

## Import surges on high demand for raw materials

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Import surged 11 percentage points during the first seven months of the current fiscal year despite political unrest and tight monetary policy.

According to available data, overall import witnessed a whopping 22.07 percent growth during the July-January period of the current fiscal year, which was 11.31 percent during the same period of the previous year.

Central bank high officials say increased need for raw materials for export-oriented industries resulted in the import surge.

However, they said there is nothing to be worried about.

Import of consumer goods increased 25 percent during the period, while industrial raw materials, capital machinery and petro-

leum imports surged 14.32, 16 and 18 percent, according to the Bangladesh Bank (BB) statistics.

LC opening for consumer goods including rice, wheat, sugar, salt, milk food, pulses and spices rose 41 percent, while LCs for industrial raw materials, capital machinery and petroleum went up 9.76, 11 and 35 percent during the period.

BB statistics regarding goods imports do not match with the belief that prices of essential commodities hiked due to a decrease in import for the joint forces' drive against hoarding.

Private sector credit also increased 2.36 percentage points during the July-January period, sources said.

Available data shows that

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Nazmul Huda, Tuku, Salahuddin, Pintu Salim shown held in different cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Detained former ministers Nazmul Huda, Iqbal Hassan Mahmud Tuku, Salahuddin Ahmed and lawmakers Nasiruddin Ahmed Pintu and MAH Salim were shown arrested yesterday in connection with different cases filed on different dates.

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, Dhaka passed the orders following petitions for showing them arrested in the cases.

HUDA'S CASE

Former communications minister Huda was shown arrested in two graft cases filed with Shahbagh and Dhanmondi Police Stations on March 21.

Metropolitan Magistrate Jagannath Das Khokan passed the order following two petitions submitted by the investigation officers.

Anti-Corruption Commission

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## Tarique back to jail after back pain check-up



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tarique Rahman, son of immediate past prime minister Khaleda Zia, was taken back to Dhaka Central Jail yesterday after having several diagnostic tests done at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU).

Tarique was taken to BSMMU for the diagnostics since the hospital at Dhaka Central Jail is not equipped to conduct the necessary diagnostics advised by his physician.

On March 29, at the request of jail authorities, Associate Prof Dr Mohammad Shamsuzzaman of Department of Orthopaedics at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital (DMCH) treated Tarique for his persistent back pain.

Dr Shamsuzzaman advised X-rays, blood tests and MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) for Tarique at that time.

Dhaka Central Jail authorities took Tarique to BSMMU prison cell at around 11:00am for the tests. After the MRI, blood tests and five

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PHOTO: STAR

Policemen provide clearance certificates to people willing to go abroad for jobs at the One-stop Service at Dhaka Metropolitan Police Commissioner's Office in the capital yesterday.



PHOTO: SYED ZAKIR HOSSAIN

The administration declared this structure on the Cox's Bazar beach illegal but it is yet to be demolished.

## Salman, Sohel sued for fraud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A case was filed against Beximco Group Vice-chairman Salman F Rahman and his brother Sohel Rahman on charges of fraud on Monday night.

Mohammad Akamat Ullah filed the case with New Market Police Station accusing them of embezzling Tk 4.56 lakh given to them for buying two plots.

The complainant said though he gave the money to the accused between 2000 and 2002, they neither handed over the plots nor

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## Signs of progress in freeing sailors

Blair sees crisis with Iran hits 'critical' phase

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Tony Blair said yesterday the next two days would be "critical" in efforts to resolve the stand-off with Iran amid signs of progress towards freeing the 15 British captives.

But he warned that Britain would not shirk from taking "increasingly tougher decisions" if its sailors were not released as soon as possible.

Britain had seemed to be taking a softer approach towards Tehran 12 days into the crisis after a week of pushing for Iran's international isolation, expressing outrage and disgust at videos of the 15 navy personnel and cranking up the pressure.

However, Blair insisted the ball was back in the Iranians' court and

reiterated that Britain was ready to turn up the heat again if a new wave of diplomacy failed.

"The next 48 hours will be fairly critical," he told Glasgow-based Real Radio, while cautiously welcoming comments Monday by top Iranian official Ali Larjani, who envisaged a diplomatic solution.

Blair maintained that there are two possible outcomes: one of "peaceful, calm negotiation... the other is to make it clear that if that's not possible, then we have to take increasingly tougher decisions."

"I'm not going to say any more at the moment -- it's for the Iranian government now to come back with their response."

Larjani's comments seem to offer "some prospect," Blair said. "We very much hope the Iranian

government realises that the best way to deal with this is in a diplomatic way.

His comments came after Iran and Britain started talks Tuesday described as a first step towards resolving the row that has further strained relations between Tehran and the West.

Larjani said Tuesday the new contacts could create the conditions for ending the stand-off.

"The British government has started diplomatic discussions with the foreign ministry to resolve the issue of the British military personnel," Larjani told state television's central news agency.

"It is at the beginning of the path. If they continue on this path

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## Aminul Haque sued for land grabbing, govt tree stealing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Two more cases have been filed against former minister Aminul Haque in connection with land grabbing, and felling of government-owned trees in Rajshahi.

Gulam Mostafa, a homeopath of Rannagar, lodged the land-grabbing case yesterday against him and nine others with Godagari Police Station in Rajshahi saying the accused illegally occupied a piece of land he owns, measuring 13-decimals, at Dayingpara on April 13 last year.

The plaintiff said the accused grabbed the land and forced him to sign an agreement, which gave the land away to Godagari Bank Samity President Ashraf Haq.

Other accused people in the case include the ex-minister's maternal uncle and Godagari

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## Govt takes steps to check history distortion in textbooks

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Education Adviser Ayub Quadri yesterday said the interim government has already taken initiatives to correct all sorts of history distortion from primary and secondary level textbooks to be distributed among students next year.

"I also directed my colleagues to identify all types of distortion of history, especially that of liberation war and contribution of liberation

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## Bus fare increased

UNB, Dhaka

The government has increased bus and minibus fare by seven paise per kilometre in the wake of rise in fuel prices.

The buses are now to charge passengers 87 paise and minibuses 90 paise per kilometre, an official handout said.

In case of motor vehicles carrying goods, the increase of fare is 23 paise per kilometre per ton.

## Headhunting body sought for free PSC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study suggests a high-powered committee headed by the chief justice for selecting the chairman and members of the Public Service Commission (PSC) to make the constitutional body truly independent and transparent.

The draft of the study titled "Role and Capacity of the Public Service Commission as the Central Recruitment Agency, and its Current and Potential Functions in Human Resources" was presented at a roundtable jointly organised by the Ministry of Establishment and UNDP at BCS Administration Academy in the city yesterday.

The study suggested that the chief justice will be the convener, while the members may include a

senior judge of the Appellate Division, lawmakers from the ruling and opposition parties, representatives of the prime minister and the opposition leader, civil society, vice chancellors' committee, while the cabinet secretary will be the member secretary of the search committee.

"The PSC chairperson and all the members should be restrained from accepting lucrative public appointments after completion of their term," Dr M Abdul Kashem Mazumder, one of the two researchers of the study, said.

Stressing the need for specifying the qualifications of the PSC chairperson and members, he said that they should be selected partly judging by their openness to change, dynamism and experience of leading changes and their status

should be equal to that of the members of other constitutional bodies.

The current PSC responsibilities might also be split between two or three PSCs, for example -- one for education and the other for technical cadres, he said.

The recommendations were made as the study found decrease in PSC's reputation in the recent years, lack of modern recruitment, selection and assessment practices and resistance for changes within the PSC.

Professor Abdul Kashem of the Jahangirnagar University said that the PSC should engage in a long-term project of fundamental reforms and capacity strengthening with the key objective of becoming an effective partner in

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## BIRD FLU 1,250 chickens culled in Jamalpur

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 1,250 chickens were culled yesterday afternoon at a poultry farm at Char Poghaldiya in Sharishabari upazila of Jamalpur after bird flu was detected at the farm.

The bird flu control room sources said Humayun Kabir, the owner of the Rishat Poultry Farm, sent sample birds to the central lab in Dhaka for testing as birds started dying at his farm. The lab-test confirmed avian influenza infection at his farm. Following the confirmation, the livestock officials culled all the chickens at his farm.

Dr Vidyut at the bird flu control room said the warm temperature is helping them control the virus. He however claimed, "The situation will improve after a torrential rainfall."

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Prayer Timing		
April 4		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-40	5-15
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-21	6-24
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation



PHOTO: STAR

Frequent power cuts at a service station near Moghbazar intersection in the capital disrupt gas filling of cylinders in CNG-run vehicles resulting in a long queue of cars and three-wheelers yesterday.