



Ex-MP Poton's firm stole 72k tonne fertiliser

Finds BCIC probe body

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

A high-powered probe committee formed by Bangladesh Chemical Industries Corporation has found involvement of M/S Poton Traders, a contracting firm owned by former lawmaker Kamrul Ashraf Khan (Poton), in embezzlement of 71,801 tonnes of imported chemical fertiliser.

For this, the government lost Tk 581.58 crore.

The five-member committee, led by Md Zakair Hossain Akhond, director (planning and implementation) of BCIC, said this in a report submitted to the High Court yesterday in compliance with the court's January 5 directive.

Former lawmaker from Narsingdi, Poton is also the president of Bangladesh Fertiliser Association.

The committee, which was formed by BCIC following an HC directive, said that after examining the documents of the BCIC's purchase and sales department and the reports of previous three committees formed on November 10, 2022, it has been proved that 71,801.31 tonnes of Urea had been misappropriated.

The fertiliser was not supplied to different warehouses of BCIC by M/S Poton Traders in 2021-2022 fiscal year, the body mentioned.

Purchase cost of the fertiliser is Tk 553.88 crore and other relevant cost Tk 27.69 crore, meaning that the government incurred Tk 581.58 crore losses in total. This finding is consistent with a report published in the Daily Prothom Alo on January 5, the report said.

It added that on October 2, 2022, M/S Poton Traders



Ignoring two warning signs, an array of cars remains parked on a road near Gulshan-2 intersection in the capital. These parked vehicles not only occupy a significant portion of the road, but also take up a section of the footpath. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Taqsem may get sixth extension as Wasa MD

DIPAN NANDY

Taqsem A Khan is likely to continue as the Dhaka Wasa managing director for another three-year term as the board of the state-owned agency is going to propose his name for another extension.



In a meeting yesterday, the Wasa board decided to send a proposal to the LGRD ministry in this regard. The ministry will make the final decision.

Previous precedents show that the ministry usually endorses the board's proposal.

If approved, Taqsem would be at the helm of Wasa for 17 years and thus would become the longest-serving MD in the history of the agency.

Despite facing severe criticism from different quarters for his role in

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All he did was kick a ball, and it cost him his life

STAR REPORT

A schoolboy, who was beaten severely for kicking a football in Noakhali's Chatkhil upazila on Sunday, died of his injuries at a hospital in the capital yesterday.



The deceased, Osman Gani, 15, was a seventh grader at Saptagaon Adarsha High School in the same upazila.

Osman was beaten up by a neighbour in Manikpur village for kicking his son's football. He passed away at a hospital in the capital around 6:00am yesterday, said Shah Alam, a cousin of the victim.

Alam said 12-year-old Muslim, son of Mohammad Montu, was playing football in the courtyard adjacent to a road around 2:00pm on Sunday. Osman was sitting nearby.

Suddenly, the ball rolled to Osman and he kicked it. The ball then landed on the roof of a nearby one-storey building.

Muslim went home crying and informed his father of the incident. Montu then rushed there and beat Osman with a wooden object, leaving him badly injured, said Alam.

Osman was taken to Noakhali Sadar Hospital from where he was moved to Dhaka for better treatment.

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IMED REPORT

Inclusion of capacity charge to be probed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) yesterday formed a three-member committee to identify how a chapter on capacity charges of power plants was included in a research report of the division.

"A three-member committee was formed headed by Additional Secretary Gazi Md Saifuzzaman," Abul Kashem Md Mohiuddin, secretary of IMED, told The Daily Star.

IMED sources said the committee was instructed to submit the report in seven working days.

The other two members are IMED Joint Secretary Wahida Hamid and Senior Assistant Secretary Md Moinuddin Khandaker.

On June 25, the IMED website uploaded a research paper on the power sector, saying

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NATO MEMBERSHIP

Leaders stop short of inviting Ukraine

REUTERS, Vilnius

Nato leaders yesterday agreed that Ukraine's future lies within the alliance but they stopped short of handing Kyiv the invitation or timetable for accession it sought, a stance that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had earlier criticised as "absurd".

The leaders met at a summit in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius as a Ukrainian counteroffensive against the Russian invasion forces occupying parts of the country was proceeding more slowly than Kyiv had hoped.

In its declaration, Nato also dropped the requirement for Ukraine to fulfil what is called a Membership Action Plan (MAP), effectively removing a hurdle on Kyiv's way into the alliance.

"Ukraine's future is in Nato," the declaration said. "We will be in a position to extend an invitation to Ukraine to join the alliance when allies agree and conditions are met."

They did not specify the conditions Ukraine needs to meet, but they said the alliance would help Kyiv to make progress on military interoperability

as well as on additional democratic and security sector reforms.

Zelenskiy voiced disappointment that Ukraine was not invited to join Nato, telling supporters in the Lithuanian capital: "Is this too big of a wish?"

"Nato will make Ukraine safer, Ukraine will make Nato stronger," he told the thousands of people, many waving Ukrainian flags, who gathered in central Vilnius, as snipers stood guard on rooftops.

Nato's decision highlighted the divisions among 31 members over giving a date or a straightforward invitation for Ukraine to join. Kyiv has been pushing for a swift entry, bound together with security guarantees, since even before Russia unleashed its invasion in February 2022.

But Zelensky did score wins elsewhere. French President Emmanuel Macron said Paris would start supplying long-range cruise missiles, following a similar announcement by Britain.

Germany, too, announced new aid worth 700 million euros, including two Patriot air defence missile launchers, and more tanks and fighting vehicles.



BLACKCAT HACKERS

170GB sensitive data stolen from Krishi Bank

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Notorious ransomware group ALPHV, also known as BlackCat, has claimed responsibility for a targeted attack on Bangladesh Krishi Bank.

According to a blogpost by ALPHV from July 7, the hackers successfully breached the bank's security, gaining access to sensitive data and paralyzing its operations.

ALPHV, also known as ALPHV-ng, BlackCat, and Noberus, is a ransomware-as-a-service (RaaS) group that emerged in November 2021.

According to the ALPHV post, ALPHV infiltrated Bangladesh Krishi Bank's network on June 21 this year and downloaded over 170GB of crucial information.

The compromised information includes highly sensitive financial records such as account details, statements, and tax information. The hackers also acquired employee data, including emails, passport copies, labour papers, and employment contracts, potentially exposing the personal information of the bank's employees. The group also obtained the bank's SQL backup on June 19.

"We are here to inform you about a data breach which took place at the 'Bangladesh Krishi Bank' network on June 21st 2023. As a result of this breach, our team had downloaded over 170GB of sensitive data from this network. Also we have encrypted all servers and data stored there. We have infiltrated Krishi Bank network and stayed there for 12 days, it was enough to study their documentation and download everything was needed," says the ALPHV post.

The bank did not respond to the attack and did not

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Consolation win for Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

from Chattogram

Bangladesh managed to avoid whitewash in the three-match series against Afghanistan with a seven-wicket win in the third and final ODI at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Shoriful Islam starred with the ball, registering his career-best figures of 4 for 21 while Taskin Ahmed, Taijul Islam also bagged two wickets each. Shakib Al Hasan bowled brilliantly and ended with miserly figures of 13 for one from his 10 overs as the visitors were bundled out for their lowest total of 126 against Bangladesh.

The hosts lost two early wickets in the form of Naim Sheikh and Najmul Hossain - both falling to Fazalhaq Farooqi, but skipper Liton Das and Shakib steadied things for the Tigers.

Shakib was dismissed after a run-a-ball 39, but remained unbeaten on 53 off 66 deliveries - his 10th half-century in the format,

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Even though successive victories for Afghanistan in the first two ODIs had rendered the final match of the series a dead rubber, pacer Shoriful Islam had a day to remember on Tuesday. The left-arm seamer registered his career-best four for 21 in nine overs to propel Bangladesh to a consolation seven-wicket victory in the final ODI in Chattogram.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Caterpillar's 'traumatic' venom traced to bacteria



AFP, Sydney

A prickly American caterpillar's trauma-inducing venom can punch a hole in cells thanks to a mechanism inherited 400 million years ago from bacteria, a team of Australian scientists said yesterday.

The asp caterpillar, which has a predilection for oak and elm trees in its native North America, looks almost innocuous, with bristles that resemble fur.

But those bristles conceal spines that can deliver "an excruciating sting likened to touching burning coal or blunt force trauma - often sending victims to hospital", said researchers at Australia's University of Queensland.

Scientists found its venom was unlike anything seen before in insects, said Andrew Walker, who led the molecular bioscience research team.