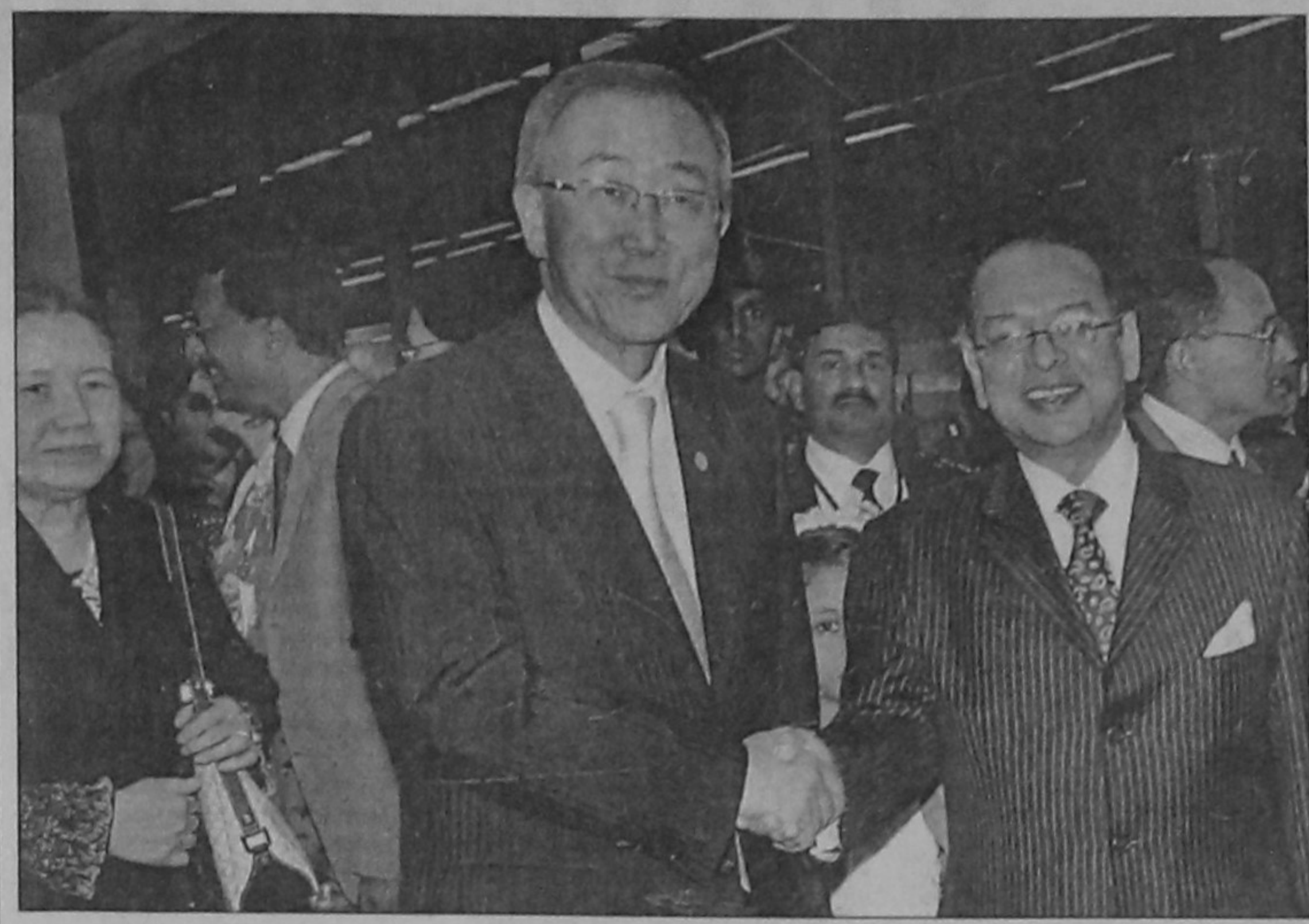
President Iajuddin Ahmed also the chancellor of the university is scheduled to preside over the ceremony while Prof Emeritus Dr Jamal Nazrul Islam will be present as convocation speaker.

Education Adviser Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman will attend the ceremony as special guest.

A total of 895 graduates registered their name to receive their certificates through the convocation to be held at CU central field.

Centring the convocation, a festive mood is prevailing among the students, teachers and employees of the university over last few days.

The first and second convocations of the university were held in 1994 and 1999.



Foreign Adviser Iftakhar Ahmed Chowdhury sees off UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon at Zia International Airport in the city yesterday.

Trust Bank bins charges

FROM PAGE 1 Mashhud had been chairman of the bank in his capacity as chief of armistaff.

In a press release to The Daily Star, Trust Bank said there has been no case of misappropriation or laundering of the bank's money by any chairman or director ever since the inception of the bank.

The release reads: Trust Bank's attention has been drawn to a news item appearing in a section of print and electronic news media to the effect that Mr Mahmudur Rahman, former Executive Chairman of Board of Investment, has accused Lieutenant General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (Retd), former Chairman of Trust Bank Limited, of laundering money belonging to the Bank.

Some of the newspapers and TV channels also reported that Mr Mahmudur Rahman alleged that Lieutenant General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (Retd) misappropriated Bank's money in the year 2002 while he was Chairman of the Bank.

In view of the news item and accusations involving Trust Bank Limited, the Bank finds it necessary to clarify the matter in order to remove the confusion that might have caused to the depositors and

valued customers of the Bank as well as members of public.

Trust Bank makes it unambiguously clear that no case of misappropriation/lauding of Bank's money, by any Chairman or Director, has ever occurred since the inception of the Bank.

The Bank also makes it clear in unequivocal term that in accordance with the demarcation of power between the Board of Directors and the Management as provided by Bangladesh Bank, in its BRPD Circular No 9 dated 17 Sep 1996 (later replaced by BRPD Circular No 16 dated 24 July 2003), Directors of a bank company cannot take part in the operation activity of the Bank, their role being limited to framing of policy and approving business strategy and proposal.

Hence, the question of misappropriation/lauding of Bank's money by the Chairman does not arise at all.

The factual position is that Trust Bank suffered a loss of Tk 23.07 crore in its foreign exchange dealing operation during January 2002 to July 2003. Launching of foreign exchange dealing operation was approved by the then Board of Directors in September

2001.

Lieutenant General Hasan Mashhud Chowdhury (Retd) became Chairman of the Bank in July 2002. The operation of foreign exchange dealing commenced in January 2002 and had incurred loss right from the beginning of the said operation.

However, the then Managing Director of the Bank did not disclose the loss to the Board of Directors and the Bank's annual accounts of 2002 were prepared without showing the loss. The loss-making venture continued till July 2003 but was kept hidden by the then Managing Director from the Board until the occurring of loss was detected in early August 2003 after Bangladesh Bank conducted an inspection of the Bank's foreign exchange operation and asked for explanation from the Bank's Management regarding un-reconciled balances of Bank's overseas foreign currency accounts (usually called NOSTRO accounts).

Thus, the Board of Directors came to know about the huge loss which accounted to Tk 23.07 crore.

The Board then immediately suspended the then Managing Director and terminated his ser-

2 journalists sent to jail over extortion

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

Editor and deputy editor of local Bangla daily Agrabani, Swapan Kumar Podder and Abu Mohammad Hamidul Haque, was sent to jail yesterday in an extortion case.

Chief Judicial Magistrate of Narayanganj Golam Mahbub ordered them to be sent to jail when they sought bail before the court.

Mokter Hossain, a businessman, in his complaint said Swapan and Abu Mohammad made threats of running a series report against him in their daily if he did not pay them Tk 1 lakh.

When Mokter went to court to file a case in this regard, the court asked the police to investigate the matter.

Police on November 1, filed the case after investigation.



Noted cultural personality Nasiruddin Yusuf speaks at a press conference organised by Sammilita Sangskritik Jote at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his left is Jotsna Bishwas and on his right is Golam Kuddus.

Indian minister escapes blast in Kolkata

AFP, Kolkata

An Indian government minister escaped unhurt when a roadside bomb exploded seconds after his car had driven past, officials said yesterday, adding six policemen were injured in the blast.

Federal Steel Minister Ram Vilas Paswan was returning from laying the foundation stone at a steel plant in West Bengal state when the explosion occurred on Sunday.

"The blast took place seconds after Paswan's vehicle passed the spot," West Bengal home secretary Asoke Mohon Chakraborty told reporters in Kolkata.

Freedom fighter Chand Mia dies

BSS, Barisal

Liberation War veteran Nazrul Islam Bhuiyan, better known as Chand Mia, passed away due to old-age complications at a hospital here on Sunday night at the age of 65.

Hundreds of people and fellow freedom fighters thronged his residence to have their last glimpses of Chand Mia who left behind his wife, five daughters, two sons and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

District command council of Muktiyoddha Sangsad covered the coffin with the national flag and the flag of the organisation as he was buried with state honour.

He was laid to his eternal rest at his Kashipur family graveyard besides the grave of his brother Mafizul Islam Bhuiyan, also a noted freedom fighter after namaz-e-janaza on the premises of Diapara Hathkholah Mosque.

Chand Mia is the elder brother of Azizul Islam Bhuiyan, chief reporter of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS).

Barisal district command of Muktiyoddha Sangsad Reaz-e-Sattar Farique in a statement mourned his death and conveyed sympathy to the members of the bereaved family recalling his contribution to the Liberation War and welfare of the people.

Nasiruddin Ahmed Musa

UNB, Faridpur

Freedom fighter and educationist Advocate Nasiruddin Ahmed Musa passed away at Faridpur Diabetic Hospital on Sunday morning at the age 60.

Nasiruddin, who was suffering from cancer, left behind his wife, one son, two daughters and a host of relatives and well-wishers to mourn his death.

He was buried at his family graveyard in Paschim Khabashpur area of the town with state honour yesterday.

Nasiruddin, former VP of Faridpur Rajendra College, was the founder principal of Faridpur City College.

Warrant issued to arrest son of Saifur

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday issued an arrest warrant against former finance minister M Saifur Rahman's younger son Shafiqur Rahman Babu in a case filed by the Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) on charge of amassing wealth worth Tk 13.84 crore illegally and concealing information of wealth from the commission.

Accepting the charge sheet pressed by the ACC, Metropolitan Sessions Judge in Dhaka Azizul Haque fixed November 6 for hearing on the case.

ACC Assistant Director Farid Ahmed Patwary, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Chief

Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka on November 2, showing 39 people as prosecution witnesses.

In the charge sheet, the IO mentioned that Shafiqur had amassed wealth worth Tk 13,84,92,392 through illegal means and concealed information of wealth worth Tk 1,22,44,453 from the commission.

The IO also prayed for issuance of arrest warrant against him and orders to attach his properties as the accused has been absconding since the case was filed.

On April 29 this year, ACC Deputy Director Sharmin Ferdousy filed the case against Shafiqur with Ramna police station for amassing wealth beyond his known sources of income and concealing wealth information.



Rezaul Karim Chowdhury speaks at a press conference at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday. On his right is Md Shamsuddoha and on his left is Mostafa Jamal Akand.



Dry weather likely

UNB, Dhaka

Dry weather with temporary partly cloudy sky is likely to prevail over the country in the next 12 hours until 6:00pm today.

Night temperature may remain nearly unchanged over the country, Met Office said in a forecast.

Highest temperature 33.0 degrees Celsius was recorded yesterday at Cox's Bazar and Chandpur and lowest 18.2 degrees Celsius at Jessore.

The sun sets in the capital at 5:17pm today and rises at 6:07am tomorrow.

Highest and lowest temperature and humidity recorded in some major cities and towns yesterday were:

City/Town	Temperature in Celsius		Humidity in percentage	
	Max	Min	Morning	Evening
Dhaka	32.0	22.2	58	66
Chittagong	31.5	20.5	73	65
Rajshahi	31.0	20.3	85	--
Khulna	32.2	22.0	63	--
Barisal	31.5	20.5	72	78
Sylhet	31.3	21.5	74	67
Cox's Bazar	33.0	21.3	66	64

Rawat, Nazrul SDEF chair, secy gen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

RK Rawat from India was elected chairman and Kazi Nazrul Islam of Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh, re-elected secretary general of Saarc Diploma Engineers Forum (SDEF) for the term 2009-10, says a press release.

Besides, the newly elected president of Institute of Diploma Engineers, Bangladesh MR Khairul Uman was elected co-chairman of the body.

They were elected at the eighth meeting of the body held in New Delhi, India on November 22-25.

Representatives from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Maldives, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Nepal along with the host country attended the meeting and fourth conference of the body.

Chinese milk tested melamine positive

FROM PAGE 1 samples contain melamine.

Later, the government sent samples to the labs in Bangkok and the local institutions on October 21.

On Sunday, the 12-member committee debated on the test results for hours and finally decided to announce the results through a joint press conference yesterday.

Health and Food Adviser Dr AMM Shawkat Ali in the press conference said each kilogram of Yashili-1 milk contained 67.33mg of melamine, Yashili-2 0.2mg and Sweet Baby-2 0.28mg.

Asked about Atomic Energy Commission's report, Shawkat Ali told The Daily Star the commission's laboratory has some limitations. "It's good for detecting pesticides and radiation levels, but not melamine," he said.

Asked then why the government sent samples to BAEC, he said: "This is a question. I would have advised for not sending samples to

the commission. The Dhaka University laboratory also has similar limitations."

He declined to say what the BAEC finds were.

Chief Scientific Officer of Atomic Energy Commission Dr Didarul Alam Chowdhury told The Daily Star, "I cannot say anything about our findings."

Prof Dr Nilufar Nahar of Dhaka University's chemistry department said: "Our report is correct and I still advise all not to feed their children powdered milk."

She claimed the renowned brands on the market source their milk from China.

Earlier, tests by the chemistry department found melamine in eight brands, but private laboratory Plasma Plus and BSTI found the toxic material only in Yashili-1 that created confusion.

"The test results of the Bangkok laboratory conforms to the results of three laboratories in Dhaka -- BSTI, BCSIR and of Plasma Plus," Commerce Adviser Dr Hossain

Zillur Rahman told the press conference.

Asked if the government is rejecting the test results of Dhaka University and BAEC, he said the government accepted the test methods of the Bangkok lab, BCSIR and Plasma Plus. The BAEC and Dhaka University laboratories are not capable of "simultaneous detection" of melamine, he added.

False presence of melamine may be observed because of differences in methodology, Zillur noted.

Health Adviser Shawkat Ali said authorities of Australia, New Zealand and Denmark met the government and showed documentary evidence that powdered milk exported from these countries are not laced with melamine.

These products are tested in their own countries and even by the European food safety body before export, Ali said.

Diploma and Red Cow brands are imported from Australia, Danu Full Cream from Denmark and Nido Fortified Instant and Anlene

from New Zealand.

Asked about what will happen to the ban on sales of the brands not found to be containing melamine, Shawkat Ali said the government will inform the court about the test results and will act according to the court's order.

About the tolerable level of melamine in powdered milk, he said the government has contacted the World Health Organization (WHO), which said the US Food and Drug Administration fixes the tolerable level according to the weight of individuals.

The work of fixing a common tolerable level in powdered milk is under process, he said, adding: "We are in favour of zero melamine in baby formulas."

The government is now strict about the traders who import powdered milk in bulk and packs. "We've already issued a show-cause notice to a brand called 'Fresh Milk'," Shawkat Ali said.

Dairy delicacies stir up toxic fear

FROM PAGE 16 to form mobile courts in 2006 that conducted several hygiene drives across the country.

But this time the government's role during the ongoing melamine controversy is not satisfactory to many.

The newspaper reports led the government agencies to test samples of milk powder, seize and destroy some specific brands of formula milk, but the consumers have yet to see any action regarding dairy products.

Following the media reports on the presence of melamine in milk powder, this correspondent looked into production of some dairy items and found similar dirty situation there.

Earlier, the Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) conducted a survey in February 2006 and found that almost 100 percent of the examined samples of sweetmeats and curd were adulterated.

DCC food and sanitation officers say those mouthwatering sweetmeats are not only adulterated, most of those are made in a filthy environment.

Though the mobile courts conducted several drives, fined and realised charges, and jailed some owners and workers, the government could not find any

mechanism to improve quality of those products.

Things remain almost the same, say officials who were engaged in hygiene drives.

The people involved in producing dairy products say almost all those products in the country are made with cheap and low standard milk powder. Milk powder of different brands costs Tk 550 per kilogram, whereas the non-brand cheap milk powder costs Tk 300 per kg.

Speaking anonymously, an experienced confectioner says if someone wants to produce genuine sweetmeats, it would be very expensive. From 40 litres of milk only six kilograms of chhana or curdled milk, main ingredient for sweetmeats, is made, he adds.

After mixing four kg sugar with one kg chhana, only four kilograms of original sweetmeats are found with one kg liquid sugar remaining.

So, from 40 litres of milk one can produce around 24 kilograms of original sweetmeats, the confectioner observes.

If fresh milk is Tk 60 per litre and sugar Tk 36 per kg, only production cost of one kg original sweetmeats would be at least Tk 164 without transportation, advertisement and shop rent, workers' salary and

packaging costs and taxes.

The situation is same in case of ice-cream, chocolate, cheese, ghee, yoghurt and other dairy products, the confectioner says, adding, "Almost all the dairy producers adulterate their products."

Some experienced confectioners say most sweetmeats are made with adulterated chhana, saccharin, flour and textile dye. Traders also use soybean and vegetable oil instead of milk fat.

DCC officials say there are around 1,000 confection shops in the capital selling thousands of kilograms of dairy products every day. But the few dairy farms in and around the city produce much less quantity of raw milk, they add.

"So most of the dairy products are made with cheap milk powder. The others are made of adulterated artificial formalin-mixed liquid milk," said a government official who conducted several drives.

Confectioners say a huge portion of milk and chhana comes to the city from Barisal, Chandpur, Sirajganj, Bogra, Munshiganj and Shariatpur. During a sudden inspection, it was seen those are arriving in unclean pots wrapped by dirty cloths on deck of launches and roof of buses.

They say first the chhana traders liquefy low-standard milk powder and mix it with raw milk; then they put paste of ground rice into the milk and add sulphuric acid to turn the milk into chhana within minutes.

Later they use essence, artificial colours and sugar to make the sweetmeats. In most cases, the sweetmeats producers use toxic textile dye instead of food colours, although this may cause cancer and kidney damages if regularly ingested.

"If the industrial chemical melamine is added to textile dye and saccharine for food items, the health risk increases many times," said a health expert.

Some owners of high-end sweetmeats shops admitted that a section of traders make their confections with adulterated ingredients.

"Some traders obviously do it. But we make our sweetmeats and curds with fresh liquid milk," said a trader, who has many shops in the city and mobile courts fined their factory in Mirpura a couple of times.

According to the Pure Food Ordinance, 1959, at least 10 percent milk fat is mandatory in sweetmeats. But in most cases, the percentage of milk fat is not more than five percent, sources say.