

Farmers

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Aman in 15 bighas of land in Chiribandar. And he is selling a two-maund sack of paddy at Tk 1,100 at best as against Tk 1200/1300 last year.

Some other farmers echoed what he said about the market situation.

Asked about this, Food Minister Abdur Razzaque admitted that the situation is a bit tricky as government food godowns are already full with stocks both from imports and local procurements in the last Boro season.

Razzaque hinted that a concrete decision could be reached after analysing the rice market situation at the cabinet meeting today.

The government now has a stock of 1.5 million tonnes of food grains, the highest since January 2000.

Some sources however said had the government not gone for a food grains import spree in anticipation of a probable shortfall, it could have started Aman procurement.

In first five months of the current fiscal year, the country already imported nearly 0.9 million tonnes of food grains, and the government also locally procured over 0.8 million tonne of rice in the Boro season.

Razzaque said despite a huge off-take and distribution of food grains under various safety-net programmes in recent weeks, the granaries remain full.

Renowned agriculture economist Dr Mahabub Hossain, who follows developments in agriculture sector and rural economy, noted that the government's food import planning needed to be more dynamic so that late shipments from contracts signed months ago do not unnecessarily occupy the food godowns when all domestic rice seasons reaped good harvests this year.

Mahabub, executive director of Brac, explained that the government went for an import drive anticipating future stock deficit. But due to good harvests of both Boro and Aman rice, late consignments of imported food are not that needed.

He, however, said the current slide in rice price is mainly due to stock release by big farmers, who had stocked Boro for high price but were eventually forced to release the stock due to better Aman output.

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That BNP's only political agenda is to prevent the war crimes trial from taking place is now out in the open, said Ashraf, who is also general secretary of AL.

No matter how hard they try, the war criminals will not be able to protect themselves, not even by hiding behind BNP chief Khaleda Zia, he added.

He alleged that plots were afoot at home and abroad to thwart the trial, and millions of dollars had been spent to appoint lobbyists for the war criminals.

"Now the people must decide which side they are on -- the ones who want to try the war criminals or those who are out to stop the war crimes trial. There is nothing in between," he said.

Flanked by party leaders, Ashraf said the trial must be held on the soil of Bangladesh. "There is none in this world who can foil the trial."

He said since a new law had been promulgated splitting DCC into two, anyone can support or oppose it. "But what is this hartial for?"

The AL general secretary said Khaleda had enforced the hartial for three reasons -- to save her cantonment residence, her son Tarique from the money-laundering case and the war criminals.

People don't want the corrupt, criminals and money launderers as their leaders," he added.

Abul Aziz Pasha died in Zimbabwe in 2001.

Polls in 90 days

FROM PAGE 1

one, he added.

However, the final decision would be made after Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda returned from Thailand, Sohul said.

The EC will formally inform the government about its decision.

Election Commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakhawat Hossain was present at the meeting.

Although he did not make any comment, he was seen nodding in agreement as Sohul spoke.

On Sunday, Sakhawat Hossain told reporters that it would be "hard" for the EC to hold polls to the two city corporations in the capital within the tenure of the current commission.

The tenure of Shamsul Huda and Sohul Hussain will expire on February 5 next year. Sakhawat Hossain's will draw to a close on February 14.

At present, the commission is busy with preparations for the newly-formed Comilla City Corporation polls, which are due on January 5.

On November 29, parliament passed a bill, in a mere four minutes, slicing the DCC into two, paying no heed to criticism and protests from civil society and political parties, including the main opposition BNP.

The president assented to the bill on Thursday, thus giving it the effect of a law.

Protesting the passage of the bill, BNP yesterday enforced a dawn-to-dusk hartial in the capital.

Meanwhile, in line with the new law the government yesterday appointed two administrators to the Dhaka Uttar (north) City Corporation and Dhaka Dakkhin (south) City Corporation.

Khalilur Rahman, additional secretary of primary and mass education, was made administrator of DCC South, while Khorshed Alam Chowdhury, director general of Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, was appointed administrator of DCC North.

Their name plates were also affixed at Mayor Bhaban at Gulshan and Nagar Bhaban respectively. However, neither of them went to their new offices till

Hartial called

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Islamia as its associate.

By demanding a halt to the proceedings of the war crimes tribunal, the opposition party has at last lifted the lid on its intentions, he observed.

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5:00pm yesterday.

Talking to reporters, Khalilur Rahman said he would apply his ability, experience and talent to the best of his ability to serve city dwellers.

"The responsibility of an administrator is huge. I'll try to discharge my duties properly," he added.

Asked whether he had sympathy for any political party or if he would face any political pressure, he said he would do his job as a government official.

Although he did not make any comment, he was seen nodding in agreement as Sohul spoke.

The last polls to the DCC were held in 2002. The tenure of the incumbent mayor and councillors expired in May 2007. Polls to the unified DCC could not be held for many reasons, one being the state of emergency in 2007-2008.

Assuming office in January 2009, the Awami League-led alliance government opted not to allow the EC to hold the polls.

The commission in February last year informed the government that it could hold the DCC polls in April, but the government did not approve the plan.

The EC then fell silent on the issue of the DCC elections.

It conducted polls to the Chittagong City Corporation and municipalities and union parishads across the country last year.

The Narayanganj City Corporation polls were held on October 30 this year.

Two teens die

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Alam, 18, was an SSC examinee from the local Abdul Aziz School and College.

As Ferdous lost control of the bike near Khilgaon flyover, it crashed against the road divider, leaving him dead on the spot. Sabbir was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where he was declared dead, said police.

Tamim Hossain, owner of the motorbike, told The Daily Star that his friends Sabbir and Ferdous had taken the bike from his Basabo house to buy food to celebrate his birthday.

Canada

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course, my government has clear policy that we cannot extradite people to countries that have death penalty," she said in response to question from journalists.

Sources said during the meeting the issue of extraditing Major (retd) Nur Chowdhury figured prominently and the foreign minister reminded the high commissioner about her October 5 letter to Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird with request to handover the convicted killer to Bangabandhu.

Meeting sources said the Canadian envoy told the foreign minister that the Canadian government understands that the matter is very much important to the country.

As this involves legal matters, sources said the high commissioner assured that she would again inform her government about the convicts.

Dipu Moni also wrote similar letter on October 5 to the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton asking Lt Col (retd) M Rashed Chowdhury, who is now residing in the United States, to be sent back.

The Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members were brutally killed on August 15, 1975 by some disgruntled army officials.

After a long trial, the court awarded death sentences to 12 people. Of them, five were hanged, one died, six are still absconding. Syed Faruque Rahman, Sultan Shahriar Rashid Khan, Bazlul Huda, Mohiuddin Ahmed and AKM Mohiuddin were executed on January 28, 2010.

The absconding convicted killers are: Col (retd) Khandakar Abdur Rashid, Lt Col (retd) Shariful Haque Dalim, Major (retd) Nur Chowdhury, Lt Col (retd) M Rashed Chowdhury, Abdul Mazed and Moslehdin.

From Myanmar the prime minister will fly to Bali, the Indonesian goddess island, on Wednesday to attend an international democracy conference on December 7-9.

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WWII bomb prompts evacuation

AFP, Berlin

About 45,000 people were being evacuated from their homes in the western German city of Koblenz yesterday ahead of work to defuse a World War II bomb.

The 1.8-tonne British bomb was discovered in the River Rhine after water levels fell. It was due to be deactivated later yesterday.

People living within a 1.8-kilometre radius of the site were ordered to leave their homes by 0800 GMT, the fire service said.

Some 2,500 fire, police, medical and technical personnel as well as city officials are involved in organising the evacuation, the biggest in Koblenz since World War II.

Nearly half the population of the city is affected.

Two hospitals, seven old people's homes, a prison and several hotels have also been evacuated. Streets have been closed off and the main train station was shut to trains in the early morning.

The British bomb was discovered on November 20, together with a 125-kilogramme US bomb which was also due to be deactivated as soon as officials confirm all buildings are empty.

More than six decades after the war, authorities believe there are still some 3,000 bombs buried beneath the capital Berlin alone, and unexploded devices are regularly discovered in construction work.

In June 2010, a 500-kilo Allied bomb, thought to be British, exploded and killed three German sappers and seriously injured two others in the central city of Goettingen as they prepared to defuse it.

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