

## Inflation spiralling

**FROM PAGE 1**  
was 7.95 percent. However, later the rate was declining and in February of the same fiscal, the rate declined to 5.72 percent.

Uttam Kumar Dev, senior research fellow of the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), identified three main reasons for the recent hike in rice prices. "First of all, we have short production of aus and aman rice, and import was also low," he said adding, "The other reason is that the prices of rice in the international market are high."

He, however, said the recent trend of inflation rate might change within a couple of weeks when boro rice will be available in markets.

According to the Bangladesh Bank (BB) statistics aus and aman rice production in the current fiscal was 1.24 crore metric tons while in the last fiscal it had been 1.25 metric tons.

Import volume of rice in the last nine months of the current fiscal was 17.08 lakh metric tons, which had been 19.41 lakh metric tons in the same period of the last fiscal.

The trend of rice prices in the international market show that in Thailand a metric ton of rice had been \$352 in the first quarter of the current fiscal which rose to \$372 in the second quarter.

BBS sources said rice consumption largely controls the changes in the inflation rate. One official said 50 to 60 percent of the inflation rate depends on rice consumption.

Rice prices increased in recent days. According to yesterday's Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) report, rice prices increased by 14 to 26 per-

cent in the last one year while the rate of increase was 8-14 percent in the last one month.

Economists predict more increase in the inflation rate in the current month as production cost of boro rice increased this year due to a fuel price hike.

Economic Research Group, an independent research organisation, in a recent study apprehended that inflation rate might reach double digits (10 percent) within a year.

Uttam Kumar Dev of CPD said the only possible way of lowering rice prices is to meet the target production of boro. He, however, is sceptic about meeting the target production saying that the government could not achieve the target production of aus and aman.

## Criminal

**FROM PAGE 16**  
information that Nabir with his gang was holding a secret meeting at a house of one Abdul Gani at Nagar Mohammadpur at about 8.30pm.

They raided the house and asked the criminals to surrender. Ignoring Rab's call, the criminals started firing on them prompting a gun battle.

A police team rushed to the spot when the Rab asked for help from Kushiya sadar police.

The law enforcers found Nabir dead on the spot after the gunfight. However, the other criminals managed to flee.

Rab recovered a country-made rifle and two bullets from the spot.

According to police, Nabir was accused in ten different cases including two for murders.

## Mufti Hannan

**FROM PAGE 16**

In the forwarding reports placed before the court, Criminal Investigation Department Inspector Abu Hena Mohammad Yusuf, also investigation officer of the cases, mentioned that the two leaders gave important information about the bomb explosions.

Ten people died and several others were injured on April 14, 2001 when bombs went off at Ramna Batamul during the Bengali New Year's celebration.

Hannan made a confessional statement on November 19 last year.

On June 14, 2001, Akbar Hussain, one of the arrestees, made a confessional statement to a metropolitan magistrate disclosing involvements of Mufti Hannan and others with the blasts.

## Hannan Shah

**FROM PAGE 1**

procession wielding pistols, Molotov cocktails, machetes, and iron rods at Safaishree under Kapashia upazila in Gazipur at 4:00pm on October 28, the last day of BNP-Jamaat-led alliance government's rule.

In the attack, around 20 to 25 AL activists and leaders were injured, five of whom suffered bullet wounds, the FIR mentioned.

The FIR also said Hannan Shah opened fire on the procession wounding AL activists Kishore, Quayum and Mithun.

Around 50 people were made witnesses in the case.

First Class Magistrate Molika Khatun directed the officer-in-charge of Kapashia police station to investigate the case.

Hannan however alleged that the government filed the case through the AL leader.

He also claimed that he himself was a victim of an AL attack on him on that very day.

## CA pledges

**FROM PAGE 1**

wants to work together towards a common goal," Chief Adviser's Press Secretary Syed Fahim Munaim quoted the CA to have said.

The editors' side said they have faith in the government and they also expect the same from the government side.

Regarding cut in import duty on newspaper, the CA said he would discuss the matter with the concerned ministries.

About the proposed Right to Information act, Fakhruddin said he would definitely look into the matter.

On talk-shows on TV channels, the CA suggested participation of all stakeholders in such programmes that would benefit all, not only the government.

The TV channels' editors requested the chief adviser to look so that any discrimination doesn't take place in providing terrestrial facility to private TV channels. They also said that private TV channels don't get government advertisements.

The CA assured them of looking into those matters.

Information Adviser Barrister Mainul Hossain and the cabinet secretary were present.

## 17 'JMB men'

**FROM PAGE 16**

Mohammad Liton, 29, and following his information they arrested Mohammad Abu Solaiman, 45, a former imam of a mosque in Khagachchari upazila, who left the upazila after the August 17 countrywide bomb blasts in 2005, police said.

U N B adds from from Chapainawabganj: Rail police arrested two Islamist militant suspects as they were moving suspiciously at the station at about 7:00am yesterday.

The arrested -- Mizanur Rahman, 18, and Sohel Rana, 19, both from Fulbari upazila of Dinajpur district -- are students of Devnagar Hafiza Madrasah of Chapainawabganj Sadar upazila.

Two toy guns, one tape recorder, electric bulb and circuit and five books were found after searching their bags.

## One-way

**FROM PAGE 16**

due to this," he admitted.

Meanwhile, the policemen deployed in the area for enforcing the one-way traffic system claimed that the plan has reduced traffic congestion.

"It will take a couple of days for people to get used to the one-way traffic system," Police Sergeant Sohel told The Daily Star.

The DMP also banned honking horns on some roads in Dhanmodi to curb noise pollution.

Some 150 members of riot police have been deployed to enforce the one-way traffic system, sources said.

## Experts

**FROM PAGE 1**

After receiving the expert committee's report, Power and Energy Adviser Tapan Chowdhury told reporters that he is yet to go through the report.

But the committee has briefed him that there was no major irregularities or corruption involved. "Only there might be a few minor flaws, which were insignificant," Chowdhury said quoting the committee's observation.

Replying to a question, Tapan Chowdhury said the proposed site for Siddhirganj 240 MW peaking plant has been handed over to Indian Company BHEL on Saturday and the company has already started its work to set up the power plant.

He also said no employees of the existing 50 MW Siddhirganj plant would be retrenched and they all will be absorbed in other projects of PDDB.

## Steps underway

**FROM PAGE 16**

avert a blow out or damage to the gas field's structure.

Though this situation initially seemed unmanageable, the level of uncontrolled release of gas gradually reduced. Experts said mud pumped by Bapex ultimately found its way to the main leakage point and greatly reduced gas leakage.

Meanwhile, the government urgently invited GSM experts to Bangladesh to help resolve the problem.

GSM held a meeting with Petrobangla, Bapex and BGCL on April 22 to discuss the best measures for the troubled Titas well.

At the meeting, GSM President Robert Dean Grace noted that the actions taken by Bapex prior to mid April had helped kill the field to a great extent. As a result of Bapex's action, which was technically sound, the level of uncontrolled gas release had reduced significantly.

Grace made three proposals to resolve the problem. His first proposal-- to kill the well using coil tubing unit-- was put aside as the risk factor in such a step is high. "If the coil tubing breaks down inside the well, it would lead to a serious problem," onecourse explained.

His second proposal involves using a snubbing unit to kill the well. The government accepted this idea along with the third proposal-- to drill a relief well. Drilling of this well would come later as this is time consuming.

Experts from Bapex however made their own presentation at the meeting. They said it became clear from their earlier actions that the seven-inch casing (there are five casings of different sizes inside the well) still had a leak while another crack in the 13-3/8 inch casing had been sealed off by pumping mud before mid-April.

Bapex argued that using the snubbing unit bears the risk of a blow out at many steps.

"Since mud pumping had turned out to be effective, Bapex believes that the leakage in the seven-inch casing can be sealed off by applying barite, which does not appear a risky idea," the source said quoting the Bapex proposal.

But the government ultimately opted for GSM's solution because of its experience and expertise in the matter. GSM had been involved in both Magurhahra and Tengratila blowout remedial actions.

Sparse gas leakage through various points of the ground in Brahmanbaria had been noticed for the last three to five years. But since the last dry season, this has become alarming. Local villagers and farmers had told The Daily Star in February that gas was leaking

from more than 3,000 big holes-- including some 30-foot-diameter holes-- in IRRI paddy fields, water bodies and the Titas river. Gas emitted through some holes is burning with high flames.

Titas field produces 400 mmcf of gas as against the country's total gas demand of 1,500 mmcf. Discovered in the early sixties by Shell Oil, Titas was estimated to have a gas reserve of 5.12 trillion cubic feet (tcf). After four decades, it now has 2.78 tcf.

## Judicial probe

**FROM PAGE 1**

at Paltan Maidan on November 3, "The son of four-party alliance chief drives Tk 2 crore car, wears suit worth lakh taka and squanders thousands of crore taka in gambling abroad," and "A syndicate of 2 lakh and 86 thousand crore taka is being run at Hawa Bhaban."

In his complaint against Jalil, Tarique quoted the AL general secretary as telling the newsmen on November 16, "Tarique's APS Apu pressurised the inspector general of police to post 15 BNP men as officers-in-charge (OCs) at different police stations under Gopalganj, Faridpur, Shariatpur and Madaripur."

In the charge against Obaidul Quader, the complainant said he (Quader) at a press briefing on November 4 said "The New York Stock Exchange has awarded Tarique Rahman with a medal. How much taka is needed to get it, what is the source of this money, people want to know."

Quader also said, "People want to know what Tarique Rahman carried in 435 suitcases and bags on his trip to Saudi Arabia for performing the Umrah? Why and how the Malaysian government has confiscated the money of Tarique?"

The petitioner said all these widely published and telecast statements of the AL leaders are false and baseless aiming to undermine his political image.

## High-level

**FROM PAGE 1**

The other committee members include Shah Mohammad Ali, joint secretary to the telecom ministry, and representatives from science and information and communication technology ministry, armed forces division, Directorate General of Forces Intelligence, National Security Intelligence and Bangladesh Telegraph and Telephone Board.

## CG asked to draw

**FROM PAGE 1**

stressed on the need for greater planning and coordination between the armed forces and the caretaker government to ensure the government's success, as they feared the government's failure to achieve its aims will be a 'catastrophe' for the country.

They were speaking at a roundtable on 'Reform of Political Systems' organised by the daily Prothom Alo at its office yesterday, where the speakers were former advisers to past caretaker governments Akbar Ali Khan, Sultana Kamal, Maj Gen (ret'd) Syed Md Ibrahim, and M Hafizuddin Khan. Centre for Policy Dialogue Executive Director Debapriya Bhattacharya and Jahangirnagar University Professor Dilara Chowdhury also participated in the discussion.

Sultana Kamal, who is also the executive director of Ain O Shalish Kendra, said the government must take immediate and visible steps to change the political practice in the country. She said it is necessary 'so that the people of Bangladesh are given a hope of a specific goal'.

Debapriya Bhattacharya observed that the current political reforms are being carried out in an 'ad-hoc' fashion, which takes away from the government's predictability, making the people's lives more 'uncertain' and insecure. Debapriya also recommended more time-bound specific goals which, he believes, are currently absent, such as a mid-term economic goal.

He also said Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed needs to go public with the goals through the media, namely through television or newspaper interviews, and revive the initial public confidence and support enjoyed by the government.

Debapriya noted that a cursory review of public opinion since the Fakhruddin-led interim government took over on January 11, suggests that public support for the government has been in gradual decline since February.

Former adviser to a caretaker government Ibrahim said these problems need to be mitigated through dialogues between the government and the people, as the government has to have public support. Akbar, in a similar manner, also urged for a greater push to gain public support to complement the government's legal justifications, which, he said, cannot

## Writ petition

**FROM PAGE 1**

present address is 62, Bijoynagar, Dhaka.

A group of lawyers including BNP's Law Affairs Secretary Zainul Abedin assumed that Josneara might be the wife of former prime minister Khaleda Zia's political secretary Harris Chowdhury, but it could not be confirmed.

In the same petition, she also prayed to issue rule upon the Election Commission (EC) as to why it has been delaying in holding the general elections.

After filing of the petition in the morning a division bench of the HC partly heard the matter yesterday afternoon and fixed May 16 for the next hearing.

This is the first ever petition filed against the caretaker government challenging its legal base of its holding office.

While Abdus Salam Mandal is the filing advocate of the petition, Syed Golam Mostafa moved in the court yesterday as counsel of the petitioner.

After yesterday's hearing, Mustafa said that as the caretaker government and the EC did not hold the election within 90 days as per the constitution, they cannot do that and they should explain on what authority they are doing this.

In the petition, It is mentionable that several writ petitions were filed in the HC last year against the then caretaker government led by President Iajuddin Ahmed, as there were allegations of violating constitutional provisions against him for assuming CA's office.

When a HC bench was about to deliver judgement on one of the writ petitions at the end of November, the then chief justice stayed the matter,

## Printers propose

**FROM PAGE 1**

Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) ATM Shamsul Huda on April 5 announced that no election could be held in next 18 months, as it is the minimum required time for preparing the voter list with photographs at an estimated cost of Tk 450 crore.

The timeframe triggered controversy as some politicians and electoral experts found it too lengthy.

The EC however on several occasions has said that it would welcome anyone who will come up with a proposal to complete the job in less than 18 months.

The forum submitted the proposal to the despatch section of the Election Commission secretariat as they failed to get an appointment to meet the CEC.

"We tried to meet the chief election commissioner but didn't get the appointment. We were asked to submit the proposal to the despatch section of the EC secretariat," Gazi Aminul Haque, a forum member, told reporters after submitting the proposal.

A few forum leaders have claimed that they have experience in preparing voter identity cards in 1995.

The forum also offered to conduct a feasibility study on their own for preparing the voter list.

## Indian cricket

**FROM PAGE 1**

India are here to play Bangladesh in their second full series and third overall tour after their tour back in the winter of 2004-05. India crushed Bangladesh in the Test series but Bangladesh won the second one-day international by 15 runs. In that match, dashing batsman Aftab Ahmed smashed a scintillating 67.

Bangladesh played against India in their inaugural Test match in November 2000.

The Indians are going to play their first two one-day internationals at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur on May 10 and 12 respectively and then travel to Chittagong to play the final one-day on May 15 where they also start the Test series from May 18. The second and final Test will be played in Dhaka from May 25.

The visitors are expected to leave on May 30.

### SQUAD

Rahul Dravid (captain), Mahendra Dhoni (wicketkeeper), Gautam Gambhir, Dinesh Karthik, Zaheer Khan, Dinesh Mongia, Munaf Patel, Piyush Chawla, Ramesh Powar, Virender Sehwag, Rudra Pratap Singh, Shanthakumaran Sreesanth, Manoj Tiwary, Robin Uthappa, Yuvraj Singh.

## Sacked Pakistan

**FROM PAGE 16**

he took his protest to the city for the first time since he was fired by military ruler Musharraf on March 9.

Chaudhry, who has denied charges that he abused his authority, told the crowd that the "Era of dictatorship is over."

"It is the responsibility of the courts to defend human rights of the people and protect the constitution," he said.

"Rule of law and supremacy of the constitution is inevitable for a civilised society and the nations who do not believe in it cannot survive and face a collapse," he told the crowd in the city known as the country's cultural capital.

It was the biggest show of support for Chaudhry since he was sacked by Musharraf on March 9 over misconduct charges, his counsel Aitzaz Ahsan told the gathering on the lawns of the Lahore High Court.

## Special graft courts

**FROM PAGE 1**

quick disposal.

Former state minister for planning and Awami League (AL) leader Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir, ex-state minister for civil aviation and tourism and BNP leader Mir Mohammad Nasiruddin and his son Helaluddin, former state minister for labour and employment and BNP leader Amanullah Aman were produced before the court at 11:30am. Aman's wife Sabera Aman, one of the defendants, however, was absent.

Later in the day, the authorities concerned at the MP Hostel did not allow the newsmen to cover proceedings of the special courts. They let the journalists in but by that time the day's business was over.

Following the restrictions, those waiting outside the MP Hostel's gate since early in the morning wanted to know from the on-duty officials if the trials were being held in camera but to no avail.

Tight security measures were in place throughout the day and around the makeshift courts that will deal with the cases against the ones listed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) as graft suspects. Many big names in politics and business have already been rounded upon on corruption charges.

### HARRIS' CASE

Proceedings against Harris at the Fifth Special Court began with deposition of three prosecution witnesses.

Judge Ashraf Hossain recorded statements of the witnesses and set tomorrow for deposition of two others.

The witnesses who gave statement yesterday are ACC Deputy Director Abu Sayeed, ACC Field Officer Khandaker Akheruzzaman, and Abdul Hakim, a caretaker of Harris' neighbour.

Earlier on April 30, the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court, Dhaka framed charges against Harris in his absence and summoned the complainant and other witnesses for deposition yesterday.

ACC Deputy Director Abu Sayeed filed the case on April 5 for not submitting wealth statement to the commission within the stipulated time.

In response, the court issued an arrest warrant and ordered the authorities concerned to send a copy to the concerned police station. It also directed the police to report back to it.

On February 18, the ACC asked Harris to submit his wealth statement within 72 hours, but neither he nor his representative complied with the instruction. The anti-graft body at a meeting on March 29 approved the filing of the case, sources said.

### CASES AGAINST 3 STATE MINISTERS

On April 29, the ACC pressed charges against them in connection with graft cases filed with different police stations.

The investigation officers (IOs) submitted charge sheets to the Court of Chief Metropolitan Magistrate, Dhaka showing 12 people as prosecution witnesses for each of the cases.

### ALAMGIR CASE

## Shady trade thrives

**FROM PAGE 1**

organised the ill-fated river cruise of Friday. Around 200 youngsters from the low-income section of the city paid Tk 350 each for the pleasure trip.

Local youths said the Love Touch Band used to perform at various social programs including marriage ceremonies and birthday programmes. It recently gained huge popularity among the local youths for its young girls who sang and danced with contemporary Hindi music.

On Friday night, soon after a girl hired by the band performed the first dance, the youths aboard the launch split into two groups and clashed with each other for dominance over the girl.

The rowdy youth were allegedly intoxicated at that time. The situation turned worse when the security personnel on the vessel intervened after a windowpane of the vessel was damaged during the clash.

Upon receiving instruction of the vessel owner over cellphone, the crew drove the launch toward Sadarghat instead of its scheduled destination Farashganj.

As soon as the launch reached Sadarghat, a group of 20-25 lungi-clad men swooped on the pleasure trippers. The identity of the attackers could not be ascertained till yesterday.

The family members of the deceased were in the dark about

Judge Shahed Noor Uddin of the Third Special Court yesterday fixed May 9 for hearing on charge framing against Mohiuddin Khan Alamgir in a graft case filed with Tejgaon Police Station.

ACC deputy directors (DDs) Sharmin Ferdousi and Jibon Krishna Roy, also the IOs of the case lodged on March 6, submitted the charge sheet that says Alamgir committed a crime by not disclosing accurate financial information to the National Board of Revenue (NBR) and the ACC.

He also did not mention that Tk 1.17 crore was kept as fixed deposit with Karwan Bazar branch of IFIC Bank, the IOs said.

### NASIR CASE

Judge AK Roy of the Second Special Court yesterday began trial of Mir Nasir and his son Mir Helal in connection with a graft case filed with Gulshan Police Station.

ACC DDs Sharmin Ferdousi and Abdullah Al Zahid, also the IOs, submitted the charge sheet of the case filed on March 6.

According to the charge sheet, the two have accumulated assets worth over Tk 24.39 crore through illegal means.

Besides, Helal transferred Tk 2.83 crore from different bank accounts following his father's arrest, the IOs added.

### AMAN CASE

Judge Firoz Alam of the First Special Court began proceedings against former state minister Aman and his wife Sabera in a case filed for amassing huge wealth through illegal means.

ACC DDs Abdullah Al Zahid and Jibon Krishna Roy, also the IOs, submitted charge sheet in the case filed with the Kafur Police Station.

In the charge sheet, they said Aman and his wife have amassed properties valued over Tk 10 crore.

The IOs said there are discrepancies between income and expenditure of the former BNP minister. He also accumulated a huge wealth through abuse of power.

The DDs accused Sabera of giving false information in her statement to the anti-graft body.

### MIRZA ABBAS CASE

Four prosecution witnesses yesterday gave judicial statements to a metropolitan magistrate in connection with a graft case filed against former housing and public works minister Mirza Abbas and 11 others on March 29.

Those who gave statements are Fakir Mahbub Alam, Iftekhar Uddin Ahmed, Ahmed Iqbal and AY Mohammad Kamal.

The ACC on March 28 filed the case against Abbas and 11 engineers and officials of Rajdhan Unnayan Kartipakkha (Rajuk) and Public Works Department with Motijheel Police Station.

Violating the authorities' direction on selling 18 abandoned houses of the government, they in connivance with one another sold the houses in a fake auction that resulted in a loss of Tk 127,64,29,000 to the government as the houses were sold at much lower prices than the market value, ACC sources said.

## Govt sits on EC call

**FROM PAGE 1**