

Re-fix Boro procurement rate at Tk 15 per kg

Organisations urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Different socio-political organisations yesterday expressed mixed reactions over the procurement price of Boro paddy at Tk 14 fixed by the government.

Some of them demanded steps to re-fix the price rate at Tk 15 per kilogram instead of Tk 14.

Jatiya Krishi Porjalochona Committee (national committee to review agriculture) hailed the government for fixing the procurement prices of per kg Boro paddy at Tk 14, while rice at Tk 22.

Convener of the committee Tozaffal Hossain Monju said the government initiative would protect the farmers much from making losses.

In a release, the committee said the government decision will inspire the farmers to move for bumper rice production next.

The committee, however, opined that it would be better if the government fixed the procurement price of per kg Boro paddy at Tk 15 instead of 14 as farmers mainly sell paddy.

Bangladesh Krishak Samity (Bangladesh Peasants Society) demanded the government increase procurement price of per kg Boro paddy at Tk 18. It also demanded to procure paddy directly from the farmers.

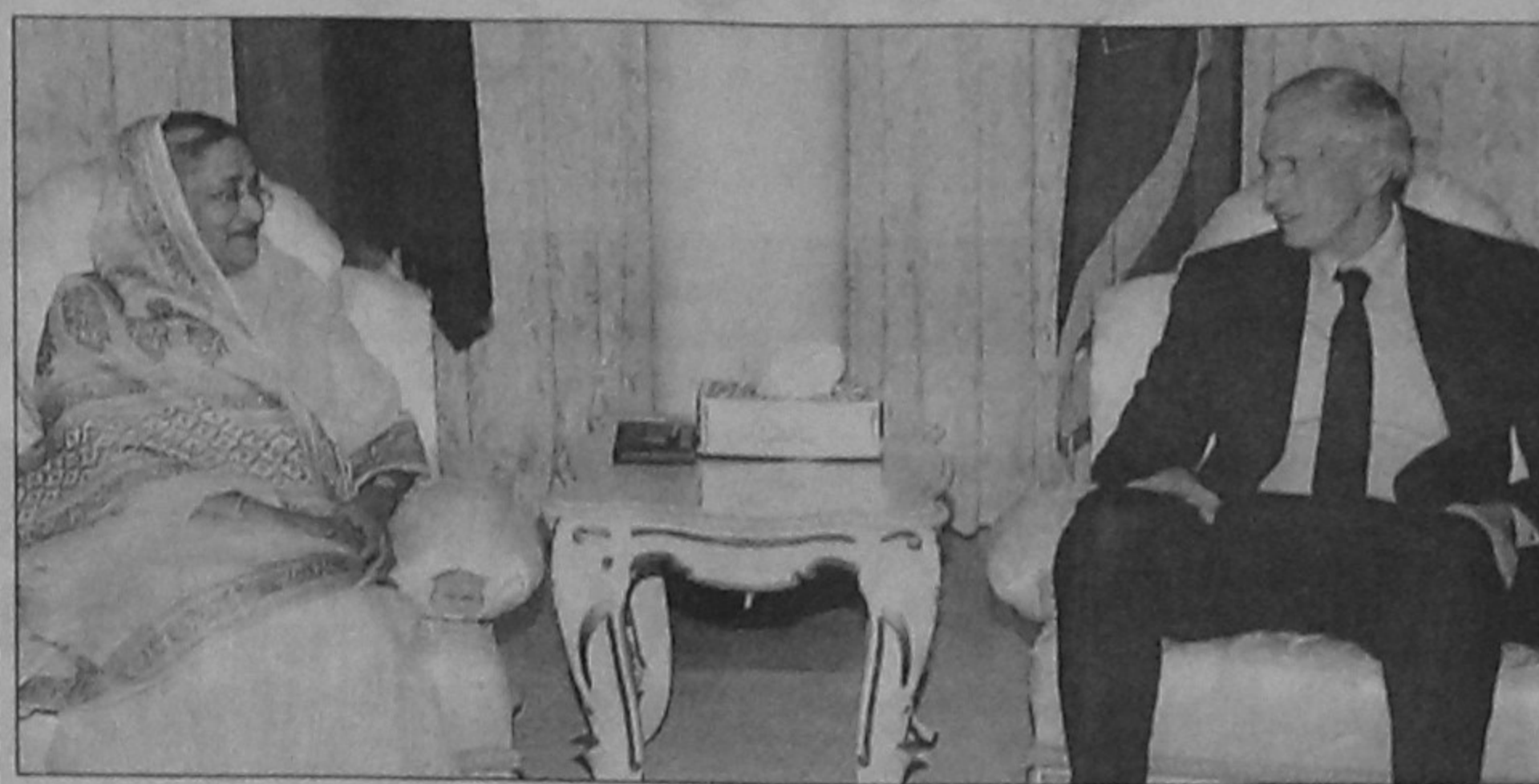
It said the government decision to procure per kg Boro paddy at Tk 14 would not much benefit farmers as the produc-

tion cost is much higher than the government fixed price.

Central council of 11-party, a coalition of left-leaning parties, also demanded the government re-fix the procurement price of per kg Boro at Tk 15 instead of Tk 14.

The 11-party leaders at a meeting at Worker's Party of Bangladesh (WPB) central office also expressed concern at the incidents of muggings and killings across the country and urged the government to take bold steps to this end immediately.

WPB General Secretary Bimal Biswas, acting president of Gonotontri Party Muhammad Afzal and Abu Hamed Sahabuddin of Shamyabadi Dal were present at the meeting.



US Ambassador James F Moriarty calls on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Jamuna in the city yesterday.

US envoy calls on PM

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador James F Moriarty called on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Jamuna in the city yesterday evening.

During the meeting, they discussed matters of mutual interests, including bilateral trade and commerce.

Both of them observed that there are scopes for increasing exports of Bangladeshi products to the US market.

Media urged to uphold positive image of women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a view exchange meeting yesterday urged the media to uphold positive image of women so that they are encouraged to move further ahead.

They alleged that the media still tends to cover news of women only when they are the victims of physical or sexual harassments.

The meeting on the 'Media coverage of women' was organised by Karmojibi Nari (KN), a non-government rights organisation, at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium.

The speakers urged the journalists to be careful in using words while reporting on issues related to women.

They alleged that with few exceptions, television dramas also usually portray women as emotional mothers, dependent wives, and decorative fiancées only.

Speaking at the meeting Nasimun Ara, president of Nari Sangbadik Kendra, said if the media continues to portray women in traditional roles as victims of violence or sex then I am afraid there is little chance that we are going to achieve gender equality.

Naadira Kiron, senior journalist of ATN Bangla, stressed the need for changing mindset towards women in the society.

KN Executive Director Rokya Rafique presented the keynote paper.

Karimuddin Vorosha's son shoots brother dead

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A son of former Jatiya Party lawmaker Karimuddin Vorosha was shot dead by his another son at one of their business offices at Bijoy Nagar in the city yesterday over a business dispute.

The police and family members said Kabirul Islam opened fire on his younger brother Khairul Islam Vorosha at their 'New Age Tobacco' office on the sixth floor of Ali's Centre around 3:00pm.

Both Kabirul and Khairul are the sons of Karimuddin's second wife.

Injured Khairul, who was the managing director of New Age Tobacco, was rushed to nearby Islami Bank Central Hospital at Kakrail and later shifted to Square Hospital where the doctors declared him dead.

Hospital sources said he received two bullets in his chest.

Employees of the New Age Tobacco said they chased Kabirul after he opened fire, but he managed to escape.

An employee, seeking anonymity, told The Daily Star that Kabirul all on a sudden entered the room of Khairul and asked an employee who was talking to Khairul to leave the room.

He said the employees also heard the two brothers exchanging hot words, followed by three gunshots.

Kabirul also has a room at the same office, but he did not attend the office regularly, the employees said.

Karimuddin Vorosha, an industrialist, told reporters that Khairul was killed over business-related feud between the two brothers.

Imran Hossain, brother of Khairul's wife, told The Daily Star that Kabirul was a drug addict and he took money from the office very often, which led to the feud between the two brothers.

Jute minister hospitalised

UNB, Dhaka

Jute Minister Abdul Latif Siddiqui was admitted to LabAid Hospital in the city after he fell sick yesterday morning.

Siddiqui is being treated under the supervision of Dr Matiur Rahman, Dr AKM Sohrabuzzaman and Dr Nazir Ahmed Chowdhury, said a press release.

The minister was suffering from SVT, a rapid rhythm of heart, the release said, adding that "He is now in good condition."

Doctors advised him to take rest for a few days.

EC may amend delimitation laws of constituencies

UNB, Dhaka

The Election Commission may amend the delimitation laws of the parliamentary constituencies for striking a balance between the parliament seats in rural and urban areas in terms of population in the wake of rural-to-urban migration.

Talking to reporters, Chief Election Commissioner Dr ATM Shamsul Huda yesterday said the population in parliamentary constituencies in rural areas has been on a gradual decrease while the numbers of people in the city areas are on the rise. The present delimitation law was made considering the proportion of population of a certain area and hence a lack of balance was created through the demographic changes.

"In such a way the parliamentary seats between rural and urban areas are being

imbalanced. So it's necessary to make the delimitation laws time-befitting," he said, adding that the commission raised this matter during their meeting with the prime minister.

The CEC informed that the commission would agree to give suggestions if the government wants to change the delimitation laws for the parliamentary constituencies.

About permanent constitution of political parties, he said the commission would actively consider providing more time to the political parties for submitting their permanent constitutions if the parties applied for time extension to complete their tasks.

"Much time of two major political parties was wasted due to the BDR mutiny and so it would be rational to give them some more time to submit their permanent constitutions," he

told reporters at the EC secretariat in the afternoon.

Besides, the CEC said the commission plans not to coerce the political parties into submitting the party constitutions in a hurry as the commission sees it has enough time at this moment. "Now there is enough time in our hands and so we should not exert pressure on political parties in this regard."

About updating voter list, he hoped that the updating task of digital voter list with photographs might start from the last week of May or the first of June and the commission is going to hold workshops at the six divisional headquarters in this regard.

After the workshops, the updating task will begin across the country based on unions, one after another, he said, adding that 7-10 days would be given to collect information for updating the voter list.

BDR DG visits 2 sectors, meets BSF officials

STAR REPORT

Director General (DG) of Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam yesterday visited two sectors in Jessore and Khulna.

He also held a meeting with the chief of South Bengal zone of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) at Benapole border.

During the visits, Maj Gen Mainul asked the border guards to come forward to help legal procedure in the mutiny case by disclosing the truths.

Talking to The Daily Star, the DG said he visited Jessore and Khulna sectors of BDR including Benapole port. At Benapole port, he met with the chief of South Bengal zone of BSF Indian police officials also met with him.

Our Staff Correspondent from Khulna adds: Maj Gen Mainul said work on rebuilding the BDR is going on to make it more effective than before.

"We are trying to collect information to detect the real guilty and save the innocent," the BDR chief said, adding, "The name of BDR and the uniform of its troops would also be changed in course of time as part of the proposed reforms."

A Correspondent from Jessore reports: During the Benapole visit, the BDR DG met with a six-member team of BSF.

They discussed present condition of smuggling, trafficking of women and children and also the security of the border area.

The BSF delegation included IG Shoris Gohan, IG of Kolkata police Mabal Dhor and DIG S S Tumar.

Obituary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Lanka, passed away at a Dhanmondi clinic in the city in the early hours of yesterday at the age of 74, says a press release.

He left behind his wife, a brother, a sister and a host of relatives and admirers to mourn his death.

His kulkhwani will be held on Thursday after Asr prayers at House #76, Road #5, Block #F, Banani.

Advocate Abdul Latif

UNB, Dhaka

Advocate Abdul Latif, former president of Madaripur district unit of Awami League and former public prosecutor, passed away due to old-age complications at Labaid Hospital in the city on Sunday night at the age of 81.

Death anniversary METRO DESK

Today is the 29th death anniversary of Nurul Islam Shams, first ever chief national commissioner of Bangladesh Scouts and former joint secretary of Bangladesh government, says a press release.

Bangladesh Scouts will organise a milad mahfil and a discussion at its national headquarters at Kakrail in the city at 5:00pm.



Writer Selina Hossain speaks at the launching ceremony of a report on the use of harmful drugs by sex workers at Dhaka Reporters' Unity auditorium in the city yesterday.

90pc sex workers addicted to steroids: Study

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The first-ever study on steroid intake among prostitutes has found that almost 90 percent of sex workers aged between 15 and 35 are addicted to hazardous steroid medicines that may eventually lead to death.

The survey, conducted in two brothels in Madaripur and Doulatdia, also found that most prostitutes, especially in their young age, are abused and forced to take steroids to appear matured, healthy and attractive to clients.

These are the same steroid drugs that veterinary doctors recommend dairy farmers who want to make their cows plump and meatier. The drugs are extremely addictive and may result in severe skin, liver-related diseases and even cancer, it added.

The survey report titled 'Drishsher Ontorale' jointly published by ActionAid Bangladesh and Ulka Nari Sangha was launched at a ceremony at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU) in the city yesterday.

Speakers at the programme described the findings as shocking, saying that the act of making sex workers take steroids is like making a cow flabby and fleshy for better sale prices.

"I am stunned and speechless to see how a human beings being treated like a dairy animal; how they are given steroids to make them plump like cows," said Selina Parveen, litterateur and writer who was the chief guest in the event.

"No one has the right to destroy another life like this. This is the worst violation of human rights," she added.

The report said since most sex workers are recruited at a very young age, they are forced to take steroid drugs such as oradexson (dexamethason group). This makes them

appear older and matured and helps the brothels to avoid police hassle.

The belief that chubbier sex workers generate more income along with the fact that steroid drugs offer rapid results than nutritious foods turn many prostitutes into taking these drugs, it noted.

"A girl is usually abused, starved and molested if she refuses to take the medicine. And once she becomes addicted to the drug, she cannot leave it," said Md Kamal Hossain, national star project coordinator of rights and social justice sector of ActionAid.

"When someone tries to leave the drug, she goes through a withdrawal symptom where her natural body functions are severely hindered and would not become normal until drug intake is resumed," he said.

"Creating awareness would not be enough in the situation.

The distribution channel of these drugs should be destroyed as well," he added.

The report mentioned that these drugs are readily available in the brothels and local quacks at really low prices.

"Some of these drugs cannot be even categorised as drugs. Medical experts use them in emergency and rare occasions, and they are by no means should be used by general people for general use," said Dr Zahed Md Masud, executive director of AITAM Welfare Organisation.

Prof HKS Arefin of Dhaka University, Sex Worker Network of Bangladesh President Joya Sikder and representatives from Ulka Nari Sangha and other organisations also spoke.

ActionAid Bangladesh also launched a campaign titled 'Nobojibon' to create awareness among sex workers of the harmful effects of drugs.

DHAKA TODAY Seminar, Talk, Seed fair, Town hall meeting

Move to file 40 sedition cases

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districts in connection with the mutinies at different BDR units. Earlier on Sunday, the government approved of filing sedition cases against the BDR mutineers.

Sources in the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) said a CID team picked up the three from their 21/4 Birbal Kachhra house near the Bay Tannery at Hazaribagh around 8:00pm on Sunday after one of the security guards of the tannery told the National Committee, formed by the government to probe the incident, about their involvement.

Later, a Dhaka court placed Suriya on a two-day remand while her sons Sumon and Jewel on a three-day remand each after they were produced before the court yesterday afternoon with a prayer for five days remand for each.

The same court yesterday also placed 25 suspected BDR mutineers and a civilian on a

five-day remand each in the mutiny case.

The court also ordered to send five other BDR jawans to jail after they were placed before the court on completion of their different terms of remand.

Meanwhile, five more BDR jawans yesterday made their statements under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code confessing to their involvement in the BDR carnage.

They are sepoy Siddik Alam, Mohsin Ali, Abdur Rashid, Shamim Al Mamun and Sumon Mian.

With yesterday's statements of five BDR men, a total of 50 BDR jawans have so far made confessional statements.

Besides, the CID interrogated 40 suspected mutineers inside the Pilkhana yesterday about their roles during the BDR carnage.

SEDITION CASES

After getting the approval from the government, police headquarters sent papers to the

police stations concerned to file 40 sedition cases.

Commerce Minister Lt Col (ret'd) Faruk Khan told The Daily Star that the government approved it at a meeting on April 26.

Sources said around 1,000 BDR members from 40 sectors and battalions would be made accused in the cases.

BDR Director General (DG) Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam told The Daily Star, "The case would be filed by the government."

According to sources, the BDR authorities provided information and lists of the BDR units where the BDR men took part in the mutinies.

Following the information and lists, the police headquarters sent a letter to the home ministry seeking approval to file sedition cases. The home ministry has already given permission in this regard.

ARREST OF SURIYA

Sources in the CID said Suriya Begum organised a proces-

sion in Hazaribagh area in favour of BDR rebels on February 25 while her two sons provided fleeing BDR jawans with cloths.

An employee of a shop near Suriya's house wishing anonymity said Suriya used to organise BNP processions in the areas but he could not say whether she organised any procession during the BDR mutiny.

Suriya is the wife of late Abdus Salam, a retired BDR Sepoy. Locals could not say immediately which post Suriya holds in the Ward unit, but said she contested for the post of councillor as a BNP-backed candidate in the last Dhaka City Corporation election.

With the latest arrest, 19 civilians have so far been arrested in connection with the BDR mutiny case. The arrested persons include ward Awami League leader Torab Ali.

Missing grenades cause for concern

FROM PAGE 1

of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab), told The Daily Star, "We still don't know the destinations of the missing weapons. If terrorists can lay their hands on the missing grenades that might become very dangerous, as they tend to use grenades for assassinations."

"However we still don't know how many grenades are missing from Pilkhana," he added.

An assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of the criminal investigation department, who is close to the investigation, said during interrogation, a number of captured mutineers admitted that they destroyed the ledgers of weapons in an effort to make it difficult for investigators to estimate the amount of looted weapons.

Lt Gen (ret'd) M Atiqur Rahman said, "When I was the DG of BDR from December 15, 1977 to June 30, 1982, the army used to supply the required arms, ammunition and explosives to BDR with the approval of the home ministry. So it's possible to get back-up information from both sources."

"The missing weapons could reach the hands of terrorists and other criminals, and could even be smuggled into neighbouring countries' sepa-

ratists like the United Liberation Front of Assam," said Atiqur Rahman, adding, "The fugitive BDR men with weapons are trained persons. I'm afraid it will become very dangerous if they start using those."

But Commerce Minister Lt Col (ret'd) Faruk Khan seemed to somewhat differ with the apprehension, saying, most of the missing weapons are small firearms, which might cause some social nuisances, but not any national security threat.

He, however, declined to give out any detail about the missing ammunition and explosives and said, "We'll give out the detail after the next meeting of the investigation committee."

The minister said, "It's not difficult to estimate the missing arms, ammunition, and explosives, as there are back-ups of the ledgers that were in Pilkhana."

According to the BDR sources, apart from looking for back-up information, they are also checking all documents regarding the arms and ammunition purchased in the past.

Talking to The Daily Star, the incumbent BDR DG, Maj Gen Md Mainul Islam, said, "It's easy to count the missing firearms, but regarding the ammunition we don't how many were used during the mutiny, and how

many were taken out from Pilkhana by the fleeing mutineers."

He also urged the people of the country to come forward with information for arrest of the fugitive BDR men, and for recovering the missing weapons, saying, "We've already supplied the details about the fugitives to all intelligence and law-enforcing agencies."

Senior ASP Abdul Kahar Akand of CID, who is the investigation officer (IO) of the BDR mutiny case, said, "We're not sure whether the missing weapons have already reached the hands of terrorists and other criminals."

He however added that it does not mean that all the missing weapons have already reached the hands of criminals, as some of those are still being found abandoned at different places in and out of Pilkhana.

Replying to a question, he said they have been interrogating arrested BDR jawans about the looted weapons.

Azim Ahmed, director of the intelligence wing of Rab, told The Daily Star, "We've been working to detect the destinations of the missing weapons." Lt Gen (ret'd) M Atiqur Rahman said once looted weapons go underground, those tend to change hands.