

## Food items go pricier

**FROM PAGE 1**  
for importing 3,000 tonne soyabean oil," TCB Director Mokhesur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

Of this, 2,500 tonne will be bought from the international market and 500 tonne from the local market.

"After completion of the import, we will launch OMS for soyabean oil through our dealers," the TCB director said. Oil prices will come down after the OMS starts, he added.

Earlier, the TCB floated tenders twice for importing soyabean oil but no one took part in those tenders.

Oil traders at the Moulavibazar wholesale oil market in the city, however, said oil prices will not decrease until the prices come down internationally.

"Two months ago, crude palm oil sold at US\$350 per metric tonne on the Malaysian market, but the price is \$587 at present," said Abul Hashem, general secretary of Bangladesh Wholesale Edible Oil Merchants Association.

"The price of crude soyabean in Brazil or the US was \$515-520; the price has increased at present to \$800," he added.

"Oil supply to the market is also very low because importers are not opening LC [letters of credit] for

importing oil as the government is not taking decision whether or not to lessen the duty on oil import," Abul Hashem said.

"We urged the government to curtail the amount of duty imposed on imported oil and to impose a specific duty," he said.

Soyabean oil sold at Tk 70.50 per litre yesterday, but the price was Tk 68.20 last week, said oil traders at Moulavibazar. Palm oil sold at Tk 62.20 per litre yesterday while the price was Tk 60.50 last week.

**PRICES OF RICE AND OTHER ESSENTIALS INCREASE**

Swarna rice sold at Tk 22 per kg at the Hatirpool kitchen market yesterday; the price was Tk 21 last week.

The prices of other types of rice also increased by Tk 1-2, said traders at the market.

Potato sold at Tk 17 per kg yesterday while the price was Tk 15 a week ago.

The price of green chilli increased by Tk 20-25 per kg while the prices of aubergine, okra, tomato, coarse flour also increased by Tk 1-2 per kg.

Sellers said the prices of the produce increased as there was a lack of supply ahead of the Bangla New Year.

## Abbas taken to BSMMU prison cell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former public works minister Mirza Abbas was admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital yesterday for diagnostic tests as his physical condition deteriorated.

Prison authorities took Mirza Abbas to BSMMU at around 11:00am and admitted him to the hospital's prison cell. Diagnostic tests will be conducted on him in the morning today.

"He had been ill in the central jail for several days and earlier on April 8, he was taken to BSMMU for a few diagnostic tests. As his condition further deteriorated, he has been admitted to the hospital this time for more tests," said DIG (prison) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddiqui.

As his diabetes worsened and body parts got swelled up, prison doctors suggested admitting him to BSMMU.

## NBR asks

**FROM PAGE 1**  
Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher, his wife Habiba Akhtar Chowdhury, daughter Tasfia Jahan, and son Sayed Abdullah Mohammad Tasfir Hasan are also on the list.

Besides, the banks will have to provide the financial transaction reports of former APS to Sheikh Hasina Rabiul Alam Mohammad Obaidul Mukhtar Chowdhury, his wife Fahima Khatun and son Mahsina Farhad, Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) leader Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, his wife Rifat Hossain, brothers Kawsar Zahan and Dr Zakir Hossain, daughters Tasmim Tamanna, Tahmin Nuzhat, and Tanchzil Tania, former communications secretary Ismail Zabiullah, his wife Aysha Siddique and son Ahmed Ishiaque Zabiullah, ex-member of Public Service Commission (PSC) Prof Mahfuzur Rahman, his wife Firoya Begum and brother Mamunur Rashid, Awami Swechhasheba League President AFM Bahauddin Nasim, his wife Dr Sultana Shamima Chowdhury, brothers Jalaluddin Ahmed Yamin and Khalid Hossain Yaad, ex-chief engineer of Public Works Department AFM Manjurul Islam, his wife Akhtar Jahan, daughter Sabrina Manjur and son Tanvir Manjur, former additional Inspector General of Police Md Shahidullah Khan, his sons Yamin Khan, Yasir Khan and Imran Yamin Khan.

Also on the list are businessman Giridhari Lal Modi, his wife Koushalya Modi, son Dilip Modi, and daughters Manju Khaitan and Anju Khaitan. AL leader Kamal Ahmed Majumder, his wife Shahida Kamal, and sons Ziauddin Ahmed Majumder and Shahed Ahmed Majumder, CBA leader of Desa Kazi Mosharraf Hossain, his wife Shahnaz Mosharraf, son Kazi Ferdous Hossain, daughters Kazi Rokshana Nasrin and Kazi Munmun Sharmin.

Another mobile court on February 19 raided Abul Khair Consumer Products Ltd in Chittagong and seized around 230 tonnes of inedible milk powder to be used as an ingredient in its Starship condensed milk.

The joint forces on January 31 arrested three police officials and two officials of Abul Khair Group who were giving the cops Tk 15 lakh in bribe inside Fatulla Police Station in Narayanganj for release of a huge quantity of rotten wheat seized earlier.

The district administration of Narayanganj on January 29 seized

## Moudud remanded

**FROM PAGE 1**  
the influential ex-BNP minister.

Moudud is now under the custody of the joint forces, Gulshan police yesterday said.

The forwarding report that the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case placed before the court said the accused has committed crime as he possessed foreign liquor and beer that he had smuggled into the country evading tax.

There is strong possibility of recovering contraband foreign liquor and getting information regarding the matter and so, the accused needs to be taken on a seven-day remand for proper investigation of the case, the IO added in the forwarding.

The IO also mentioned that through misuse of power during his ministership Moudud had kept sares, meant for the poor as government relief, in his possession. Besides, the ex-minister did not distribute those to the people, which is a corruption.

Filing a separate case by the Anti-Corruption Commission in this regard is now under process and subject to investigation.

On March 25, the National Board of Revenue directed banks to freeze the accounts of Moudud Ahmed and his wife.

The defence lawyers submitted a petition seeking cancellation of the remand prayer. They argued that the accused is 70-year-old and sick and the case was filed to tarnish his image.

The prosecution said that information regarding the case would be revealed if the accused is placed on remand during the investigation.

After hearing both the sides, the magistrate rejected the petition for remand cancellation saying that it is a case under the Special Powers Act. He also directed the IO to arrange necessary medical treatment for Moudud.

The IO of the case Obaidul Haque who is also the officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station told The Daily Star yesterday that under interrogation, Moudud has started giving significant information. He however refused to divulge the information for the sake of investigation.

## Fair price shops

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Partex Group and Abul Khair Group that have been used are selling essential commodities through their fair price outlets with cooperation from Bangladesh Rifles (BDR).

The other companies include Meghna Group, PHP, Imam Group, Masud and Brothers, Alam and Brothers, S Alam, Mostafa Group and Mabco.

A mobile court on February 13 fined Tk 7,50,000 and issued arrest warrant against former BNP lawmaker and Chairman of Partex Group MA Hashem, his wife and three sons as their company Partex Sugar Ltd supplied and sold sugar in the market forging the BSTI (Bangladesh Standards and Testing Institution) seal.

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the rotten wheat worth around Tk 19 crore from five cargo vessels and from a warehouse at Aliganj. Abul Khair Group had imported it.

Asked about cooperation with companies sued for corruption, BDR officials said the authorities concerned would take legal steps against them for what they did. BDR is not looking into this matter.

"We are cooperating with companies that showed interest in sale of goods at fair prices. We have taken many initiatives to ease market price and this is one of those," said a BDR official wishing anonymity.

In reply to a question, another BDR official said, "We just ensure that they (companies) sell goods at fair prices ...We also ensure security."

When contacted, Riazar Rahman, sales manager of Partex Group said, "It (operating fair price shops) is a social service from us. We are helping BDR in their initiative to ease market price."

He added, "We took this initiative after getting permission from BDR."

Around 22 companies are running fair price shops in 19 districts.

Partex sells rice at Tk 19 per kg, potato Tk 13.50, onion Tk 14, garlic Tk 28 and pulses at Tk 44 a kg, and a half-kg pack of milk powder at Tk 160.

## 28 'militants' held

**FROM PAGE 16**  
other JMB top leaders on March 29.

Bogra police sources said Tangail region's deputy chief of the newly formed "Alahar-6" Abdur Razzak was also arrested from Bogra Sadar for his alleged involvement in militant activities.

Gabtol police officials said JMB activist Maharuzzaman allegedly involved in the countrywide bomb explosions on August 17, 2005 was also arrested.

Our Tangail correspondent reports: Tangail police arrested eight members of an unidentified Islamist militant outfit on Saturday night during a raid. Police also seized books on Jihad, documents, and training manuals from their possession.

Ashraf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Tangail Police Station, told The Daily Star that acting on a tip-off a team of Tangail police raided the house of Sayeed Chowdhury at Purbia Adalat Para in Tangail town around midnight Saturday.

They arrested militant leader Shah Mohammad Ferdous Tazim, 24, and Rizmul Alam, 25.

Following the confessional statements of Ferdous and Rizmul, police arrested Mohammad Bulbul, 26, Delwar Hossain, 35, and Abdul Aziz, 25, at Santosh Baluchara near Tangail town.

They also arrested Liton Miah, 25, Alal Uddin, 24, and Mohammad Rafiqul Islam, 36, from Aloa, Bahanipur, and Nagarjalpai villages in Sadar upazila.

The arrestees allegedly told police during interrogation that they were organising a Jihad and other members of the organisation remain active in different places in the country but their militant wing is yet to be formed and named.

Sheikh Mohammad Maruf Hassan, Tangail superintendent of police (SP), said, "Arrested militants told police that Ferdous Tazim and Rizmul Alam are policymakers of the organisation while Matin Hassan of Gabandha, who is an accused in a August 17, 2005 countrywide bombing case, is their main coordinator."

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel arrested four suspected JMB members early Saturday morning after raiding two villages in Pabna, our Pabna correspondent reports.

The arrestees are Uzzal Hossain, 20, Mostak Ahmed, 20, Mahadi Hassan Chanchal, 23, and Aminul Islam Shetu, 22.

Among the arrestees Aminul Islam Shetu is allegedly a key leader of JMB in the region, Rab-12 sources said.

Rab sources claimed they received information that JMB militants were planning to attack the Pahela Baishakh celebrations in Pabna and to defeat Gobinda and Laskorpur villages under Pabna Sadar upazila

## Shamim Osman asked to appear in court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday directed former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Shamim Osman to appear before the court within three days as he failed to submit his wealth statement within the timeframe set by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

At the end of the three-day period, the court will start trial in his absence if he fails to appear before it.

Special Judge Abdul Quddus Mia passed the order in connection with a graft case filed by the ACC. The court fixed April 19 for the next hearing on the case.

Advocate Nabil Hossain, public prosecutor of the case, said police during the hearing told the court that they attached movable properties of Shamim Osman from his residence at Jamtola residential area on April 11 following a court order. They however could not arrest fugitive Shamim Osman.

Earlier on April 4, Benazir Ahmed, deputy director of ACC in Narayanganj, filed a graft case against Shamim Osman with a Narayanganj court.

Intelligence sources said Shamim Osman and his two elder brothers -- Selim Osman and Nasim Osman -- have been on the run.

## Judge's family

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Asadul Islam Arif, who hails from Barguna, is still at large.

The killing of advocate Haider Hussein, who conducted the case as the public prosecutor (PP) of Jhalakathi, has made the family members so worried about such retaliatory act by JMB that they find it difficult to continue normal movement, said Biswanath.

Biswanath sought security of his family members from the government.

Sultan Ahmed Khan, complainant of judges murder case, and driver of the bombed car Ibrahim Sardar, who is also a witness of the case, other witnesses, and officials related with the trial of the judges murder case, also expressed concerns about the JMB's possible revenge.

Aminul Islam, deputy inspector general of police of Barisal range, said special security arrangements with law enforcers both in uniform and plainclothes have been made for the family members of the judges and those connected with the case.

## Engr Mosharraf

**FROM PAGE 16**  
The court fixed April 26 for trial of the case and summoned the complainant and other witnesses to appear before the court on that day.

According to the prosecution, then housing and public works minister Mosharraf in collusion with the other accused directed the authorities concerned to allocate 11 shops situated on 17 decimal government land at Sutrapur area to Nisha Rani Devi. Due to the allocation, the government incurred a loss of Tk 5 crore.

Later on December 11 in 2001, Syed Tahsinul Haq of the now defunct Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) filed a graft case with Sutrapur Police Station accusing Mosharraf and five others.

## Tapan

**FROM PAGE 16**  
report on Tata investment proposal terming it "very practical and realistic."

"We can start negotiation on the basis of that report and recommendation," he said.

The adviser said that he also heard that Tata proposal was sent to the Chief Adviser's Office for the decision, but said the advisers would give their decision when it would come for discussion.

Replying to another question, Tapan Chowdhury said the cabinet decided that Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation would not supply any petroleum fuel to the state-run Biman Bangladesh on credit.

## HC rejects

**FROM PAGE 16**  
over, the Election Commission decided to hold a qualifying test of them.

The EC later made an arrangement with the Institute of Business Administration, Dhaka University, to conduct the exam. "The date has not yet been fixed for the test," an EC source said.

## Police raid

**FROM PAGE 1**  
their wealth statements to it in person within a stipulated time.

He was one of the four suspects against whom the anti-graft body filed cases for non-submission of wealth statements. The ACC also sought permission from courts to confiscate their movable and immovable properties.

## World Bank divided

**FROM PAGE 16**  
Department soon after he joined the World Bank in 2005.

"Having (made public) the facts the World Bank board has yet to complete its work," Benn said in a statement. "While this whole business has damaged the bank and should not have happened, we should respect the board's process. I'm sure these views will be shared by other governors who will also be giving their response."

He said the Wolfowitz controversy was distracting attention from the bank's agenda.

"This weekend ought to be about the bank's contribution to fighting poverty and I'm looking forward to discussing how we can increase aid, tackle climate change and get clean water to 1 billion human beings," said Benn.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson called Wolfowitz "a very dedicated public servant" and said he also believed the review process by the board should be allowed to proceed.

However, Paulson said waiting for this process to be completed should not be read "as any lessening of support for Paul" by the United States. The White House said President Bush has confidence in Wolfowitz, a former deputy defense secretary and one of the architects of Bush's Iraq war strategy.

A planned demonstration by bank employees calling for Wolfowitz to resign failed to materialize, but several dozen members of advocacy groups marched outside the bank headquarters calling for his ouster.

Some African officials attending the meetings expressed support, saying Wolfowitz has made the continent a greater priority at the bank.

"We have seen visionary leadership, steadfast progress under Mr. Wolfowitz," said Liberia's finance minister, Antoinette Sayeh. "We can only say that we look forward to that continuing."

German Development Minister Heidemarie Wiecek-Zeul said Wolfowitz needs to do some soul-searching about whether he can continue to lead the bank.

## 35 killed

**FROM PAGE 16**  
beleaguered court, slammed the militants for striking at civilians.

"By targeting vital civil institutions and innocent civilians terrorist groups reveal their failure to confront our armed forces, which are carrying out Operation Fardh al-Qanoon successfully in Baghdad," he said in a statement.

Iraqi and US troops have been pressing the offensive, known in English as Operation Imposing Law, since February 14 in a bid to win back the initiative from insurgents and sectarian militias who terrorise the local population.

But every day insurgents continue to bomb heavily populated areas in a bid to undermine the crackdown, and they are striking increasingly outside the capital, melting away from the main thrust of the initiative.

Two British helicopters crashed in Iraq early on Sunday, killing two Britons and seriously wounded a third, although officials said the incident appeared to have been an accident rather than the result of hostile fire.

"Now that next of kin have been informed, I can confirm that the two helicopters reported this morning as having crashed north of Baghdad earlier today were, in fact, both UK helicopters," British Defence Secretary Des Browne said in London.

Prime Minister Tony Blair said it would be a time of "great grief and anguish" for the families of those killed. "But what our forces are doing there, what British forces are doing in Iraq and Afghanistan, is they are fighting the same forces of terrorism and extremism that are operating around the world today."

The Puma helicopters, which normally carry up to 16 people with a crew of three, came down in the early hours of the morning in a rural area southwest of Taji, home to a huge American military base north of Baghdad.

The BBC, citing military sources, said the helicopters were taking part in a special forces operation, which would explain why the incident occurred so far north of where British troops are based in the main southern city of Basra.

The US military initially said the crash appeared to be the result of a mid-air collision.

In the northern city of Mosul, two suicide bombers detonated trucks packed with explosives aimed at an Iraqi army base in the western Al-Taniqu district, killing four people and wounding 16, said police Major Mohammed Ahmed.

Further south, in the war-scarred province of Diyala bordering Iran, security forces found the bodies of six oil tanker drivers, five of them Iranian, who had been ambushed, kidnapped

## Rajuk engineer

**FROM PAGE 16**  
found in my drawer. But the bag containing the money was found under my table which somebody else had put there," Muzaffar said.

The detained engineer allegedly demanded Tk 7 lakh from the firm a week ago for the approval of the construction plan. Technoheaven officials went to pay Tk 5 lakh yesterday informing Rab personnel beforehand.

Earlier, on May 26, 2006, Rajuk approved a plan submitted by Technoheaven for constructing a 16-storied commercial building on the same plot. Later, Technoheaven submitted a revised plan for constructing a 15-storied building at the same place. But the revised plan was not approved even though it was submitted 25 times.

Rajuk suspended the official temporarily following the arrest.

"At this point it is my conclusion that he has to decide for himself whether in regard to this mistake, he can credibly fulfill his duties," she said.

Last week, Wolfowitz apologized for his involvement in securing Reza's job at the State Department. But the apology has failed to quell the concerns of many on the bank's board.

Its European members have long had doubts about Wolfowitz's suitability to be bank president and have clashed with him over his emphasis on rooting out corruption in developing countries and holding up loans for countries with poor governance records.

The World Bank meetings were the closing chapter in the spring finance meetings, which also involved the International Monetary Fund. On Saturday at the IMF policy-steering committee meeting, officials expressed satisfaction with the robust expansion of the global economy but said more must be done to correct trade imbalances.

Finance ministers and central bankers said in a policy statement that growth is expected to remain strong this year and in 2008, underpinned by solid economic foundations.

In their communique the ministers said continued vigilance of the world economy was required in case there was a sharper than expected downturn in the U.S. economy, the world's largest, and a revival of inflationary pressures if oil prices rebound.

In a separate statement, four governments, including the United States and China, renewed promises to enact policies aimed at rebalancing global trade.

They said an orderly reduction in the U.S. trade deficit and trade surpluses in Asia would benefit the world by defusing protectionist trade action.

## Extortion case

**FROM PAGE 16**  
cases filed by the individuals. The reform is also necessary so that the police cannot harass anyone, he added.

BBC Bangla Service in conjunction with the BBC World Service Trust organised the discussion at the Bangladesh-China Friendship Conference Centre in the city. Kamal Ahmed of BBC Bangla Service moderated the event.

AL Presidium Member Motia Chowdhury, BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia's adviser Mofazzal Karim and editor of the daily New Age Nurul Kabir also took part in the dialogue as discussants.

The law adviser observed that there were no prime ministers in Bangladesh in the past against whom charges of corruption were not made. Without naming anyone and referring indirectly to the chiefs of the two top political parties of the country, Mainul said that if they are convicted in corruption cases, they would be disqualified from running in the polls as per the electoral laws.

"We have formulated rules to arrest the alleged black money holders. Some have already been captured and others will be tracked down. If found guilty, the black money holders, whoever they are, will be declared disqualified to contest the next election," he said.

The law adviser said that the government also has plans to amend some electoral rules after discussing with the political parties, so that a free and fair election free from black money, muscle power and conflict, could be held.

Describing the cases against

Hasina as 'fabricated and conspiratorial,' Motia observed that these were filed with 'ill motive', while Mofazzal said that before taking any actions, the allegations against anyone must be checked first in each case.

The New Age editor noted that corruption charges against BNP Chairperson Khaleida Zia and AL President Sheikh Hasina are not new. The serious charges against them should be examined thoroughly in a transparent way so that no negative intention by any quarter could be successful.

Replying to another query, the law adviser observed that the politics of the country has turned into 'dynastic politics' as practice of democracy is absent within the political parties. He also advised the politicians to think about what have been going on in the name of politics, adding that it could not be allowed to continue.

"If we want to see an end to confrontational politics as well as corruption, killings, plundering, grabbing of lands and properties, then the present leadership of the parties will have to be changed," he said adding that it is the national demand to exclude those who had contributed to the criminalisation of politics in the past.

When both the BNP and AL leaders present said that the change in leadership would be decided by the party leaders, workers and people of the country, Mainul observed that such a move is yet to be witnessed.

Asked whether it is possible to hold a free and fair poll by 2008 as per the pledge made by the chief adviser, the law adviser said that it is their prime duty as they had assumed power at a time of a civil war like situation in the country due to violent confrontational politics.

"We are sincerely working towards holding an election as early as possible so that a fair and democratic government comprising honest and competent persons assumes power, instead of a crooked one," Mainul said.

Motia said that the nation wants election to be held as early as possible, adding that the commoners would not allow any un-elected government to rule for an indefinite period of time.

Nurul Kabir said that the fulfilment of the pledge made by the chief adviser would depend on what steps the caretaker government take, while Mofazzal Karim said that he believes the government would be able to hold the next election by 2008.

## Mashhud

**FROM PAGE 16**  
the cases we've already filed as quickly as possible," he told reporters after a meeting with Chief Adviser (CA) Fakhruddin Ahmed.

The ACC chairman apprised the CA of the commission's activities and its anti-corruption campaigns.

Mashhud said he met the CA to discuss the activities of the reconstituted ACC and programmes relating to combating corruption. "Mainly, we discussed the tasks we've undertaken."

Responding to a questioner, he said both the CA and he discussed ways to ensure coordination in the working organisations, procedural problems and solve financial problems, if any.

About any further district tour as he did on two occasions by helicopter, the ACC chairman said there would not be any more tours in near future. "New dates have to be fixed...But before that emergency works should be done."

Asked why the tours were cancelled, he said, "I'm not feeling well."

Asked if there is any problem in funding, he said, "There is no problem in funding...The ACC has Tk 8 crore. There has to be a balance between the tours and the ACC activities."

"If I tour afterwards, I'll travel the nearby districts by car," Mashhud said.

Meanwhile, the ACC has approved the filing of cases against former state minister for land Ruhul Quddus Talukder Dulu and former BNP lawmaker Hafiz Ebrahim, an ACC source said.

In another development, the ACC yesterday had a meeting with those inquiry officers who are yet to submit their inquiry reports to the commission, said the source.

On February 18, the ACC had directed Mamun to submit his wealth statements within 72 hours, but neither he nor any representative on his behalf