

Fertiliser import

FROM PAGE 1
import a record 16.5 lakh metric tons (MT) of chemical fertiliser in FY 2009-'10 to supplement the uncertain domestic production, for meeting the 29.5 lakh MT requirement officially projected for the fiscal year.

Industry sources however feared that the import target might still appear inadequate if BCIC factories continue to suffer production losses owing to the persistent gas crisis.

One BCIC official said the corporation is not being able to set a production target for the current fiscal, as nobody knows whether the shut factories will be able to resume production anytime soon.

Talking to The Daily Star, Agriculture Minister Matia Chowdhury acknowledged the need for increased urea import, and blamed the previous government's inertia in exploring new gas fields, for the current gas crisis.

She said, "We're stuck with limited options -- obviously, we have to give priority to power generation and that's why some of the fertiliser factories have to be kept out of operation."

Matia however expressed firm resolve to meet farmers'

requirements of fertiliser, no matter what. "We need to spend more to import fertilisers," she said.

"If we can save money by not importing food -- growing enough locally, I don't see much problem in spending a little more for importing fertilisers," she argued.

In last year's (FY 2008-'09) budget Tk 4,285 crore was allocated as subsidy for fertilisers and other agricultural inputs, but due to abnormal price hikes of urea and non-urea fertilisers on the international market, the amount was later raised to Tk 5,785 crore.

Early this year, the prices came down by a third on the international market, and the finance minister allocated Tk 3,600 crore as subsidy for fertilisers for the current fiscal year.

The BCIC sources said the government will procure up to five lakh MT of urea from Karnaphuli Fertiliser Company Ltd (Kafco) at an international market price of \$297 per metric ton, which is three times higher than what it would pay for procuring the fertiliser from state-run factories. Besides, 11.5 lakh MT more will be imported from different countries at international prices as well.

Imams

FROM PAGE 1
"If anyone has the symptoms of swine flu infection, they will receive treatment without tests," he said, adding treatment may start at home with the intake of the antiviral drug Oseltamivir without visiting a doctor.

Patients of cancer, asthma, diabetes and expecting women in cases of swine flu symptoms must visit the doctors, the minister said. He claims "preparations at the hospitals are enough" to handle the swine flu patients.

At least 5,000 health workers across the country have already been trained to care for the swine flu patients. So the people who live in the remote areas will not be deprived of treatment, the minister observed.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid, Information Minister Abul Kalam Azad, State Minister for Religious Affairs Md Shahjahan Miah and State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Md Motaah Hossain were present at the meeting.

Meanwhile, sufferings of the patients at different city hospitals remain unchanged, according to insiders. Most of the hospitals, which declared to provide swine flu treatment, did not give proper counselling or treatment to the infected patients.

Most of the hospitals' employees are still referring the patients to the IEDCR, saying they would not admit them without positive test results. But the government has meanwhile stopped conducting further lab tests.

The health minister said the ministries are working to make aware the people about swine flu and some 5,000 physicians have been provided training in this regard.

Moreover, doctors and health centres in Dhaka and at district and upazila levels have been instructed to give the patients proper advice on the virus.

"The situation has not yet worsened that much to close the educational institutions," said Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid.

"The educational institutions are being closed on account of the month of Ramadan. The swine flu panic has no relation with the vacation," he added. He suggested informing the health or education ministry if any student is suspected to have been carrying the virus.

Country Representative of WHO Duangvadee Sungkhobol and IEDCR Director Prof Mahmudur Rahman, among others, were present at the meeting.

Matin

FROM PAGE 1
Judge KM Imrul Kayes asked the defendants appear before the court on October 14 with their written statements.

In his plaint, Shahadat, proprietor of M/S Everest Enterprise, alleged that the CPA had floated a tender on May 25 last year for appointment of terminal operator for integrated operation of Chittagong Container Terminal (CCT) and CCT extension area. In response to the tender, he along with 10 others submitted bids.

The CPA then formed a seven-member Tender Evaluation Committee (TEC) for scrutinising and evaluating the documents submitted by the bidders. The TEC scrutinised the documents and found that five bids were substantially responsive and six were non-responsive.

The plaintiff claimed that the TEC said Everest Enterprise was the lowest bidder. But instead of awarding the contract to his firm, the last caretaker government cancelled the tender on November 20 last year without giving any 'cogent reasons'.

Shahadat blamed the then shipping adviser Matin for cancellation of the tender. The 'mala fide' intention of the defendants caused a financial loss of Tk 25 crore to him, he said.

Meantime, the parliamentary standing committee on shipping ministry at a meeting on May 27 this year discussed the issue and formed a House sub-committee to examine the extent of loss caused to the public exchequer by not awarding the contract to the lowest bidder 'Everest Enterprise', the plaintiff said.

The House sub-committee investigated the matter and submitted its report containing a clear and unambiguous finding that the defendants in collusion with others had cancelled the tender causing a loss of Tk 8,05,84,096 to the public exchequer, Shahadat added.

Foreign militants

FROM PAGE 1
The detained Indian militant also said that he built a safe-house in Habiganj in 2002 to shelter fugitive terrorists, and recruit and train Bangladeshis to take part in terrorist attacks in Kashmir, India, Pakistan.

Obaidullah built the safe-shelter under the cover of a kindergarten named 'Noor Shah Islami Kindergarten' in Habiganj's Shayestaganj upazila.

One of LeT's operations chiefs in Bangladesh, Faisal alias Khurram Khaiyam alias Abdullah, supplied Tk 18,000 in two lots to Obaidullah to construct the house.

Intelligence sources said, however, that Obaidullah has not revealed all the details about his operations in Bangladesh since his arrival in 1995.

In his statement, Obaidullah said several other militants in Bangladesh visited his safe-house, including Moulana Mohiuddin, who he knew from the Deoband madrasa, and Harkat-ul Jihad, Bangladesh leader Mufti Abdur Rouf.

His fellow Indian LeT member Habibullah alias Mansur and Jamal, visited Srimangal

twice in 2002 to rent a house for a temporary safe-home.

Later, the then ARCF chief Asif Reza ordered Habibullah and Jamal to open a training camp for Bangladeshis recruits that would also serve as a safe shelter for Pakistani and Indian mujahideens, according to Obaidullah's statement.

Obaidullah decided against opening the training camp because of security risks.

In 2005, Obaidullah met ARCF chief Amir Reza, Asif Reza's brother, at Khurram's house near the Noorani mosque in Dhaka's Goran area. There, Amir asked Obaidullah to buy a permanent safe house and provide jihadi training to Bangladeshis recruits.

Obaidullah claims they insisted on giving him the responsibility for the camp despite his reluctance.

At the end of 2008, Khurram called him from Pakistan to press him to work harder for the organisation as demanded by his senior commanders. Khurram also told Obaidullah that he may return to Bangladesh after he (Khurram) discusses the move with "ISI and LeT high-ups."

BDR trial

FROM PAGE 1
Section 2 of the Bangladesh Army Act 1952 defines who are subject to the act and "BDR personnel do not fall within the definition", Kamal told the Supreme Court.

Barrister Amir said a combined law should be enacted to try the BDR mutineers as different offences including killing, looting and torture took place during the February 25-26 carnage at the Pilkhana headquarters.

The two were delivering their submissions as amici curiae (friends of court) before the 11-member full bench of the Appellate Division, headed by Chief Justice MM Ruhul Amin, during the hearing on the presidential reference on the mode of trial of the accused BDR personnel.

Earlier on August 25, advocate TH Khan also said in his submission that the offences committed during the BDR mutiny cannot be tried under the military law as the BDR is not a disciplined force like the army.

Two other amici curiae--barrister Rafique-Ul Huq and advocate Khandaker Mahbubuddin Ahmed--said on August 26 that the accused BDR personnel can be brought to trial under the military law by issuing separate notifications.

In a written statement submitted to the apex court yesterday, Dr Kamal said under section 5 of the army act, through a notification its effect can be extended to members of a disciplined force raised and maintained by the government. "But under the existing law, such a notification cannot have retrospective effect," he said.

"The problem, therefore, has to be squarely faced by

thorough investigation to identify those responsible, and by effective prosecution to bring them to justice, for which the responsibility is that of the Executive Branch of the State," Kamal's statement said.

During his submission, barrister Amir also said the offences committed during the BDR carnage can be tried under the International Crimes (Tribunal) Act 1973.

"If the BDR incidents are tried under court martial, that will be judicial killing in the name of trial like the trial of the Ziaur Rahman murder case," he said.

The court adjourned the hearing on the reference until 10:00am today.

Sale of sugar

FROM PAGE 16
government and private sector to control it. As a result, the sugar is not being sold at the price fixed by the government.

Sugar is now being sold at Tk 48-50 per kilogram though the commerce ministry fixed its price at Tk 39 at the mill gate earlier so that the retail price remains fair during the Ramadan.

After the meeting, ASM Mohiuddin Monem, deputy managing director of Abdul Monem Limited, said every refinery would sell five tonnes of sugar every day to the 200 TCB appointed dealers at Tk 39 per kg.

He said the highest retail price of sugar may not cross Tk 42 per kg if its adequate supply both from the government and private sector is ensured.

However, he said such sales by the private sector would continue only during the Ramadan.

Maddhapara

FROM PAGE 16
marketing manager of the mine Mahbubur Alam was injured.

The miners issued an ultimatum to the authorities to withdraw the sacking order yesterday or else they would go for an indefinite strike from today.

Sources said the miners began their agitation yesterday morning hearing about the sacking of the 10 miners who were members of the Sramik Karmachari Union of the mine.

The miners called for the strike instantly and confined the officials and staff to the administrative building by placing rocks in front of the building, sources said.

Monimul Haque Momin, president of Sramik Karmachari Union, was among the 10 sacked workers. He told a meeting held at the mine that they would go for tougher movements if the workers are not reinstated to their jobs.

The miners alleged that corruption and nepotism of mine officials mar production and they urged the government to form a monitoring committee to protect the mine from corruption.

Mine sources said outsourcing company Blue Star employed 282 miners there. Of them, 254 formed a trade union violating their employment contracts.

They also said the mine authorities filed a general diary on August 20 as the miners under the banner of their trade union threatened dire consequences after the authorities tried to suspend trade union activities.

Sirajul Islam, general manager (admin and finance), said Petrobangla, the parent organisation of the mine, would decide whether the miners would be reinstated to their jobs.

Criminal hurt in 'shootout' with Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A criminal sustained bullet injury in a 'shootout' with Rapid Action Battalion in the city's Motijheel yesterday.

Small Hossain Lal alias Rocket Lal, 34, of Jatrabari, is an accomplice of "Foreign" Kuddus, one of the top listed criminals in Motijheel area.

When a patrol team of Rab-3 moved to arrest a gang of three to four criminals in front of Motijheel Ideal School and College, the criminals opened fire on them. As the Rab personnel retaliated, a gunfight ensued.

Lalu was found lying at the spot bullet-hit in his left leg after the shootout.

He was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Police arrested him but his accomplices managed to flee.

A revolver and three bullets were recovered from the spot.

Rab sources said Lal confessed his involvement in killing trader Anwar at the capital's Shapla Chattar on September 27, 2008.

Lalu was also involved in extortion and an accused in several cases including arms cases with Motijheel and Sabujbagh police stations.

2 abducted in Rangamati

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

Two activists of United Peoples Democratic Front (UPDF) were allegedly abducted yesterday.

In a press release, UPDF claimed that members of Parbatya Chattagram Jana Sanghati Samity (PCJSS) abducted Shukra Sen Chakma, 29, of Jurachari, and Ranjan Chakma, 28, of Barkal, from Rangamati Reserve Bazaar.

There has been a longstanding rivalry between the two organisations over the CHT peace accord. PCJSS supports the agreement while UPDF opposes it.

Bodishattya Chakma, secretary of PCJSS, Rangamati, however, rejected the allegation.

"The members of UPDF are responsible for such incident," he added.

ASI of Kotwali police station Afriza Begum said none filed any case in this connection.

S Asian water

FROM PAGE 16
first day. This indicates that Indian delegation did not want to sign any declaration," said an official present at the meeting.

Though China is a part of Hindu Kush-Himalayas region and it has to play a key role in management of the region, it did not join the conference as observer, said the official seeking anonymity.

The 10 visions for addressing the climate change say the regional players must come together to generate an improved database for climate change responses and adaptation at all levels.

The visions also include the countries of south Asia to address the challenges of climate change through collaborative actions at enhanced capacity regarding data collection, and sharing and research on impact of climate change through SAARC and other organisations.

It also says that eco-friendly technologies should be made available with a view to promoting green development.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, chief of the all-party parliamentary group on climate change, Bangladesh chaired a session in the morning of the last day of the conference. Lawmaker Saber Hossain and the youngest lawmaker of Bangladesh Zunaid Ahmed Palak delivered their speech as panel discussants of south Asian parliamentarians group.

Environment Minister of Nepal Thakur Prasad Sharma chaired the closing session of the conference in the afternoon.

The conference was attended by Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Kyrgyz Republic was present as observer.

Kyrgyz Republic will hold a global ministerial conference of the mountain countries in 2010 to discuss on issues of cooperation in the post-Copenhagen period.

London wants

FROM PAGE 16
we see Bangladesh as a key partner among the LDCs (least developed countries)," he said, stressing the need for adaptation and mitigation programmes.

"We cannot hope to eliminate poverty in South Asia without facing this global climate challenge, neither can we hope to achieve a global climate deal without facing this region's development challenges," Miliband went on adding that they are learning about the impacts of global climate change on 700 million people living below the Himalayas, referred as 'the water tower of South Asia' by him.

The decisions to be made in Copenhagen will be some of the most important the world will take for decades, and will also be vital for future prosperity of Bangladesh and the region, said UK International Development Minister Douglas Alexander.

Asked what will be the fallout if the Copenhagen negotiations fail, he said, "Let us be optimistic and wish for a success." The task however is not very easy, he noted.

As developed countries have the major contribution to carbon emission, they must agree to cut it down, but developing countries should also participate in the process, as 8

billion of the 9 billion world population will be in the developing countries by 2050, Douglas said.

On Bangladesh's understanding about the impacts of climate change, the ministers said they are impressed by the depth of the government's understanding of the matter and its seriousness about it.

On Bangladesh's political stability, Douglas said, "We want a sustainable democracy in Bangladesh and encourage all citizens and all parties to engage in constructive politics of democracy, and an effective parliament with the opposition participating within it."

On swine flu outbreak, he said, the UK is worried not only about swine flu, but also about other communicable diseases.

"The UK is already one of the largest donors to help improve health delivery services and availability of drugs, and vaccines in Bangladesh," he said.

Douglas noted that the UK is providing a new assistance of 250,000 pounds to ICDDR, B to enable it to assist the government in tackling the swine flu outbreak over the next six months.

British High Commissioner Stephen Evans and DFID chief Chris Austin were also present at the briefing.

No respite

FROM PAGE 1
problems came up for discussion at the meeting.

"As long-term strategies, we recommended relocating the shopping malls outside the capital and actions against unplanned builders," added Shafiga, who also heads the 12-member high-powered committee to coordinate the measures to curb traffic jam.

To ease the commuters' plight during Ramadan, Dhaka Metropolitan Police and BRTA have been carrying out special drives against illegal parking, unfit vehicles and violation of traffic rules.

But their efforts did not yet see much result as their poorly equipped officials keep struggling to cut the tailbacks.

Both DMP and Bangladesh Road Transport Authority say they don't have enough wreckers to drag the seized vehicles off the roads.

DMP Commissioner AKM Shahidul Haque told The Daily Star, "Over five lakh vehicles ply the city roads, whereas we have only five wreckers, three of which often get out of action."

Without more wreckers being added to the DMP fleet, he noted, it won't be possible to act effectively against illegal parking and breach of traffic

rules.

Besides, he cited shortage of manpower and other logistics as another key obstacle to immediate execution of the government orders to seize the vehicles of traffic offenders.

Despite the limitations, the commissioner added, they have already seized 2,600 motorised vehicles and over 4,000 rickshaws in the special drive that began on August 9.

BRTA Director (enforcement) Tapan Kumar Sarker, a member of the 12-member committee, spoke of similar problems. He said the condition of BRTA is even grimmer. It has no wrecker at all.

The two mobile courts it set up on August 4 have been working with a single wrecker hired from DMP.

Deputy Commissioner (Dhaka) Zillar Rahman, who has been leading 13 mobile courts since August 24, said he has yet to receive any written instructions about the PM's directives.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, a magistrate involved in the ongoing drive said they cannot seize vehicles for want of wreckers and also due to insufficient legal muscle.

Pak forces

FROM PAGE 16
The corpses, six of them beheaded, were dumped on the roadside, riverside and fields in different areas.

Pakistan's military claims to have cleared Swat of Islamist extremists in an offensive launched earlier this year after militants extended their grip into the northwest valley, terrorising residents with public beheadings and other violence.

Officials said a total of 251 people had been found dead in similar circumstances since July, and believed that the militants were killed by residents who feared a Taliban comeback.

"Among the 41 dead bodies, six were beheaded, almost all of them were militants," Atif-ur-Rehman, the top administrative official of Swat district, told AFP, adding that the rest had bullet wounds.

"According to my information they were militants and were killed by residents," Rehman said.

The United States has been urging Pakistan to fight the Taliban who operate mostly in lawless tribal areas near the border, which Washington sees as another front in the Afghan war.

Two militant commanders were among those killed in the raids in the Bara area of north-western Khyber region, a statement from Pakistan's paramilitary Frontier Corps said.

It said more than 35 insurgents were killed a death toll that could not be independently confirmed. The statement added 40 suspected militants were captured in the operation, which started at dawn and continued through the day.

The new fighting came days after another suicide bombing this one at the main

Khyber border crossing between Pakistan and Afghanistan killed 19 guards. The attack at the Torkham crossing was blamed on Taliban militants.

Pakistan's military has this year intensified its fight against the Taliban, who are believed to shelter al-Qaeda leaders in areas they control, where the government has only nominal control. The Taliban also help mount attacks against Western troops across the Afghan border.

The two suicide bombings in Swat and at Torkham follow militant vows to avenge the death last month of their leader, Baitullah Mehsud, in a US missile strike in South Waziristan and for the army operation in Swat, where the extremists had imposed their harsh interpretation of Islam on residents.

The reported surrender of 105 militants in Swat gives a boost to army efforts to pacify the region, where pockets of resistance remain and the atmosphere is still tense. After Sunday's suicide bombing at a police station that killed 17 cadets training in Swat's main town, the army said sweeps by security forces left at least 45 militants dead Monday.

Akbar said the Taliban fighters' surrender reflects their weakening hold in the valley as residents provide more intelligence to the military.

"There is a local uprising against the Taliban, that is why militants are surrendering," he said, adding the fighters would be tried in local courts. He urged other extremists to turn themselves in.

Human rights activists have accused security forces of executing captured militants and dumping their bodies, but the military denies it.

Patients confused

FROM PAGE 1
is no need now for any individual test. Rather than wasting time, the patients should be provided with symptomatic treatment and anti-viral drugs in cases of respiratory problems.

Health Minister AFM Ruhul Haque also said yesterday that patients suspected to have swine flu should get treatment immediately instead of waiting for confirmation of swine flu infection.

Speaking at a press briefing at the secretariat, the minister blamed the media for "cooking up" stories of sufferings of patients running from hospitals to hospitals.

The government has repeatedly said 15 public and private hospitals have been provided with special training to manage patients having swine flu and flu-like illness through setting up isolation wards and antiviral drugs.

But, during a visit to the DMCH yesterday, a signboard was seen at the hospital's isolation corner asking patients to contact the IEDCR. A nurse on duty told The Daily Star that they did not know about the IEDCR's decision to stop the testing facility.

Separate outdoor sections were found active at the Infectious Diseases Hospital, Suhrawardi Hospital, Dhaka Shishu Hospital and Miford Hospital. But many hospitals including Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University are yet to set up their isolation wards and separate corners at the outdoor section, which increases the risk of spreading the deadly disease at the hospitals.

The situation at BIRDEM is even worse. The information desk there is telling patients that the hospital does not provide treatment for swine flu although the hospital authorities said ward-112 has been turned into an isolation ward for patients with swine flu symptoms.

Biman

FROM PAGE 16
its inefficient management, poor marketing and a nexus between a section of Biman officials and a group of corrupt people, Biman insiders said.

Interference of successive political governments is also to blame for the sorry state of Biman, they observed.

"Biman achieved a net profit of Tk 5.91 crore between July 2007 and June 2008 and signs are positive in the current fiscal year," a Biman high official told The Daily Star.

Biman officials revealed the information on Biman making a profit at its first annual general meeting held Saturday.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd Air Marshal (ret'd) Jamal Uddin Ahmed presided over the annual general meeting.

"Biman incurred a loss of Tk 272.19 crore in 2006-07 fiscal year. It also incurred huge losses in 2005-06 and 2004-05," said a finance official of Biman.

Biman officials said it last made a profit, Tk 34 crore, in 2003-04 fiscal year.

In July 2007, Biman was transformed into a public limited company. About 1,856 employees and officials of the overstuffed Biman went into retirement under the voluntary retirement scheme of the last caretaker government.