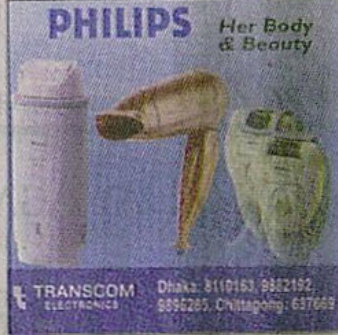




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2 outlaws killed in 'crossfire'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Two outlawed party cadres were killed in "crossfire" between police and their accomplices in separate incidents in Kushtia and Chuadanga yesterday.

Purbo Banglar Communist Party (PBCP) cadre Mizanur Rahman Mizan was killed at Belgachhi Rothitola village in Alamdanga upazila of Chuadanga, while outlawed New Biplobi Communist Party (NBCP) cadre Abdul Latif was killed at Hizlaboi village in Khoksa upazila of Kushtia.

In Chuadanga, the police arrested PBCP cadre Mizanur Rahman from a house of Houshkhali village in Alamdanga on Friday.

During a police interrogation, the accused in 12 cases including seven for murder admitted having firearms hidden at different places of Chuadanga.

A police team led by officer-in-charge (OC) of Alamdanga Police Station Abdul Baset Khan went to Houshkhali and Kedarnagar at about 10:00pm and recovered one

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Saarc summit in Dhaka Nov 12-13

Pakistan announces dates; Morshed Khan says all members have agreed to take part

AFP, Islamabad

The twice-postponed 13th summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) will be held in Dhaka on November 12-13, Pakistan Prime Minister Shaikat Aziz announced in Islamabad yesterday.

Pakistan, the current chair of the seven-nation regional body, issued the new dates after consultation with the host Bangladesh and other member states.

The summit had originally been slated for January 9-11 but was cancelled after the December 26 tsunami

disaster that battered Asian shores. The tsunami devastated coastal areas of three Saarc countries - Sri Lanka, India and the Maldives.

The summit was rescheduled for February 6-7 but was postponed again at the last minute after India pulled out citing concerns about the security situation in the region.

Aziz said the summit will be preceded by meetings of the standing committee and the council of ministers from November 9-11. "We believe that regional cooperation is an important vehicle for faster economic growth and development," he told reporters.

The Saarc, which groups Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, was founded in 1985 to forge economic solidarity and boost standards of living among the region's 1.4 billion people.

The grouping has few achievements to show mainly due to tensions between its two largest members, India and Pakistan.

UNB adds: Foreign Minister M Morshed Khan yesterday said all the seven member states have agreed to participate in the November 12-13 summit.

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Police seek approval to quiz Bidisha at hospital

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Investigation officer (IO) of the theft case filed against Bidisha, estranged wife of former president HM Ershad, on Friday petitioned a court for allowing him to interrogate her at hospital.

Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Gulshan Police Station Kazi Nure Alam, who is also the IO of the case, filed the petition with the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's (CMM) Court, Dhaka.

Bidisha, now under treatment at the prison cell of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital, was taken on a three-day remand on June 5. The IO in the petition said she gave important information during interrogation while on remand. But she needs to be quizzed further and intensively, he added.

The defence opposed the move

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Eating dangerously

Watchdog limps with weak laws, staff shortage

PINAKI ROY

City markets are flooded with adulterated and contaminated food items, cheating consumers and exposing them to grave health risks, while the government, hindered by weak laws and staff shortages, is nearly powerless to check it.

A recent investigation by The Daily Star has found that food is

no longer what it seems. Several weeks of investigation and dozens of spot inspections have revealed that, largely unknown to the public, wholesalers and retailers mix various substandard and artificial chemicals - sometimes even deadly poisons - in food items to make them look more attractive. Hardly anything available in the market - from life saving medicine to fine quality

rice, colorful pulses, vegetables, fruits and big fish, jams, jelly, ice-cream, and sweetmeat - remains uncontaminated by this evil alchemy.

The Daily Star has also found, through interviews with several government agencies, that adulteration flourishes because of a widespread breakdown in the government regulatory system.

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PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

Foods prepared with substandard items and in unhygienic conditions pose serious risks for public health. The photo taken yesterday shows the inside of a bakery in the capital.

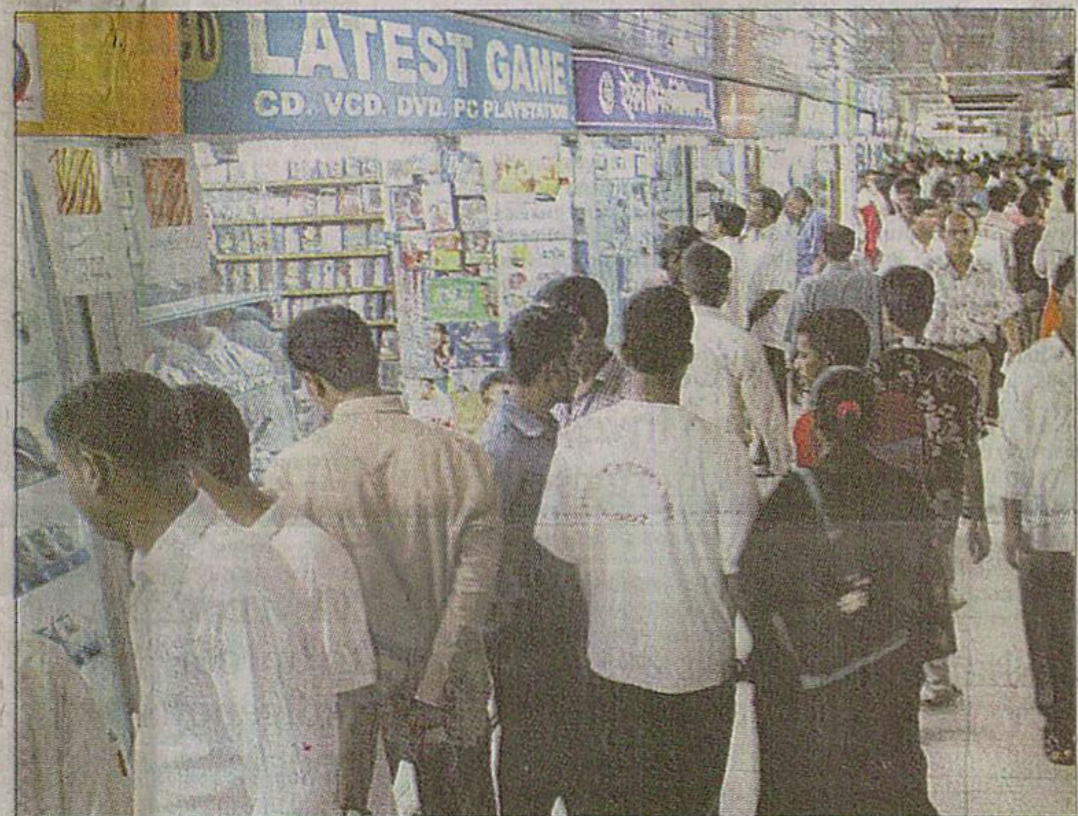


PHOTO: STAR

People fascinated by the proposed tax-cut on cellphone sets in the budget for FY 2005-06 crowd Eastern Plaza shopping centre in the capital yesterday.

CEC's holding two offices challenged

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three Supreme Court lawyers yesterday challenged the legality of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) MA Aziz's holding office alongside that of Appellate Division judge.

Advocates Ruhul Quddus, Abdul Mannan Khan and Nazneen Nahar Dipu filed a writ petition with the High Court asking for an explanation as to under what authority Justice Aziz claims to simultaneously hold the office of an Appellate Division judge as well as the office of the CEC.

The CEC, law secretary, Supreme Court registrar and the Election Commission have been made respondents to the petition.

A High Court division bench partly heard the petition yesterday and ordered the petitioners to gather from the Supreme Court registrar whether Aziz is still holding the office of an Appellate Division judge. The court also directed them to inform it of the findings when it resumes hearing Saturday.

The petitioners submitted that MA Aziz violated the terms of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

SECURITY COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP Japanese minister hails Dhaka's strong support

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh, which has extended strong support for Japan's permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), will work as a facilitator, but not as a co-sponsor of Japan, in its move to place a draft resolution for a UN reform.

Bangladesh, being a facilitator in the UN, has strongly supported Japan's candidature as a permanent member in the UNSC and there is no change in that position, visiting

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Ichiro Aisawa

Budget posture to fuel inflation further

BEA fears

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Economic Association (BEA) yesterday feared that increased bank borrowing and expenditure in the unproductive areas in the proposed budget will push inflation up to double digit next year.

The proposed budget will promote corruption as the continued provision for whitening black money will basically serve the interests of the corrupt people, the association said at a post-budget press briefing at the National Press Club.

Criticising the finance minister, BEA President Kazi Kholiquzzaman said the finance minister backtracked from his earlier position and could not keep some of the commitments he had made in several pre-budget meetings due to pressures from politicians and businessmen.

"Inflation in March [this year] was 6.18 percent according to government statistics and it showed an upward trend in the following months," he told the briefing, adding that the actual inflation rate, however, is higher as prices of essentials are on the rise.

Expenditure in the unproductive areas has been increased in the proposed budget and the government will have to borrow more money from banks to meet this increased expenditure, which will definitely push inflation up further, he cautioned.

Everybody is worried about the present inflationary trend and it was hoped that some measures would be taken to contain the inflation but it is absent in the proposed budget, he explained.

The finance minister has allocated more money for the union and

village levels in the proposed budget as it can be used for political purposes, but there are no proposals for strengthening the local government bodies, the BEA president said.

Corruption, bribe, default loan, politicisation and nepotism have created an alarming situation in the society, he said, identifying corruption as the main reason for slow poverty reduction and economic growth.

Curbing corruption is a big challenge for the nation as it has seriously damaged the image of the country abroad, Kholiquzzaman said, adding that it is necessary to take harsh measures for addressing this issue instead of encouraging it.

"We think that the government gave sufficient scopes for whitening black money and it should not continue anymore," he maintained.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

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