

## Green tealeaves used as fertiliser!

Govt yet to live up to its promise of setting up processing plants in Panchagarh region

PINAKI ROY, back from Tentulia

Nearly 500 tons of green tealeaves worth around Tk 1 crore, which tea estates of the country's potential tea-growing region in Panchagarh district produce, go down the drain every year because of the absence of tea-processing plants there.

Some 200 small tea-growers, as a result, are not making profits from their investment in the tea estates.

The annual domestic tea consumption has doubled to 40 million kg from 20 million kg 10 years ago, according to Bangladesh Tea Board (BTB).

"The government assured us of setting up a tea processing factory when we started growing tea in the gardens here in 2001. But the government is yet to do anything," Md Shah Alam, manager of Karotoa Tea Garden, told The Daily Star.

"Now some growers are using the leaves as compost fertiliser and some are throwing them away

as they have to pluck the tealeaves to make the gardens bushy," he said.

Different ministers including former commerce minister Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury and high officials including top officials from Bangladesh Tea Board had assured the tea-growers of adequate infrastructure including processing plants.

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Gone to waste... Labourers at Dahuk Tea Estate in Panchagarh recently pluck tealeaves only to throw them away in the absence of a tea processing plant.



Too hot to handle... the prices of aubergine, left, spiralled to a new high of Tk 80 a kg from Tk 55 and other popular iftar items including dates ranged between Tk 50 and Tk 250 a kg against Tk 40 to Tk 150 in the capital's Karwan Bazar Kitchen Market yesterday on the eve of the Ramadan.



PHOTO: STAR

## Low over Bay weakens Moderate rain likely

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The well-marked low over the Bay has weakened and is moving towards the Myanmar coast, the met office said.

In this season of transition comparatively cold wind at night and dew drops on grass in the morning and evening remind us of the upcoming winter season, met officials said.

"Now wind from two distinctly different directions blows - the receding southwest wind and upcoming northwest wind. We feel cold due to the northwest wind that has started blowing by now," said Arzumand Habid, deputy director of the met office.

The highest temperature in Dhaka was 29 degrees celsius as the sky was cloudy due to the low over the Bay.

The prevailing low over the northeast Bay and adjoining area off Chittagong-Akyab coast moved slightly northwestwards and weakened into a low pressure, the met office sources said.

"The low is likely to move in the northeasterly direction and become unimportant," Shahjahan Alam, duty officer of the met office told The Daily Star.

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## Holy month of self-restraint begins

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The holy month of Ramadan begins today as the moon was sighted in Bangladesh yesterday evening.

A meeting of the National Moon-sighting Committee chaired by its Chairman and State Minister for Religious Affairs Mosharrif Hossain Shajahan confirmed the moonrise for the month of Ramadan yesterday.

The holy Shab-e-Qadr will be observed on the night of November 10 as the Ramadan begins today, said a press release of the Islamic Foundation Bangladesh.

Throughout this holy month, people belonging to the Muslim community will observe self-restraint and sanctity, two core aspects of the Ramadan, by fasting.

President Prof Iajuddin Ahmed, Prime Minister Khaleda Zia and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina greeted the public on the eve of Ramadan.

The president said this holy month

brings ample scope for the Muslims to practise self-restraint and self-purification every year. He expressed the hope that social and spiritual teachings of the holy month will be reflected in the life of all.

Prime Minister Khaleda Zia said the main teachings of this month are self-restraint and sacrifice. She asked the people to come forward to establish peace in the country burying all differences. She also expressed the hope that all will keep the sanctity of the holy month.

Awami League chief and Leader of the Opposition Sheikh Hasina urged all to observe the sanctity of Ramadan. In her message, Hasina expressed her concern at the rocketing prices of essentials, asking all to keep the price level in the reach of ordinary people.

Heads of state and government of Muslim countries greeted the president on the occasion of Ramadan. They also expressed sincere wishes for the welfare of the

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## Aubergine sells at Tk 80 a kg!

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The prices of aubergine yesterday jumped to a record Tk 80 a kg from Tk 55 in the capital's kitchen markets on the eve of the Ramadan.

Aubergine is used in preparing a very popular 'iftar' item, *beguni*.

Tomato came next to aubergine selling at Tk 55 a kg yesterday against around Tk 40 on the previous day.

Two other food items in high demand during the Ramadan - puffed rice and gram (local brand) - also had a price spiral of more than Tk 5 a kg on the day, selling at Tk 28 and Tk 30 a kg.

Prices of other iftar items such as

various categories of dates ranged between Tk 50 and Tk 250 per kg yesterday against Tk 40 to Tk 150 previously. Pressed rice sold at Tk 25 per kg against Tk 20 last week.

Prices of most essentials and vegetables in the kitchen markets that shot up by at least Tk 2 to Tk 15 a kg over the last one week showed a fresh hike yesterday.

Lentil was selling at Tk 42 a kg yesterday, Tk 2 higher than on the previous days.

Onion and garlic yesterday sold at Tk 28 and Tk 30 per kg against Tk 24 and Tk 25 last week, ginger and turmeric at Tk 68 and Tk 62 a kg

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IFTAR-RELATED ITEMS	TAKA PER KG YESTERDAY	TAKA PER KG A WEEK AGO
Aubergine	80.00	55.00
Puffed Rice	28.00	22.00
Gram	30.00	25.00
Fresh Flour	40.00	30.00
Onion	25.00	24.00
Flattened Rice	25.00	20.00
Dates	50.00-250.00	40.00-150.00
Banana	40.00per doz	30.00per doz
Orange	120.00 per doz	100.00 per doz
Apple	60.00	50.00

## House committees as good as ineffective

Crucial bodies do not sit regularly, meetings lack quorum

SHAKHAWAT LITON

The parliamentary committee system has virtually become ineffective as the ruling coalition-formed standing committees in the absence of opposition lawmakers hardly played their due role in overseeing government functioning.

Most of the parliamentary standing committees do not sit regularly though Rules of Procedure of the Jatiya Sangsad require them to sit at least once a month. Moreover, a number of meetings saw quorum crisis.

The House bodies are to ensure transparency in the ministries' activities and their accountability to

the Jatiya Sangsad.

Meetings of parliamentary sub-committees formed to probe alleged corruption and irregularities in various ministries also witnessed futile discussions due to the BNP-led ruling alliance lawmakers' indifference to corruption issues, sources said.

Moreover, about 40 percent of the alliance lawmakers on an average dodged the committees' proceedings, sources in Parliament Secretariat said.

Some committees just echoed the views of the ministries on any issues. For example, the standing committee on the home ministry at

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## Dawn-to-dusk rickshaw strike today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rickshaw-Van Malik Sramik Sangram Parishad observes a dawn-to-dusk strike today in the city to protest seizure of unlicensed rickshaws without providing rickshaw-van-pullers with alternative jobs.

Sukur Ahmed, convener of Rickshaw-Van Malik Sramik Sangram Parishad, a union of rickshaw-van owners and pullers organisations, yesterday said 15 organisations have supported today's strike.

They will picket in all the areas under the 21 metropolitan police stations to make the strike a success, he added.

On unauthorised rickshaws, he said Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) has not been renewing licences for the last four years. "In that case, how should they identify if any rickshaw

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## Row over power-sharing dogs ruling coalition

IOJ, BJP threaten to boycott govt programmes

REZAUL KARIM

The longstanding commotion in the ruling four-party alliance over the crucial issue of power-sharing has intensified with two of its components threatening to boycott all government programmes from now on.

Alliance sources said discontent was brewing in the coalition as both factions of the Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) and Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) were not included in any government forum even more than three years into the alliance's coming to power.

A BNP policymaker admitted relations with the IOJ and BJP are getting increasingly strained and

that it would be difficult to maintain unity of the coalition if the trend is not checked.

Top leaders of the IOJ and BJP said days are not far when they will have to part with the BNP-Jamaat alliance. "We will not hesitate to quit the alliance because we have not been included either in cabinet or in any forum of the government," said an IOJ leader.

Seeking anonymity, he said the BNP high command has been buying time for the last three years to include IOJ and BJP men in the cabinet or various government bodies, giving them ministerial status.

Referring to several meetings of top leaders of the alliance with BNP

Chairperson and Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, the IOJ leader said each time the PM gave 'fresh commitment' to include representatives of all the alliance partners in development bodies at union and district levels and various other bodies but it ended up in nothing.

Talking to The Daily Star senior leaders of the IOJ and BJP said they have decided that from now on no top leaders of the two parties will attend any government or alliance programmes. They will send mid or lower level leaders to such programmes just to show their presence.

Sources mentioned leaders like chiefs of the two IOJ factions Azizul

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## KIDNEY DIALYSIS FLUID Firm gets import nod thru' fake documents

NAIMUL HAQ

The Drug Administration (DA) granted registration for import of kidney dialysis fluid to a private company that submitted 'fake' documents to gain the monopoly business, sources said.

Jahanara Clinic Private (JCP) Ltd had first applied on February 8 last year for registration to import the fluid used for patients with loss of functions of both kidneys.

The Drug Control Committee (DCC) on September 10 the same year reviewed the application and rejected it as the JCP did not provide documents showing the fluid to be imported from Malaysia is also marketed freely in at least two developed countries as required by the DA rules.

On October 15 and December

27, the JCP again applied and the DCC rejected its applications saying the company did not submit documents required to obtain import registration.

After a top-level change office in the DA, the company obtained import registration on June 23 this year for three categories of the fluid - Plasmacare H3, Renacid K2 and Renacarb K4 - all manufactured by Ain Medicare Ltd. in Malaysia. They opened letter of credit on September 9 at Uttara Bank Shantinagar branch in Dhaka.

But a reputed company manufacturing similar fluids complained to the DA on August 25 about the authenticity of a free sales certificate (FSC) on the fluids the JCP obtained

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## World opinion backs Kerry against Bush in US polls

AFP, Sydney

George W. Bush's policies have stirred up deep global resentment and the world would much prefer John Kerry to be the next US president, research by leading global newspapers published yesterday showed.

A collaborative polling exercise involving 10 newspapers around the world, including the Sydney Morning Herald in Australia, showed hostility is directed not only at the Bush administration but also at the image of the United States.

The project, initiated by Canada's Quebec-based La Presse newspaper, also included France's Le Monde, The Guardian of Britain, Japan's Asahi Shimbun, Russia's

Moscow News, Mexico's Reforma, Israel's Haaretz and Spain's El Pais.

They found that voters in eight out of the 10 countries - excluding Israel and Russia - want to see Kerry, the Democrat challenger beat the Republican Bush in the November 2 presidential election.

Their findings, the product of identical polls taken in September, also suggested the Bush administration was facing isolation and hostility rarely seen among its closest allies.

In most of the countries surveyed, including Australia, opinions towards the United States deteriorated over the first Bush term.

"Only Israel, lockstep with the US in terms of foreign policy objectives and delivery, ran against the trend,"

the Herald said.

Of Israelis surveyed, 40 percent said their attitude towards the US had improved over the past two or three years, while 26 percent said their view had soured.

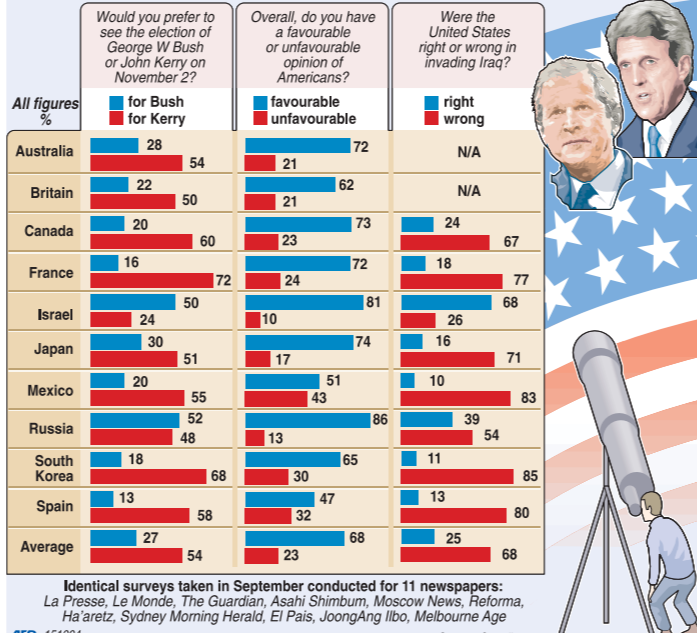
"This contrasts with the response elsewhere," the paper said. "In Canada, 64 percent said their attitude had worsened, France 70 percent, Britain 45 percent, Japan 74 percent, South Korea 67 percent and Australia 54 percent."

Traditional rival Russia had recently embraced it "with the zeal of a convert," supporting Bush by 52-48 over Kerry while 86 percent were favourably disposed towards Americans. However, they opposed the Iraq war by 54-39.

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## World opinion wants Americans to vote Bush out

Global poll in 10 countries shows public prefers Kerry, disapproves of war in Iraq



Identical surveys taken in September conducted for 11 newspapers: La Presse, Le Monde, The Guardian, Asahi Shimbun, Moscow News, Reforma, Haaretz, Sydney Morning Herald, El Pais, JoongAng Ilbo, Melbourne Age 15/10/04 Source: Guardian

## US unprepared to handle election fraud: Congress

AFP, Washington

The US government is ill-prepared to address allegations of voting fraud should they arise during next month's presidential and legislative elections, a congressional report concluded Thursday.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) Congress's independent investigative arm, determined in a 106-page report that the US Justice Department has not established procedures for documenting voting irregularities or voter intimidation, and has no clearcut policy for responding to such allegations.

Lawmakers who requested the report expressed outrage at the findings.

"It is inexcusable that the Justice Department is not fully prepared to

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## Grenade attack puts AL district councils on hold

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The August 21 deadly grenade attack dealt a body blow to the main opposition Awami League's (AL) efforts to shore up its countrywide network, holding fresh councils in districts.

The party moved to wrap up most district councils by September after missing at least three deadlines since March 2003.

"The Awami League tried to bring dynamic leadership to the district units when the alliance government stepped into the fourth year in office in October, but the grenade snaggled all efforts," an AL leader said.

The AL could not hold any district

council after the grenade attack that killed 20 people and wounded a further 200, including senior party leaders, in a gory episode that sent a shock wave.

The AL policymakers are now thinking of completing the long-standing councils by mid-November, the month of Ramadan. They say the AL chief, Sheikh Hasina, did not announce a tough programme from the October 3 grand rally because of Ramadan that begins in mid-October.

"The party will have to put its own house in order first and then fashion a strong opposition alliance," the AL leader said.

AL Organising Secretary Saber

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