

Stop distribution of Brazilian wheat

Supreme Court asks govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday ordered the government to stop distribution of wheat imported from Brazil as its quality had been questioned.

The food office has already distributed more than 1.5 lakh tonnes to those who are on the government's safety net schemes, including Food for Work, Test Relief and also as ration for the police, sources said.

The remaining wheat will not be distributed to any organisation or department until further order, the apex court told Attorney General Mahbubey Alam.

Furthermore, the four-member Appellate Division bench extended for two weeks a stay order on the High Court verdict that directed the government to take back wheat from an organisation if it was willing to return it.

The bench, headed by Chief Justice Surendra Kumar Sinha, also asked the

government to file a leave to appeal petition in two weeks with the SC against the HC verdict.

The apex court came up with the order while hearing a petition moved by the government.

The attorney general told the court that the government would move a petition on receiving a copy of the full HC verdict.

According to media reports, the Director General of Food bought two lakh tonnes of Brazilian wheat early this year.

The police complained that the grains were of low quality, prompting the food ministry to collect samples from district warehouses for testing, said ministry officials.

After testing some samples in its own laboratories last month, the food ministry claimed that the grains were "fit for human consumption" and the quality "conforms to the contract specifications."



The low-lying land of Bandarban district is inundated as the Sangu and the Matamuhuri rivers flow above the danger level due to heavy monsoon rain and onrush of water from the hills.

PHOTO: BANGLAR CHOKH

Hike now only in basic pay

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depends on the assessment report of the employees," said a high official of the finance ministry official.

Then again, an employee can avail both these perks at the same time. As a result, sometimes junior officials get more than what their superior officers do, he said.

However, a number of associations representing secretariat-based officials and staff demand continuation of the selection grade and time scale.

"Now that demands have been made for the continuation of these systems, another secretary-level committee may be formed to look into those," said the finance ministry official.

The pay commission in its report suggested 4 to 5 percent yearly salary hike on incremental basis instead of time scale and selection grade.

"Under the new system, government employees will get more than what they would with the selection grade and time scale in place," said the finance ministry official.

Apart from these, university profes-

sors want their salaries in the grade for senior secretaries, which the pay commission didn't want.

"Unlike the government staff, university teachers get large scale promotions ... If university professors are paid the same salary as senior secretaries get, it will be a huge financial burden on the government," the official said.

"Besides, government officials can serve up to the age of 59 while 65 is the service age for university teachers. So, professors serve a lot longer than senior secretaries and get paid for a longer period of time," he argued.

However, their demands would be recommended for further scrutiny, he added.

RISE IN GOVT EXPENSES

According to government plans, this year public servants will get only the basic salary stipulated in the new pay scale while the allowances will be given as per the previous scale. The increased allowances will be available from the next fiscal year.

"It will require between Tk 12,000 crore and Tk 14,000 crore additionally

this year to implement even the new basic salaries," said the finance ministry official.

For salaries and allowances of the government staff, the budget of the current fiscal year has allocated Tk 45,153 crore, 53 percent more than last year's revised budget.

The review committee made some changes in the pay structure recommended by the commission.

While the commission proposed Tk 8,200 as salary for the lowest of the 20 pay grades, the review committee raised it to Tk 8,250.

The commission's recommendation for salary in the highest grade was Tk 80,000 which was slashed to Tk 75,000 by the review committee.

Similarly, the committee downsized proposed salary for senior secretaries from Tk 88,000 to Tk 84,000 and for the cabinet secretary from Tk 100,000 to Tk 90,000.

The proposed salaries for a few more upper tier grades might be slimmed down by Tk 2,000 to Tk 3,000 in the cabinet meeting, according to finance ministry sources.

How is he doing?

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issue, so I won't comment on this. My lawyer will speak on my behalf," he replied, pointing to his lawyer SP Mahanta, who was standing beside him.

Before the reporter could ask him anything, Mahanta smiled and chipped in, "It's not yet the time to speak about this."

Asked how his Eid day was, Salahuddin went silent for a while and then lamented, "After a long time, I spent an Eid away from my family."

"How long will you stay at the rented guest house?" this correspondent asked.

"I won't stay there much long. I am thinking of shifting to a new place," Salahuddin said.

During the conversation, he congratulated Bangladesh cricket team, especially Soumya Sarker and Mustafizur Rahman, for their recent feats against Pakistan, India and South Africa.

WHO PAYS THE RENT?

Indian intelligence sources said

although Salahuddin is supposed to pay nearly Rs 2.4 lakh (Tk 2.9 lakh) for 60 days, he managed to rent it only for Rs 80,000 with the help of some locally influential people.

A high official of Shillong police said, "We will investigate if any payment is being made illegally. We need to know where an intruder is getting the money from."

The official, who wished to remain anonymous, said Salahuddin has good ties with a number of influential stone businessmen on Dauki border. "They may have provided him the money."

However, Hilabarth Martho, manager of the guest house, said Safayet Hossain, a nephew of the BNP leader, paid Tk 60,000 last month though they are yet to receive the rest of the amount.

The owner of the guest house skirted around a query about Salahuddin's rent payment.

The BNP leader had been arrested on

May 11 by Meghalaya police and sued under the Foreigners Act for trespassing.

He was allegedly picked up by plainclothes officials from a house in Uttara on March 10, according to his family members. The law enforcers, however, denied the allegation.

After the arrest, Salahuddin was initially sent to MIMHANS mental hospital in Shillong and was later shifted to Shillong Civil Hospital.

Later he was admitted to Indira Gandhi Regional Institute of Health and Medical Science after Salahuddin's wife Hasina Ahmed demanded better treatment for her husband.

Within 23 days of the arrest, Shillong Sub-Inspector M Lamhare submitted the charge sheet accusing Salahuddin only of trespassing.

Two days later, a Shillong court granted Salahuddin conditional bail, making it mandatory for him to appear before the court every week. He was released from the hospital thereafter.

40,000 marooned

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encroachment of river banks contributed to the flooding, he said.

Mizanul Haque Choudhury, deputy commissioner of Bandarban, said the administration opened eight relief centres in the town and Lama to give people dry food, water, medicines and other necessities.

Quoting Deputy Commissioner Ali Hossain, our Cox's Bazar correspondent said hundreds of houses have gone under flood water in 14 unions of Chakaria and Pekua upazilas.

Over 50,000 inhabitants in the two upazilas have been marooned.

Zahirul Islam of Pekua said they

had taken shelter on high ground with their livestock and valuables.

Chakaria Upazila Nirbahi Officer Shahedul Islam said Bomubilchhari, Manikpur, Kakara, Lakhyarchar, Chiringa, Boroitoli, Shaharbil and Konakhali of the upazila, which had suffered in the previous flooding in June, have gone under water again.

The Met office recorded 131mm of rain in Cox's Bazar between yesterday morning and 3:00pm.

Our Feni correspondent reports: The flood situation deteriorated in Feni Sadar, Dagonbhuiyan and

Sonagazi upazilas with 657 hectares of seedbeds, 605 hectares of Aman and 50 hectares of vegetables going under water.

Zahirul Islam, deputy director of the agricultural extension department, said they were apprehending further damage to crops.

Some roads in the town were still under water.

Ramjan Ali Pramanik, executive engineer of Bangladesh Water Development Board, said flood protection embankment for the Muhuri river in Feni broke on Saturday, flooding a few upazilas of the district.

DCs meet tomorrow

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deputy commissioners (DCs) for discussion, Musharraf told a press briefing at the Cabinet Division's conference room.

The meeting will also discuss land management, improvement of law and order, strengthening the local government bodies, disaster management, relief and rehabilitation activities, ICT and e-governance, improvement of the quality of education, healthcare, family welfare and other development activi-

ties.

The DCs will talk about the problems, prospects and challenges they face every day and the policymakers will talk about government priorities, said the cabinet secretary.

The prime minister will also issue necessary directives to implement the government decisions, policies and programmes at the grassroots level, he added.

During the three-day conference, the DCs will also exchange views with ministers, advisers, and top officials,

including the secretaries of 39 ministries in 18 working sessions at the Secretariat.

The cabinet secretary also said 93 percent of all recommendations made at the last conference had been implemented in the last one year.

The DCs will call on President Abdul Hamid on Wednesday at the Bangabhaban.

The concluding session of the event will be held at the Cabinet Division's conference room at 3:00pm on Thursday.

Khaleda won't budge from demand

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On January 6, the BNP-led alliance launched a non-stop blockade and a series of hartals over the same demand.

But the ruling AL has been rigid on its stand that the election will be held in line with the constitution, meaning the polls will be held under the AL government.

Talking to The Daily Star, BNP Standing Committee Member Moudud Ahmed, who was present at Saturday's meeting, said, "The party chief's approach was different. But the substance of her statement remains the same which means the next parliamentary election must be held under a

non-partisan government.

"As the government has been opposing the term -- caretaker government, she took a realistic approach and didn't use that term. Instead, she said the election-time government can be called by any name. We just want a free, fair and inclusive election," said Moudud.

The BNP chief stated categorically that there would be no election under the AL government. The poll-time government must be comprised of non-political and neutral persons, and that is what the BNP chief wanted to mean in her statement, he added.

Asked, another BNP Standing Committee Member Mahbubur Rahman said the BNP chief, through her statement, invited the ruling party to hold discussions on how to hold a free and fair election, and it was definitely a positive initiative from her side.

"I believe the BNP chairperson wanted to mean that the party is not sticking to its demand for reinstating the 13th amendment to the constitution regarding caretaker government. Instead, she urged the Awami League government to decide on the formation of the election-time government through dialogue," he added.

Iraq retakes key university on edge of Ramadi

AFP, Baghdad

Iraqi government forces recaptured a university campus yesterday on the outskirts of Ramadi from the Islamic State group, seizing a key position for any offensive to retake the city, officials said.

Iraqi forces had recaptured parts of Anbar University in May, shortly after losing the provincial capital to the jihadists, but later pulled back.

The university was retaken by elite forces from Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), known as the "Golden Brigade".

"The Golden Brigade managed to liberate Anbar University with backing from the army as well as air support from the coalition and Iraqi aircraft," Brigadier General Abdelamir al-Khazraji, deputy commander of CTS forces in Anbar, said.

"Our forces liberated the university early Sunday and now have full control of it, following a week of fierce clashes," he told AFP.

"The Iraqi flag is flying above the university presidency once again," he said.

A statement from CTS said the Iraqi special forces had "inflicted heavy human and material losses to the enemy."



The pavement and the canal next to the Dania Road in Jatrabari are occupied by makeshift stalls of hawkers. People say local youths with political backing build the shops over the canal and then rent them out to hawkers. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

'Yaba trader' killed

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teams, during a regular patrol, found four people on two motorbikes moving suspiciously on Seabeach Road in Patenga around 1:00am yesterday.

When the team asked them to stop, they sped up their bikes instead and started to open fire on the crime busters, he claimed.

In retaliation, the Rab members fired back, triggering the "gunfight".

At one stage, the smugglers fled. Later, the Rab men found the bullet-hit body of Zafar on the spot.

Zafar was taken to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where he was declared dead on arrival, added the Rab official.

Rab claimed to have recovered 10,000 yaba tablets, two firearms, three bullets and two cartridges there.

Zafar's family members claimed that he used to sell fishing nets at a shop in Sadarghat and he had a fishing boat.

"My husband was shot dead after being detained. There was no gunfight," claimed Khurshida Begum, wife of the deceased, while weeping at the hospital morgue.

She said her husband left home for Dhaka around 11:00am on Saturday and was missing since then.