

## WINTER CROPS IN PABNA

## Farmers using too much pesticides to prevent pest attacks

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Headless of health and environmental implications, a section of farmers hell-bent on making a quick buck have been overusing pesticides on winter crops in the district's Ishwardi upazila.

Jamal Uddin, a farmer from Goyalbathan village, said he used to spray pesticides once or twice a week on beans, but this year severe pest attacks had forced him to spray it nearly twice as much over the same period.

He was using at least 150 to 200 millilitres of pesticides per week on each bigha of land.

However, the safe dose of moderate pesticides recommended per bigha a

week is 30 to 40 millilitres while the dose of stronger pesticides should be 10 to 20 millilitres within the same period, said Bivutipushon Sharker, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension, Pabna.

Applying excessive pesticides does not necessarily lead to better results, he said, adding that most farmers don't care how much pesticides they should apply on crops. Nor do they follow cautionary instructions.

The DAE cannot take any legal action against the abuse of pesticides.

"We have no magistracy authority for conducting drives against toxic vegetable producers. The department can only create awareness and observe

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A farm worker spraying pesticide in a bean field in Pabna's Ishwardi upazila recently. Such rampant use of pesticides by bean farmers could put people's health in danger.

PHOTO: STAR

## It's made in Bangladesh

At inauguration, origin of red Trump hats shocks many

REUTERS, Washington

One of the biggest cheers Donald Trump received from supporters watching his inaugural address on Friday was his call to "buy American and hire American."



It was a moment rich in irony. Many of those supporters were sporting Trump's trademark red "Make America Great Again" baseball caps that were made in China, Vietnam and Bangladesh.

Some were horrified when they discovered their Trump hats were foreign made.

Victoria Scott, 13, and her brother Andrew Scott, 12, each bought a "Make America Great Again" hat before the inauguration. Victoria's hat cost \$25 and was made in China.

She did not seem to mind. Andrew then checked his hat. "Bangladesh?" he said after checking the tag. His father corrected him. "You mean Bangladesh."

Rob Walker, 44, who had driven to Washington from Georgia with his wife Abby, 36, had stopped at a truck stop on the way to buy a "Make America Great Again" cap.

"Oh God, I hope it's not made in China," Abby said, flipping the cap over to check. She looked at its label. "China! Don't tell anyone!"

The Trump hats available for

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## President Trump acts swiftly

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Republican billionaire be sworn in, and deliver a stridently populist call-to-arms.

Trump promised to lift up the nation's disenfranchised and those who felt betrayed by the political elites, declaring with vindication that "the forgotten men and women of our country will be forgotten no longer."

Adhering to his vow to immediately start dismantling the healthcare reforms passed by president Barack Obama, Trump signed his first executive order in the Oval Office, targeting Obamacare.

It commands government offices to grant all possible exemptions to limit the "economic and regulatory burden" of the Affordable Care Act, as a prelude to a full repeal.

The Trump administration will also make defeating "radical Islamic terror groups" its top foreign policy goal, according to a statement posted on the White House website moments after Donald Trump's inauguration.

In the statement, titled "America First Foreign Policy," the Trump administration said, "Defeating ISIS and other radical Islamic terror groups will be our highest priority."

In order to "defeat and destroy" Islamic State and similar groups, the new administration said it "will pursue aggressive joint and coalition military operations when necessary," work to cut off funding for terrorist groups, expand intelligence sharing, and use "cyberwarfare" to disrupt propaganda and recruitment efforts.

Meanwhile, the first two Trump cabinet members were sworn in after being confirmed on Friday by the US Senate. Both are retired generals: Secretary of Defence James Mattis and Homeland Security Secretary John Kelly.

Trump also signaled a sharp break on

energy and the environment policy, announcing plans to undo climate policies and promote domestic energy development as part of his "America First" agenda.

A statement on the White House website, posted shortly after Trump took the oath of office, said he was "committed to eliminating harmful and unnecessary policies such as the Climate Action Plan" advocated by his predecessor Barack Obama.

The official White House website on Friday deleted nearly all mentions of climate change. The one exception: Trump's vow to eliminate the Obama administration's climate change policies, which previously had a prominent and detailed web page on whitehouse.gov.

At the same time, the official White House Twitter handles also changed over, allowing Trump to now post on Twitter as @POTUS.

Trump during the campaign dismissed climate change as a "hoax" perpetrated by China.

During his inaugural address, Trump vowed that his presidency would usher in a new political era.

Moments earlier, the incoming US leader had placed his left hand on a bible used by Abraham Lincoln and recited the 35-word oath spoken since George Washington.

The popular turnout was visibly smaller than for Obama's two inaugurations, in 2009 and 2013, with sections of the mall and bleachers along the parade route left nearly empty.

Thronges of Trump's opponents also converged on Washington.

Most of their protests -- by an array of anti-racist, anti-war, feminist, LGBT, and pro-immigration groups -- were peaceful, but sporadic violence marred the day.

Several hundred masked, black-clad

protesters carrying anarchist flags smashed windows, lit fires and scuffled with riot police blocks from the parade held in Trump's honor, with at least 217 people arrested for vandalism.

Even the peaceful protesters were intent on spoiling Trump's party -- letting out a deafening roar as the presidential limousine rolled past.

"Not my president! Not my president!" they yelled, as the pro-Trump crowd in nearby bleachers chanted "USA! USA!"

And yesterday, women in pink "pussyhats" flooded into Washington by the train-load for a massive rights march set to draw hundreds of thousands in defiance of America's headline new president.

Metro stations overflowed as trains packed to bursting moved cheering, clapping marchers into the city for what was expected to be a record-breaking inauguration-related protest.

For Trump's critics, there was disbelief that a man who 19 months ago hosted "The Apprentice" reality TV show is now leader of the free world -- sworn in with a 37 percent approval rating, the lowest on record, according to a CBS News poll.

Meanwhile, Moscow has attempted to distance itself from Trump, saying the Republican is "not our man."

Many Russians view Trump's presidency with high hopes, and some nightclubs and bars held parties to celebrate the inauguration.

President Putin's press secretary Dmitry Peskov told Russian state broadcaster Vesti: "He is not our man, he is America's man."

Meanwhile, Craftsmen in the city of Zlatoust, east of Moscow, have released a limited series of silver and gold commemorative coins, engraved with "In Trump We Trust" -- an allusion to the phrase on US banknotes "In God We

Trust," reports Reuters.

The commemorative coin was created by Art Grani. It features the face of Trump on one side and the Statue of Liberty on the other. Only 45 exist: 25 silver coins, 5 gold and 15 that are silver and gold, according to CNN.

Trump's inauguration caps the improbable rise of the Manhattan real estate magnate who has never before held elected office, or served in government or the military.

For the next few weeks the White House plans a series of daily executive orders to roll back Obama's agenda.

Trump has also vowed to re-examine long-running alliances with Europe and in Asia.

"We will reinforce old alliances and form new ones and unite the civilized world against radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth."

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The White House statement also vowed to withdraw from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the Asian free-trade pact that Obama championed but was unable to get through Congress. Trump has said, without elaboration, that international trade deals have hurt American workers.

In a separate statement on the White House website, the Trump administration said it intends to develop a "state of the art" missile defense system to protect against attacks from Iran and North Korea. It did not say whether the system would differ from those already under development, specify the cost or say how it would be financed.

## Help or kill them

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conditions characterised by progressive muscle weakness and loss of muscle mass. The symptoms mainly begin in childhood. The victims, in most cases, lose the ability to walk. Some may have trouble breathing or swallowing.

There is no cure for muscular dystrophy, he wrote in the letter.

Sabur showed symptoms when he was just 11 and was a class-IV student. Raihanul had it when he was five. Sourav got it three years ago.

Tofazzel took Sabur to India for treatment but the physicians there told him the disease was not curable.

Some doctors at the National Institute of Homeopathy in India said the disease is partially treatable, he said.

Sabur is now fully paralysed while Raihanul and Sourav may face the same fate, Tofazzel wrote in the letter.

"I have lost many of my belongings for treating my elder son Sabur over the last 20 years," he said, adding that he also took financial help from many for his children's treatment. "Now I can't do anything more."

Such a stress rendered his wife Shirina Begum mentally imbalanced, he added.

Khairul Hasan, the acting DC of Meherpur, visited Tofazzel soon after receiving the letter to assure him of help.

Learning about the incident, many were contacting the Meherpur DC and expressing their desire to help Tofazzel, said Khairul.

They are also being given the government allowance for the disabled.

"Tofazzel does not want any cash, he just wants us to communicate with the higher authorities of the government about his problem so that they bear the medical expenses," the acting DC said, adding that he asked Tofazzel to open a bank account so that people could donate.

Rasada Sultana, civil surgeon in the district, said they would form a medical team for the treatment of the three patients.

## Capture of Enigma



New pictures have emerged showing some of the crew of HMS Bulldog launching a raid on a Nazi U-Boat during World War II.

PHOTO: MAIL ONLINE

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machine perfect intact, along with vital code books.

But its capture by brave young officer Sub-Lieutenant David Balme then enabled Bletchley Park code breakers to crack the code, helping to bring an end to the war.

He was terrified to board U-110 scaled three ladders to the top of the boat's conning tower before snatching the machine.

The new images captured by the crew of the Bulldog are featured in a new book by historian Peter Hore, about the capture of the machine.

And he told the Mirror, "Balme's bravery changed the course of the Battle of Atlantic which, until then, the Germans were winning."

"The capture of the machine and the codes enabled the British to re-route convoys to avoid U-boats and to send out hunting groups, which whittled away their numbers."

"By 1943 the Battle of the Atlantic was almost won and thousands of fresh American and Canadian troops were able to cross with very few losses

to help win the war in Europe."

Sub Lieutenant Balme died last year aged 95 and was later credited with helping to shorten the war by two years.

His significance in the Allies victory was not revealed until the Seventies, when the secrecy shrouding Bletchley Park and the code-breakers' work finally began to lift.

He was presented with a Bletchley badge and a certificate signed by then Prime Minister David Cameron and local MP Julian Lewis.

Balme lived in Lymington, Hampshire, before moving to a nursing home in nearby Milford on Sea where he died.

In 1999 he condemned a Hollywood attempt to re-write history after it was revealed that a £55million film shot in Rome and Malta suggested that the Enigma device was captured by an American destroyer in the Mediterranean.

The film, called U571 used the 1941 raid as the inspiration but suggested it was American forces that captured the Enigma machine, and it was condemned by prime minister Tony Blair.

## Irregularities aplenty

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Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation (BCIC) gave the job to inexperienced Chinese company Wuhan Anyang Science & Technology Co Ltd (WASTCL).

It had even paid the company about Tk 86 crore in bills and undue benefits, like advance payment and loan. Sources claimed that government officials got kickbacks for facilitating these.

Failing to restart the factory after repeated attempts between January 13 and 19, the company wrote to the BCIC that all its staff were leaving Bangladesh to celebrate the Chinese New Year on January 24 and promised to return in mid February with an aim to restart the factory in March.

The managing director of the CCC Bidyut Kumar Biswas responded to the WASTCL letter saying, "Although about 3 (three) days have already been passed from the last GEG failure still you are not going to re-start the Plants which is not acceptable at all [sic]."

**PILING LOSSES**  
Expecting completion of the project, BCIC transferred 234 skilled engineers, technicians and operators to the CCC in June last year.

With the factory yet not operational, the CCC is facing financial loss as it has to pay the salaries and allowances of staff, most of whom are practically sitting idle, according to a letter of the CCC managing director to the Chinese company in October.

"The last CCC's restarting work completion date was 31 May 2016. But you failed to do that. Therefore, after that day CCC is bearing an overall production loss of Tk 16,06,500 per day which is calculated on the basis of everyday production of all products," wrote Lutfar Rahman, the then managing director of CCC.

This means the CCC has so far

incurred production loss of about Tk 25 crore. If the loss is calculated from the day the factory was originally supposed to restart, it would be over Tk 140 crore.

The delay in project completion is also forcing the CCC to pay a huge amount in interest on the Tk 115 crore loan it took out to pay for the project, Lutfar added in the letter to WASTCL.

A CCC committee, led by its additional chief chemist Israil Ahmed, in April last year projected that the CCC would incur a loss of about Tk 15.25 crore annually if it went for full production after the factory resumed operation.

The question arises as to why the factory is being reopened using taxpayers' money if it is to incur losses again?

**WHY REVIVE CCC?**  
Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave consent to restarting the factory at a meeting with the BCIC officials in April 2009 when they pressed for restoring the CCC. She also instructed them to probe why the CCC was closed in 2002.

The then industries minister Dilip Barua visited the CCC site 12 days later and inaugurated the factory restarting project.

Later in 2009, a BCIC committee with the chairman of the Board of Investment as its chief was formed to review the feasibility of restarting the factory and find out why it was closed in 2002. A couple of sub-committees were also formed.

The committees opined that the project could be profitable, about Tk 4 crore a year, if the government injected Tk 80 crore for factory modernisation.

The committees in their final report recommended that the government should go for the project.

**THE COMPANY**  
Chinese company WASTCL tried to go for Performance Guarantee Test Run

between January 13 and 19 but failed to do so.

Every time it tried the test run, it either failed or its performance was poor. The quality of the chemicals produced was also well below par, according to CCC documents.

As the company failed to implement the project, the BCIC itself is now saying that the company had no experience and was not capable of implementing such a project.

"It's an immature company. The selection was wrong," said BCIC Chairman Mohammad Iqbal, who was not in charge of the BCIC then.

Mentioning limited financial capability, the company sought financial cooperation from the BCIC on many occasions.

The BCIC gave WASTCL Tk 3 crore in advance last year and lent Tk 50 lakh this month violating the public procurement regulations. The BCIC had to even amend its contract with the company to give the money.

WASTCL sought another loan of Tk 1 crore this month.

The BCIC chairman first gave verbal directives to officials concerned to pay advance money to the Chinese company. He approved the advance payment on September 23, 2015.

There are allegations that BCIC officials got financial benefits from the company by providing it undue benefits.

Asked about them, the BCIC chairman denied taking any financial benefits and said he gave the money with the consent of the ministry, either with "written or verbal" instructions, and taking the opinion of the officials concerned.

The BCIC chairman said he was embarrassed by the project, which was taken up before he was given charge of the BCIC, and the allegations about his brother's involvement in the project.

Li Guoan, CEO of WASTCL, in a

letter to the BCIC chairman in October, 2016, thanked the chairman for his clear and positive attitude towards the project with his strong support and encouragement at key moments.

Even though the company failed to implement the project, the BCIC has not obtained any compensation from the company or taken any action for failing to meet different criteria of the contract.

Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman told The Daily Star last night, "This is a blatant example of utter disregard to public interest for narrow group advantage at the expense of taxpayers. If the government is genuinely interested in exploring the possibility of converting this white elephant into a viable production unit, it should solicit independent expert opinion to determine its fate."

"Those responsible for making unauthorised payments to the Chinese company violating the due process should be held accountable."

"The issue also brings into focus the risk Bangladesh is taking these days by relying indiscriminately on Chinese companies which are known to be high in the category of susceptibility to corruption in international business."

## Pakistan

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Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed grief over the latest loss of life, his office said in a statement.

Kurram is one of Pakistan's seven semi-autonomous tribal districts which are governed according to local laws and customs.

The district is known for sectarian clashes between Sunnis and Shiites, who make up roughly 20 percent of Pakistan's population of 200 million.