

DOLLAR CRISIS

# Govt mulls imposing LC margin again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In a bid to tackle the ongoing dollar crisis, the government is considering imposing LC margin again, defying an International Monetary Fund (IMF) condition.

The prevailing dollar crisis has made the government mull over imposing the LC margin, Finance Minister M Saifur Rahman told reporters after a meeting with Bangladesh Bank (BB) and the nationalised commercial banks (NCB) yesterday.

Saifur explained that BB used to tackle such situation imposing LC margin but due to the IMF condition for Poverty Reduction Growth Facilities (PRGF) programme the government was forced to withdraw the LC margin.

At the meeting the minister asked the NCB managing directors to be cautious about opening LCs

(letters of credit) and not to open LCs for luxury items.

The BB and NCB officials informed the minister about the exchange rate situation, the current state of export-import trade and Bangladesh Foreign Exchange Dealers Association's (Bafeda) initiative to keep the greenback market stable.

Earlier, Bafeda at a meeting on Tuesday attempted to fix the dollar price but failed due to the objection from some foreign and private banks. They are going to sit again soon to decide about the matter.

Bafeda took the initiative following an informal directive of the central bank.

Yesterday Saifur claimed that the current situation in the foreign exchange market was due to some small banks' reckless banking. They opened LCs for luxurious cars without considering if they would be

able to pay off for their LCs, he observed.

Earlier in 2003, while the government introduced floating exchange rate, LC margin on all sorts of imports was withdrawn as a condition for the IMF's PRGF loan.

The dollar crisis deepened since the import volume marked a rise last year and taka began to depreciate against dollar, which in turn also shot up inflation rate.

Import selling rate of dollar rose 5.57 percent to reach Tk 66.39 per unit in July, which was Tk 62.89 in January. And in the inter-bank market the rate marked a 5.77 percent rise to reach Tk 64.95 in July from Tk 61.40 in January.

However, in exports and remittances the average buying rate of dollar was raised by 6.34 percent between January and July this year. The rate was Tk 61.43 in January, which rose to Tk 65.32 in July.

HYGIENE DRIVE

## Fake medicine factory found

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Mobile courts yesterday found a fake medicine factory and collected Tk 1,06,000 in fines from food producers and traders and for selling products without expiry dates in the capital.

The government recently formed the mobile courts to control the adulteration of foods following a series of reports in The Daily Star. The mobile courts have recently extended their jurisdiction over other malpractices.

A mobile court led by magistrate ABM Abdul Fattha raided seven foods producing factories, hotels and restaurants in the Kuri, Banani and Gulshan areas, and collected Tk 1,06,000 in fines.

The court fined Tk 25,000 to Bangla-German Foods Limited, Tk 12,000 to Shalinar Garden, Tk 10,000 to Shasly Fast Food, Tk 4,000 to Shadharan Khabar Ghar, Tk 10,000 to Amantran Restaurant, Tk 25,000 to Sonali Hotel and Tk 20,000 to Café Jam Jam.

The hotels and restaurants were

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A mobile court seizes unregistered medicines and other items produced by a fake pharmaceutical factory on North South Road in Old Dhaka yesterday.



PHOTO: STAR

## Dr Kamal blasts govt for politicising admin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gono Forum President Dr Kamal Hossain criticised the government yesterday for politicisation in every sector including the administration.

He said the situation is very grave as the ruling party backed criminals are indulging in crimes with impunity.

"We are also witnessing violence due to internal conflicts in the ruling alliance and its front organisations," he added while addressing a discussion at Dhaka Reporters' Unity (DRU).

Bikalpa Jubo Dhara, youth front of Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh (BDB) organised the discussion on electoral and caretaker government reforms.

Addressing the programme, the BDB President Dr AQM Badruddoza Chowdhury asked the government to initiate dialogues with opposition parties for reforms in the caretaker

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PHOTO: STAR

This unidentified woman, brought to the DMCH in an unconscious state after she was wounded in a road accident on July 30, was kept in the hospital corridor for four days without any treatment.

# Lost memory, lost hope at DMCH

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Fearing it will not receive payment, the Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) often turns away unidentified patients brought to the hospital in an unconscious state.

Many critically injured victims of road accidents brought to DMCH are often shifted from ward to ward, without proper treatment. Some eventually die.

This reporter found a patient who had been left in a corridor for five days without any treatment. He was ultimately driven away from the hospital, as no one came to identify him and pay the expenses for his treatment.

Sometimes, however, if the bills are small, relatives of other patients or the doctors themselves donate money for such unidentified patients.

The Social Welfare Department of the DMCH also often provides

these patients with financial help and treatment. But it is not always possible to spend a large amount for one patient. Instead, the department is more often inclined to help a larger number of patients with small amounts for each, department officials said.

Patients lying without treatment or turned away are an everyday scene at the DMCH, where most patients are poor and where the 1,700-beds are often filled.

Kodbanu, a 45-year-old woman with gangrene in her legs, a broken hand and fever, was left by unknown persons outside the emergency gate, where she remained for the whole day. She was then admitted to ward No. 19 (medicine ward). Later, the ward boys sent her to ward No. 9 (surgery).

After several more rounds of shifting from ward to ward, the hapless woman was left at the Emergency Department, spending the whole night without any care or

treatment. The next day, she was seen at the emergency gate for some time but later could not be found.

Others have suffered a similar fate. Two policemen and two commuters brought a woman of around 28 from Postogola under Shyampur Police Station on the night of July 30, admitting her to the neurosurgery ward with severe head injuries caused in a road accident. The unconscious patient was kept in the corridor without any treatment for four days.

Monsur Hossain, an attendant, informed that a 55-year-old woman was admitted on Friday. She was left lying on a bed for four days, a saline apparatus hanging over her as if she was under treatment, he said. The woman died last Tuesday.

When contacted, the doctors said there is a shortage of doctors and staff at the DMCH and that there

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## CLEMENCY TO JHINTU Bar leaders for disclosure of documents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) leaders yesterday demanded that the government make public all the documents leading to the presidential pardon to Mohiuddin Ahmed Jhantu, a double-murder convict sentenced to death.

The SCBA leaders speaking at a rally arranged to protest the pardon to the ruling BNP man, described the mercy order as 'illegal and against the constitution'. They also demanded scrapping of the order and resignation of those involved in the process.

The rally was held at the South Hall of the SCBA Building yesterday afternoon.

After the rally, the Bar association men took out a procession from the Supreme Court premises, defying barricades by police.

Advocate Mahubey Alam, SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## 2 SIs face music for 'ransacking' ex-FBCCI VP's residence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two sub-inspectors (SIs) of Gulshan Police Station were stand-released yesterday after a former vice-president (VP) of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) complained to the home ministry against them for ransacking his house and misbehaving with family members.

The stand released SIs—Mizanur Rahman and Asaduzzaman—led a police team to former FBCCI vice-president Kazi Shafiqul Islam's house in Banani early yesterday after his daughter-in-law filed a case under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act against

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TERROR THREAT

# US embassy in Saudi shut

## Oil prices jump

AFP, Riyadh/ New York

World oil prices struck fresh record high points yesterday, reaching almost 64 dollars in New York, as an unspecified threat caused the United States to shut its embassy in Saudi Arabia -- the world's biggest exporter of crude.

New York's main contract, light sweet crude for delivery in September, soared 1.09 dollars to 63.40 dollars per barrel in early deals after hitting a record 63.60 dollars.

Before Monday, the previous high

stood at 62.50 dollars -- a level reached last Wednesday after US refineries were hit by disruptions. In London, the price of Brent North Sea crude oil for delivery in September surged 1.31 dollars to 62.38 dollars per barrel on Monday after hitting a record 62.47 dollars.

Before Monday, the previous high stood at 61.26 dollars, reached also last Wednesday.

The gains in oil are "tied to a heightened state of alert," as opposed to an actual supply shortage,"

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# 4 Ctg cops held for robbing trader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Four policemen and ansars of a patrol team were yesterday suspended and sent to jail for robbing a trader of about Tk 2.5 lakh in the port city on Wednesday.

They are Assistant Sub-inspector (ASI) Bashir Ahmed, constable Alauddin and ansar personnel Nurul Islam and Abdus Satter.

They were hauled before a court, which sent them to jail. Earlier, a case was filed against them with Panchlaish Police Station under the Speedy Trial Act.

Sources said the patrol team of Panchlaish Police Station held Abdur Raquib in Bahodderhat on Wednesday night.

They snatched Tk 2.5 lakh and a gold chain from the trader before letting him go with the rest of Tk 1.2 lakh, they added.

Chittagong Metropolitan Police (CMP) on Saturday closed the four law enforcers following a verbal complaint and formed a probe committee to look into the matter.

The accused policemen and ansars were arrested on Sunday night as preliminary investigation proved their involvement in the incident.

Asked, CMP Deputy Commissioner (North) Ruhul Amin said, "Proper legal action was instantly taken against the accused cops."

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## French report warned of Qaeda attack on Britain

REUTERS, Paris

French intelligence produced a report shortly before the London suicide bombings saying al-Qaeda planned to attack Britain and would use the country's large Pakistani community to strike, Le Figaro reported on Monday.

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# Islamic extremists may face treason charges

## Four bomb plot accused remanded

AGENCIES, London

Four men charged with conspiracy to murder in the failed 21 July London attacks have been remanded in custody.

Bomb suspects Ibrahim Muktar Said, 27, Yassin Hassan Omar, 24, and Ramzi Mohamed, 23, appeared before Bow Street magistrates at Belmarsh prison.

The charges faced by Manfo Kwaku Asiedu, 32, relate to an unexploded device found in a park two days after the attacks on three Tubes and a bus.

The four men will next appear at the Old Bailey on 14 November. Meanwhile, Islamic extremists who incite violence or praise suicide

attacks in Britain could face treason charges under a plan to be discussed this week by senior prosecutors and police officers, British newspapers reported yesterday.

The Guardian and the Daily Telegraph said that the idea had been discussed by Lord Goldsmith, the Attorney General, and Ken Macdonald, the Director of Public Prosecutions, on Sunday as they mull action to be taken against supporters of the July 7 attacks on London which killed 56 people.

This week's meeting will involve the head of the anti-terrorism department at the Crown Prosecution Service and senior officers at Scotland Yard to discuss what charges could be brought against

preachers whose endorsement of the suicide attacks could incite further acts of terrorism.

The British government is particularly concerned with a Syrian Islamic radical living in Britain: Omar Bakri, who predicted a terrorist attack on the British capital 15 months ago.

The founder of the radical Al-Muhajiroun movement, he scuttled his organisation last October and since then has preached in Internet chatrooms.

Earlier three of the four main suspects in the failed July 21 London bombings appeared at a high-security court yesterday charged with attempting to murder passengers on London's transport system.

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## Assam on high alert after string of blasts

### 4 killed; oil, gas pipelines blown up

AFP, Guwahati

India's northeastern state of Assam went on maximum security alert yesterday after rebels triggered a string of blasts that killed four people and wrecked oil and gas pipeline, power lines and rail tracks, police said.

There were about a dozen attacks in the state at the weekend, a government spokesman said.

Police believe they were carried out by the outlawed United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA), the most dominant of more than two dozen rebel groups that have been fighting secessionist battles in the region for decades.

"We have put army, police, and paramilitary soldiers on high alert

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Prayer Timing		
August 9		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-20	4-55
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-47	6-50
Esha	8-15	8-45

Source: Islamic Foundation