

# Food import shoots up

## 1954 lakh MT bought till March this FY

**REAZ AHMAD**  
Food grain import in fiscal 2002-03 has hit a record in 22 years barring 1998-99 when the country was hit by the worst deluge of the century. According to Bangladesh Economic Review 2003, released with the budget documents of 2003-04 on Thursday, 19.54 lakh metric tonnes (MT) of food grain (rice and wheat) was imported during the first nine months (till March 30 this year) of the current financial year. However, government statistics in the economic review show the country's projected net food grain output at 252.72 lakh MT against the domestic requirement of 223.51 lakh MT. But unofficial sources said the country had to depend greatly on rice and wheat imported from India

following a huge crop loss in the last aman season. The import volume might rise to 25 lakh MT by the end of this month, they estimated. The economic review mentioned that the 1998-99 deluge shattered the agrarian economy as about 75 per cent of the country's land area remained under floodwater for several weeks. In that fiscal, 42.56 lakh MT of food grain was imported to meet the shortfall. Year-wise food grain import volume is : 1.14 lakh MT (fiscal 1981-82), 8.68 lakh MT (82-83), 6.15 lakh MT (83-84), 12.87 lakh MT (84-85), 1.13 lakh MT (85-86), 3.42 lakh MT (86-87), 11.30 lakh MT (87-88), 7.80 lakh MT (88-89), 5.84 lakh MT (89-90), 0.37 lakh MT (90-91), 1.50 lakh MT (91-92), 4.48 lakh MT

(92-93), 3.12 lakh MT (93-94), 16.33 lakh MT (94-95), 16.89 lakh MT (95-96), 3.49 lakh MT (96-97), 14.02 lakh MT (97-98), 42.56 lakh MT (98-99), 12.34 lakh MT (99-2000), 10.63 lakh MT (2000-01), 12.89 lakh MT (01-02) and 19.54 lakh MT (in the first 9 months of 2002-03). Importers, traders and market sources attributed the sharp rise in food grain import this year mainly to crop loss and favourable profit margin (due to lower price in India and higher price in Bangladesh). Government statistics however do not reflect any significant shortfall in domestic rice and wheat production. According to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, the country produced 18.51 lakh MT of aus

against a production target of 18.4 lakh MT and 111.15 lakh MT of aman against a target of 114.6 lakh MT this fiscal. The economic review said although wheat output fell short of the target, the boro production target of 130.3 lakh MT would be achieved. The total output of aus, aman, boro and wheat this year is projected to be 280.8 lakh MT. Leaving aside 10 per cent for use as seed and for some other uses and wastage, the net food grain output would stand at 252.72 lakh MT, it said. The domestic food grain requirement is 223.51 lakh MT, according to an estimate by the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit of the Food Ministry.

## Budget will destroy the poor, patronise the rich: Hasina

**UNB, Dhaka**  
Awami League President and Leader of the Opposition in Parliament Sheikh Hasina has come down heavily on the new budget, accusing the BNP-Jamaat alliance government of protecting the interest of the rich at the cost of the poor. "By imposing tax and VAT on essentials, the alliance government has sacrificed the interest of the poor... it is the budget for devastating the poor and patronising the rich," she said, addressing the installation of UK unit of Jubo League in East London Thursday. Rejecting the budget for fiscal 2003-04, Hasina urged the people to build up a united movement against the BNP-Jamaat government to protect the interest of common people. **SEE PAGE 11 COL 3**

## DOWN TO EARTH

# Dhaka's growing noise pollution

**ASM NURUNNABI**

While the hazards of air and water pollution are well-known to many -- thanks to the relentless media campaign against these two forms of environmental pollution --, there is a considerable lack of awareness when it comes to noise pollution in the city. In the absence of any sort of enforcement or compliance of zoning laws, a state of utter confusion prevails in the realm of environmental acoustics such that we see areas clearly defined as residential, commercial, industrial, recreational, etc. overlapping one another. So we find an inter-mingling of a number of disparate entities in a given area. For

example, in a predominantly residential area, often there are mills and factories, commercial projects and educational institutions. Also it is possible to find hospitals or libraries and recreational facilities like parks located cheek by jowl. Not to mention that many hospitals are also located in busy commercial areas with its heavy vehicular traffic making unbearably loud noise with their continuous, unrelenting honking. The intensity of sound is measured in logarithmic units known as decibels. At 80 decibels, noise pollution may cause loss of hearing; continuous exposure to noise in excess of 90 decibels, a level of **SEE PAGE 11 COL 4**

## CPB terms it a budget prescribed by donors

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
The proposed budget for fiscal 2003-04 followed "donors' prescription" instead of giving the much needed support to the "poor people's economy" to alleviate poverty. Price increase of agricultural inputs, gas and power will hit hard the farmers and small entrepreneurs, affecting development of the country. Speakers said this at a discussion on "Budget 2003-2004", organised by the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB) and held at its office yesterday. Development of human resource for poverty reduction is not possible without proportionate increase of allocations for education and health sectors, they felt. Chaired by CPB President Monzurul Ahsan Khan, the discussion **SEE PAGE 11 COL 2**

# Gram Sarkar set to take shape from next month

**SHAKHAWAT LITON**  
The formation of Gram Sarkar, which has drawn flak from political leaders and NGO activists working on local government, will begin on July 1. The local government, rural development and cooperatives ministry has sent circulars to Upazila Nirbahi Officers (UNOs), asking them to complete the formation of 40,392 Gram Sarkars by mid-August, official sources said. One Gram Sarkar will be instituted in each of 40,392 wards under 4,488 Union Parishads, the lowest tier of local government, with the ward member as its head. The delivering of ruling BNP's election pledge for Gram Sarkar to welfare of rural people comes over 20 months after the party's assumption of power. But some political parties and local government experts opposed

the concept of Gram Sarkar, which they fear would make the UPs more dysfunctional and rather empower village hooligans. The government made the provision with an ill motive, General Secretary of the Awami League Abdul Jalil told The Daily Star yesterday. "They (the four-party alliance) want to strengthen their own political hold at the grassroots level, using state funds," said Jalil vowing to resist the move. The Jatiya Party (Ershad) president member, GM Kader, MP said the nomination of ruling party men for Gram Sarkar may anger other parties and lead to political strife, Kadersaid. Dr Badiul Alam Majumdar, an NGO activist working on local government issues, expressed scepticism and said Gram Sarkars would end up as parallels to UPs instead of becoming their associate bodies.

But State Minister for LGRD Ziaul Haque Zia said Gram Sarkar would be a unique system of developing the rural community. "It will not allow any scope for politicisation. Elected members of Union Parishads will be heading the Gram Sarkars. And professionals irrespective of party affiliation will contribute to Gram Sarkars as members," he said. Despite strong opposition from the Awami League, the Jatiya Sangsad passed a bill on Gram Sarkar last February. According to the new legislation, Gram Sarkar will act as an associate body of the UP, and each will consist of 13 members, one headman and one adviser. The women members from reserved seats of UPs will act as advisers. The members of Gram Sarkars **SEE PAGE 11 COL 6**



Awami League Abdus Samad Azad addresses a rally on Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday protesting the budget for fiscal 2003-04 and filing of 'false' case against party general secretary Abdul Jalil.

## US search for 'Chemical Ali' leaves four Iraqis dead

**AFP, Dhuluiya**  
A massive US army sweep for "Chemical Ali," a bloody cousin of former Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, left four Iraqis dead in the town of Dhuluiya, 60 kilometers north of Baghdad, witnesses told AFP yesterday. The search started Sunday and came to a close yesterday morning when US armored vehicles withdrew from Dhuluiya, the sources said, adding that two residents had been killed by US fire, one died of a brain hemorrhage after he was beaten up, and a fourth of a heart attack after being interrogated by the army. The six-day raid was part of a much larger army campaign, dubbed Operation "Peninsula Strike," which aims to crush pockets of Iraqi resistance in the Baqubah-Balad area, northeast of the Iraqi capital.



National Teachers and Employees' Front demonstrates in Dhaka yesterday demanding Dearness Allowance.

# 3 of a family among 9 killed in Kashmir blast, shootings

**AFP, Srinagar**  
Nine people, including three members of a family and two Indian soldiers, were killed in violence in Indian-administered Kashmir, police said yesterday. The soldiers were killed and another four injured in an explosion overnight of a land mine planted by suspected Islamic militants in south Kashmir. A police spokesman said an army vehicle ran over the mine in the village of Wangam, near Kokernag, 70 kilometers (44 miles) south of Srinagar, Kashmir's summer capital.

"The mine explosion ripped through the army vehicle killing two soldiers on the spot and injuring four others seriously," the spokesman said. Army reinforcements reached the scene and removed the dead and the injured. Indian soldiers, backed by police and paramilitary forces, later launched a manhunt for the rebels, but no one was immediately arrested. Kashmir's dominant rebel group Hizbul Mujahedin and another hardline group, Jamiat-ul-Mujahedin, jointly claimed responsibility for the attack, local news

agency Current News Service (CNS) said. Suspected Muslim militants, meanwhile, barged into the house of Ali Mohammed Mir in the village of Manidora in northern Kupwara district and fired indiscriminately, killing three people and injuring Mir, a police spokesman said. Among the dead were Mir's 60-year-old mother, 25-year-old wife and a close male relative, police said. Mir had allegedly been working with Indian security forces. He is being treated in a military hospital. **SEE PAGE 11 COL 3**

## Outlawed party leader murdered in Pabna

**UNB, Pabna**  
A regional commander of an outlawed party was murdered at village Charpara under Ataikula Upazila of the district on Thursday night. Family sources said a gang of miscreants called Shah Alam out of his residence and slaughtered him. Police said Shah Alam was wanted in several cases, including murder. In another incident, rivals killed one Laim Uddin in Santhi Upazila the same night as a sequel to previous enmity. Separate cases have been filed with local police.

# Fresh areas in Moulvibazar flooded

**UNB, Moulvibazar**  
Flood situation in the district further deteriorated yesterday as water levels of Monu and Dholai rivers continued to rise due to onrush of water from the hills. Monu was flowing 1.12 meter above the danger level at Chandnight and 1.14 meter at Monu railway station. Officials said breaches developed at 25 points of the Monu and Dholai protection embankments, submerging fresh areas. According to local people, a man was swept away by the gushing water at Shahpur village in Tilagarh Union of Kulaura upazila. He was identified as Saifulah, 60. The worst affected upazila was Komolganj. Nine unions and one pourasava in Komolganj upazila, five unions in Kulaura, five in Srimangol, two in Rajnagar and one in Sadar have been affected by the flood. **SEE PAGE 11 COL 3**

## Hasina returns home today

**STAFF CORRESPONDENT**  
Leader of the Opposition in Parliament and Awami League President Sheikh Hasina returns home today, ending a month-long tour to France, USA and UK. A British Airways flight from London carrying Hasina is scheduled to arrive in Dhaka at 6:00am **SEE PAGE 11 COL 3**

	Sun Rises	Sun Sets
June 14		6-47 pm
June 15	5-11 am	

  

Prayer Timings		
June 14		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-15	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-53	6-58
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation

# WMD hunt failures haunt US

**AFP, Washington**  
A covert, specialized army unit scoured Iraq for weapons of mass destruction, even before the US-led war, but has come up empty handed, The Washington Post said yesterday. Drawn from the US Army's special mission units known as Delta Force, Task Force 20 "found no working nonconventional munitions, long-range missiles or missile parts, bulk stores of chemical or biological warfare agents or enrichment technology for the core of a nuclear weapon," said the daily. Citing sources with firsthand knowledge of the unit's mission and others with access to its reports, the post said Task Force 20's sent "a stream of 'initially promising reports' to a small group of

Washington officials. Those reports prompted US President George W. Bush and his senior national security advisers to feel optimistic about the eventual discovery of illegal weapons in Iraq, the military and intelligence sources in Washington and Baghdad told the daily. Britain and the United States have come under increasing pressure to account for the lack of any proof of WMDs found so far in Iraq, before or after the coalition war in March and April that removed Saddam Hussein from power. A proposed investigation by the US Senate into the apparent discrepancy between pre-war US intelligence reports on Iraq's weapons programs -- which motivated the war on Iraq -- and the post-war reality was rejected earlier this week

by the Republican majority in the upper house -- Bush is a Republican. Task Force 20's chief assignment is to "seize, destroy, render safe, capture, or recover weapons of mass destruction," according to a Special Operations mission statement obtained by The Washington Post. In what is described as "far more important than that of the search teams operating in the open," the task force "staged raids ahead of the US and British ground advance to seize suspected caches of nonconventional arms, gathered hundreds of weapons samples and captured as many as half of the 'high value' weapons scientists and Baath Party leaders now in US custody, the daily said. So far, military and intelligence

sources told the daily, "the expectations are unfulfilled." The army unit is admired for its exploits, the sources told the daily. Among other missions, it was responsible for rescuing US army prisoner of war Jessica Lynch, captured Palestinian guerrilla leader Mohammed Abbas in Baghdad in mid-April and the Iraqi scientists nicknamed Mrs. Anthrax and Dr. Germ. Meanwhile, the head of the US-backed Iraqi National Congress (INC), Ahmad Chalabi, said Thursday that he put US officials in contact with three Iraqi defectors who provided detailed information about Saddam Hussein's alleged weapons of mass destruction **SEE PAGE 11 COL 2**