

Bangladesh to export rice to India

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After Sri Lanka, Bangladesh will export rice to India soon from its adequate stock at home to meet the shortage of rice in the Tripura state.

"We are going to export rice to India soon," said Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmood Ali during a press briefing at the conference room of his ministry yesterday.

Sources said India has shown interest in importing rice to the ministries of foreign affairs and food recently. Following this, the government high command gave green signal to sell rice to its next door neighbour.

The foreign minister yesterday said, "We have some surplus rice in our hand and we can export them to India as there is a shortage of rice in Tripura."

He said discussions are on with the concerned authorities in this regard. But, he did not mention the quantity of rice to be exported to India.

A highly placed government source said India wants to import rice from Bangladesh as it would be cheaper buying from here than transporting from West-Bengal and other parts of India.

The foreign minister yesterday said Bangladesh exported 25,000 metric tonnes of rice to Sri Lanka on Saturday

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



The mangled wreckage of the lorry and the train carriage after the two collided near Kamalapur Railway Station. Firefighters, *inset*, trying to rescue the injured from the train.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Govt asks Bapex to form jt venture

FROM PAGE 16

Bangladesh has been reeling from a gas supply shortfall of around 500 mmcf.

Gazprom is supposed to drill four wells in the large Titas gas field, two in Shahbazzpur, and one each in Rashidpur, Srikail, Begumganj and Semutang.

Instead of getting 200 mmcf of gas, Gazprom's work has so far produced maximum 108 mmcf from eight wells, while tasks of two wells are underway.

Besides, one of the four wells in Titas went out of production after six months, while the lone well in Semutang is producing just 6 mmcf of gas.

"Spending \$20 million to produce just 6 mmcf of gas cannot be justified. Sadly, when Bapex sought a budget of Tk 21 crore to drill the same well, Petrobangla disapproved it and gave it to Gazprom," said an official asking not to be identified.

A highly placed Petrobangla official said although the government had a deal with Gazprom, the Russian

company hired another company to carry out the drilling. "It was expected that Gazprom would supervise their work, but they are not supervising it the way we had expected," the official added.

Petrobangla had estimated to have 200 mmcf of gas by drilling the 10 wells, but the real outcome might be way lower and yet that would not be considered as Gazprom's failure, the official observed.

"We need to see if engaging a foreign company at such a high cost [\$20m per well] is cost effective. But the results are very disappointing so far. These wells are producing very little gas against a very high expenditure. And again, one or two of these wells are dying as soon as they started production."

The official also clarified that Gazprom's drilling cost was three times the cost of Bapex mainly because the latter's schemes had typically kept hidden cost. "Bapex never adds the cost of keeping a rig idle, while Gazprom would add that cost as an

integral part of a work," the official noted.

In the past, Bapex was forced to strike a joint venture deal with Canadian controversial company Niko to develop three marginal or previously used gas fields, but Niko had actually been given a new unexplored field.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in 2007 filed two cases against Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, both were former premiers then, and a number of officials and a Niko representative for the deal, which inflicted a loss worth millions of dollars to Bangladesh.

Khaleda Zia's son Tarique Rahman's close friend Giasuddin Al Mamun was among the accused.

A magazine of Canadian newspaper Globa & Mail in August 2011 revealed that Niko had paid \$500,000 to Hawa Bhaban men to get a controversial joint venture deal with Bapex in 2003.

Niko faced trial in Canada and it is practically not working in Bangladesh anymore.

Six killed as lorry collides with train

FROM PAGE 1

were opened for the passenger train coming from Narayanganj, an Ansar member, who stood guard at the depot, told The Daily Star.

Every train on the Dhaka-Narayanganj route has to cross the depot where scores of lorries load and unload goods, said Abdul Majid, officer-in-charge of Dhaka Railway Police Station.

Mohammad Kasem, who was travelling on the train roof, said several security guards and some passengers signalled the lorry driver to stop, but he ignored all warnings.

Ansar member Abdul Hannan, who also was on duty at the depot, said, "I blew whistle and signalled the lorry to stop but it kept moving forward."

As the train's first compartment tilted to the right on impact of the collision, many passengers on the train's roof fell on the ground, he said.

"I saw a passenger stuck under the

wreckage of the damaged compartment. He was rescued by other passengers and locals," said Kazi Tarim, who was in the same compartment.

Titu Alam, a witness to the incident, said the driver fell on the ground from the lorry as the vehicle crashed into the train compartment.

Of the dead, four were identified as Mujibur Rahman, 60, a trader from Mirpur, Alamgir Hossain, 45, a van driver from South Keraniganj, and Naim Sikder, a student of class-IX from Barsial, and Ismail Hossain, a trader from Narayanganj.

Identity of the other two, including a woman, could not be known.

The bodies were kept at Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy, said Inspector Mozammel Haque, in-charge at the DMCH Police Outpost.

Of the injured, eight are under treatment at the DMCH. The condition of four of them was critical, said doctors.

Sakhina Akter, wife of deceased

Pak court stalls

FROM PAGE 16

The suspension is the latest round in a tussle over whether to grant bail to Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, who is accused over the terror siege in India's commercial capital.

The Mumbai carnage was blamed on the banned Pakistani militant group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), and India has long seethed over Islamabad's failure either to hand over or prosecute those accused of planning and organising the violence.

A court had granted Lakhvi bail on December 18 but after protests from India, the authorities ordered his detention under public order legislation.

Lakhvi's lawyers challenged the detention on Monday and the Islamabad High Court suspended the order, government lawyer Jehangir Jadon told AFP.

"The Islamabad High Court took Lakhvi into its custody and granted him conditional bail against surety bonds of one million rupees (\$9,943)," Jadon said.

The suspension can be withdrawn if the government challenges it, Jadon added.

Lakhvi remains in custody in a high-security jail, as he has throughout the 10 days of wrangling. The paperwork involved in actually getting him released means he is unlikely to walk out of prison soon.

The horror of the Mumbai carnage played out on live television around the world, as commandos battled the heavily-armed gunmen who arrived by sea on the evening of November 26, 2008.

Liverpool folkie who sang

FROM PAGE 16

Khan, former chairman of botany and microbiology departments of Dhaka University, contacted The Daily Star on December 19 this year and handed over the vinyl record of Brennan's songs.

Khan met Brennan at a Liverpool restaurant called Kismet, whose owner was from Sylhet.

Brennan asked Khan about what he can do to support the struggle for freedom in Bangladesh.

In reply Khan told him, "You are an artist, you can do many things to support us."

Hearing Khan's reply, Brennan went silent for a couple of seconds and said, "I got your point" and then he left.

After four days, Brennan drove his Jaguar and went to Khan's flat and took him and his wife to his house.

There the Khan couple met Brennan's wife and three of his band members.

"I have composed four songs on Bangladesh, I will sing them to you and if you think that they are okay then

I will record them and share it with you," Brennan told Khan.

After listening them, Khan provided some feedbacks based on the life and culture in Bangladesh and Brennan quite humbly readjusted his lyrics and music accordingly.

"He accepted, changed and re-composed his songs which amazed me as a famous singer like him listened to such a novice like me," Khan said.

"The next day, Brennan took one of my colleagues, Mesbahuddin, then a PhD student of chemistry, to a local music studio called CAM Records Ltd and recorded the collection," Khan recalled.

Khan was one of the members in the city's Action Committee formed under the direct supervision of Justice Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, who became the second president of independent Bangladesh, to organise the Bangladeshi people living in England.

Justice Chowdhury played a leading diplomatic role in building support among the international communities for Bangladesh's Liberation War.

The cover jacket of the vinyl record bears the following message of Justice Chowdhury: "People of Bangladesh will fight unto the last for Truth and Justice. Victory shall be ours. Our grateful thanks are due to Lee Brennan, Dawn, Pete Thomas, John Brown, Jimmy Sefton for their sympathy and support at this hour of our grim struggle." Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, Special Envoy, Government of Peoples Republic of Bangladesh.

This 45 RPM (rotation per minute) EP (extended play) record disk contains four songs -- two on each side. On Side A are: Freedom fighters (2:26 minutes) and Mr Human (2:03 minutes) and Side B: Fight, fight, fight (2:11 minutes) and We will survive (3:22 minutes).

Brennan himself took the burden of collecting funds for our Liberation War by selling the records, said Khan.

Brennan used to sing the songs he composed on Bangladesh at pubs and restaurants of Liverpool and sold the copies if listeners felt interested.

Primary terminal, junior exams results today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Results of this year's primary terminal, Junior School Certificate (JSC) and Junior Dakhil Certificate (JDC) examinations will be published today.

Education Minister Nurul Islam Nahid will formally announce the results of JSC and JDC exams at 11:30am at a press conference at his secretariat office.

On the other hand, Primary and Mass Education Minister Mostafizur Rahman will formally brief the media on the highlights of the primary and ebtedai (madrasa) terminal exam results at 12:30pm.

Prior to that, copies of the results will be handed over to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The examinees can get their results from their respective schools. Besides, the results will also be available on the websites of respective boards and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

First 'digital

FROM PAGE 1

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Cabinet Secretary M Musharraf Hossain Bhuiyan told reporters after the meeting.

He said the draft law proposed attractive salary structure and allowances to draw the brilliant and competent persons from home and abroad for the posts of teachers and other employees of the university.

The government will implement the project on priority basis, the cabinet secretary said.

The cabinet yesterday approved another proposal for expansion of the National Service Programme (NSP) for the next two years.

Musharraf said the programme would be implemented in 17 poverty-ridden upazilas of 17 northern and southern districts.

The programme will begin on 1st January, 2015 and continue for the next two years, costing the government a total of Tk 122 crore.

Around 42,500 educated youths would get three months' training and short-time services under the project for their capacity building.

Missing jet at bottom

FROM PAGE 16

south of Borneo island but had been unable to pinpoint it.

On board Flight QZ8501 were 155 Indonesians, three South Koreans, and one person each from Singapore, Malaysia and Britain. The co-pilot was French.

The disappearance caps a disastrous year for Malaysia-affiliated airlines, with Indonesia AirAsia 49 percent owned by Malaysia-based budget carrier AirAsia.

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 went missing on March 8 on a trip from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 passengers and crew and has not been found. On July 17, the same airline's Flight MH17 was shot down over Ukraine, killing all 298 people on board.

The AirAsia group, including affiliates in Thailand, the Philippines and India, had not suffered a crash since its Malaysian budget operations began in 2002. The group's shares in Kuala Lumpur were down 8 percent at 0813 GMT.

MULTINATIONAL SEARCH
Tjahjanto said two C-130 Hercules planes were focusing the search for Flight QZ8501 in areas northeast of Indonesia's Bangka island, about halfway between Surabaya and Singapore, in the Java Sea.

Australia, Malaysia, Singapore and South Korea sent ships and aircraft to join the search, a foreign ministry official said. China also offered to send planes and ships and any other assistance Indonesia needed.

Soelistyo said Indonesia might not have the best technology to search underwater and had accepted offers of help from the United States, Britain and France. In 2007, it took Indonesia months to recover flight data recorders from a Boeing 737-400 operated by Indonesia's Adam Air which crashed off Sulawesi island, killing all 102 people on board.

According to Indonesian navy Flight Commander Laksamana Pertama Sigit Setiyanta, the sea depths in the area is only 25 to 50 metres (75-150 feet).

Flight QZ8501 was traveling at

32,000 feet (9,753 meters) and had asked to fly at 38,000 feet to avoid clouds, said Joko Muryo Atmodjo, air transportation director at Indonesia's Transport Ministry.

Permission was not given at the time due to traffic in the area. Five minutes later, at 6:17am on Sunday (2317 GMT Saturday), the plane lost contact with air traffic control, Atmodjo said.

Data from Flightradar24.com, which tracks airline flights in real time, showed several nearby aircraft were at altitudes ranging from 34,000 to 36,000 feet at the time, levels that are not unusual for cruising aircraft.

Pilots and aviation experts said thunderstorms, and requests to gain altitude to avoid them, were not unusual in that area.

"The airplane's performance is directly related to the temperature outside and increasing altitude can lead to freezing of the static radar, giving pilots an erroneous radar reading," said a Qantas Airways pilot with 25 years' experience flying in the region.

The resulting danger is that pilots take incorrect action to control the aircraft, said the pilot, who requested anonymity.

In such an emergency the pilots would likely have been wrestling to regain control of the aircraft and not had time to issue a distress signal, the Qantas pilot said.

Online discussions among pilots centred on unconfirmed secondary radar data from Malaysia that suggested the missing plane was climbing at a speed of 353 knots, about 100 knots too slow in such weather conditions.

"At that altitude, that speed is exceedingly dangerous," Sydney-based aviation expert Geoff Thomas told Reuters.

"At that altitude, the thin air, the wings won't support the aircraft at that speed and you get an aerodynamic stall."

Safety authorities say accidents involving a loss of control, such as might occur in bad weather, are rare but almost always catastrophic.