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Rice becomes 20pc costlier in a year

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of rice have shot up by 20 percent on average in the last one year, according to a report by Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB).

The TCB report, prepared yesterday, says price of fine rice went up by 15 percent, medium quality by 20.58 percent and coarse rice by 22.41 percent.

Coarse rice was selling at Tk 17 to Tk 18.5 a kg yesterday, the prices of which were between Tk 14 to Tk 15 a year ago, said the state-run trading corporation in its market monitoring report.

Yesterday's price of fine rice was Tk 22 to Tk 24 per kg that was between Tk 19 and Tk 21 a year ago.

Prices of medium quality rice
SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

Armoured cars for Rab

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) is going to use armoured cars in its operations as the Ministry of Home Affairs has planned to give the elite crime busting force a military mould.

As per decision of the home ministry, Rab has already started rehearsal for use of armoured cars, generally used by defence forces as war vehicles.

More sophisticated arms, equipment and vehicles will be provided to the elite force in phases, sources said.
SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) members in armoured cars take part in the Independence Day Parade in the capital on Saturday.

KIBRIA KILLING FBI records witnesses' statements

UNB, Habiganj

FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) Special Agent Trung Vu and two other US intelligence personnel yesterday recorded statements of three witnesses to January 27 grenade attack at Boidyer Bazar that killed former finance minister Shah AMS Kibria.

In the morning, the US intelligence agents questioned three witnesses—former union parishad member Ali Asgar and Idris Ali and Sanjab Ali of Bongao village. They had earlier given statements to a first class magistrate under Section 164 of the CrPC.

The team left Habiganj town for
SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

Ten colourful boats take part in a boat race organised yesterday in the Buriganga river to celebrate the Independence Day 2005.

JUDGE'S CAR 3 traffic cops apologise to High Court

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three traffic police men, charged with contempt of court, yesterday tendered an unqualified apology to the High Court (HC) for stopping the car of a HC judge on March 6 to serve a traffic warrant.

Traffic sergeants ATM Iqbal and Mozammel Haq and Traffic Constable Shahidul Islam yesterday appeared in court in line with the orders of the HC bench of Justice SK Sinha and Justice Shamim Hasnain, which were issued on March 14.

The HC asked them to submit an affidavit of their unconditional apologies to court by April 3.

On March 14, the court also
SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Huge quake prompts tsunami fears

'Tens' of people killed in Indonesia

AGENCIES, Banda Aceh, Indonesia

A huge earthquake off the coast of Indonesia triggered tsunami alerts across Asia late last night, causing widespread panic in countries where over 270,000 people were killed by giant waves just three months ago.

The undersea quake measuring over 8.7 on the Richter Scale prompted India, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand to join Indonesia in issuing tsunami alerts. Unconfirmed television reports said "tens of people" had been killed on the remote Indonesian island of Nias.
SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

However nearly three hours after the quake struck off the northwest Indonesian coast, Indonesian and Thai meteorological officials gave the all clear and said it appeared the quake had not caused any tsunami. One official said any possible tsunami could be headed toward the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius and Madagascar where tsunami alerts were also promptly issued.

"If the tsunami were going to happen, it would have already happened," said Chalermchai Akekantrong, deputy director general of Thailand's meteorological department.
SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

CARETAKER REFORMS

Opposition parties to finalise proposals in mid-April

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The mainstream opposition parties have planned to finalise next month their reform proposals on the caretaker government and Election Commission (EC), sources said.

Awami League (AL), 11-Party Alliance and Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) are preparing separate proposals for the reforms which will be put together to make a final proposal.

The opposition parties have taken up the issue of reforms to ensure that the next parliamentary
SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

PSI firm, its MD dodge Tk 74cr tax

Finds NBR probe

STAR REPORT

The National Board of Revenue (NBR) has found a pre-shipment inspection (PSI) firm, which assesses duties for the Board, to have dodged Tk 64 crore in taxes in the last three years.

It has also found that the managing director (MD) of the PSI firm, BSI Inspectorate Ltd, has evaded payment of another Tk 10 crore in income taxes since 1999.

The NBR has served the firm and the MD with legal notices.

According to an NBR report filed last week to the parliamentary standing committee on estimate,
SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

the BSI will now have to pay fine five times the amount evaded, which is around Tk 386 crore.

Its Managing Director Sardar Sharfuddin Ahmed will also have to pay around Tk 55 crore along with the fine.

The NBR says the BSI had received Tk 174 crore from customs houses in PSI fees in 2001-02, 2002-03 and 2003-04 financial years. But in its return sheet submitted to the NBR, it showed the same at only Tk 2.38 crore in three years.

BSI Inspectorate Ltd, previously known as Inspectorate Griffith Ltd, is operating here through its local
SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Pakistan win a thriller

REUTERS, Bangalore

Occasional leg-spinner Shahid Afridi helped Pakistan to a thrilling 168-run series-leveling win in the third and final Test against India.

Afridi grabbed three key wickets for 13 runs yesterday, including that of Sachin Tendulkar for a 140-
SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

minute 16 as India, set 383 to win, were dismissed for 214 on a turning fifth-day pitch.

Tendulkar's only consolation was becoming India's highest run-scorer in his 123rd Test, overtaking Sunil Gavaskar's 10,122 runs when he steered paceman Mohammad
SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

Travel alert for Australians in Bangladesh

BDNEWS, Dhaka

Australia has advised its citizens in Bangladesh to exercise a "high degree of caution".

"We have concerns that terrorists in Bangladesh may be planning attacks against western interests," says a recent advice of Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Australia.

"These could occur at any time and could be directed against any locations frequented by foreigners, including but not limited to, commercial and public areas, hotels, clubs, restaurants, bars, schools, marketplaces, places of worship, outdoor recreation events and tourist areas."

The advice also says the
SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

Smooth flow of water is hampered in Ramchandrapur Khal, one of the city's 43 drainage canals, due to encroachment.

City canal cleanup from today

Illegal structures to be demolished to restore normal flow

ABDUL KADER

The Dhaka Water and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) today launches a massive drive to restore normal flow in the drainage canals, beginning with removal of all illegal encroachments on Kalyanpur canal and its branches, to protect the capital from waterlogging in rainy season.

Wasa sources said the drive, starting at 10:30 am, aims to demolish illegal structures on eight canals, including the Kalyanpur canal, on a priority basis this year. The rest are the Begunbari canal, the Mohakhali canal, the Zirani canal in Rampura, the Kataru canal in Mohammadpur, the Ramchandrapur canal in Mohammadpur, the Ibrahimpur canal and Gulshan-Banani Lake.
The illegal structures on the
SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

canals include boundary walls, shanties, shops, houses and cross-dams constructed for fisheries.

The canals will be demarcated with flags after the demolition drive, and re-excavated. Of the 43 canals, many have already disappeared, the sources mentioned.

"The drive is going to be conducted without any publicity to avoid creation of obstacles to it," one source said.

Canals in the 137-square kilometre-area inside the Dhaka flood protection embankment were navigable in the past and carried the extra load of water, especially during the monsoon.

Of the 43 canals, some 25 are still 'recognisable' and 19 still have lean flows despite encroachments.
SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Over 50 Bangla Bhai victims seek fair probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

More than 50 people from Bagmara upazila who were tortured last year by Bangla Bhai and his Jagrata Muslim Janata Bangladesh (JMJB) cadres demanded a fair probe into the torture incidents' here yesterday.

Speaking to the press at the Rajshahi court premises, they retold their horrible experiences of being abused at JMJB camps and complained that JMJB cadres were still moving freely in the areas, many of them becoming rich overnight through the extortion of tolls.

"One can see torture victims in any public place he visits in Bagmara, as if all Bagmara dwellers were outlaws. We want justice as JMJB men tortured us and the police helped them," said

Amjad Hossain Mondol Amir, a rice trader at Jugipara Katila village, who alleged he was picked up by police in April of last year after
SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

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