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## Editors review state of media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Editors of leading national dailies yesterday held a meeting in the capital to discuss the prevailing situation in the print and electronic media.

The meeting presided over by Editor of the Independent Mahbubul Alam, discussed flow and rate of advertisements, irregular payment of advertisement bills by the advertisers and advertising agencies, problems in collecting bills of government advertisements, said a press release.

Matiur Rahman, editor of Prothom Alo, Shafiq Rehman, editor of Jaijaidin, Golam Sarwar, editor of Jangant, Amanullah Kabir, editor of Amar Desh, AMM Bahauddin, editor of Inqilab,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

# Govt finally wakes up to soaring rice prices

## Decides to introduce OMS outlets, asks donors for food grains

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of rice continued to increase yesterday and the government decided to introduce open market sale (OMS) outlets across the country and ask donors to provide food grains as aid instead of money.

Coarse rice was sold at Tk 32-33 yesterday, increased by Tk 1-2 per kilogram, at retail shops in the capital.

Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) also

increased the prices of coarse rice from Tk 20 to Tk 25 per kilogram at its fair price outlets where rice and other commodities are sold at minimum prices.

Col Mujiburul Haq, BDR commander in Dhaka, told The Daily Star that they have increased the prices to prevent misuse of the subsidised prices as many people buy rice from their outlets and sell it at local markets.

Swarna rice, imported from

India, was sold at Tk 34 while its price was Tk 32 on Tuesday. According to yesterday's list of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), the prices of normal quality Pajam and Lata rice were Tk 34-35 per kilogram. The varieties were sold at Tk 27-29 a week ago.

The TCB data showed that the price of coarse rice was increased by 26-30 percent in last one month while the increase in last one year was by around 70 percent.

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday said the government will sit with traders to find ways to keep the rice prices at a tolerable level.

Visiting a number of BDR-run fair price outlets in the capital yesterday, it was found that people with low incomes were standing in long queues to buy rice for Tk 25 per kilogram.

Demand for rice at these outlets

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## CLOSURE OF RMG FACTORY Workers demo brings Mirpur to a standstill

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Several thousand garment workers protesting closure of a factory without notice barricaded the busy Rokeya Sarani in the city yesterday, leading to severe traffic congestion on other streets in Mirpur area for almost the whole day.

Workers from around 20 factories staged the demonstration after the authorities closed the factory of SQ Sweaters Ltd in Mirpur following a two-day strike by the factory workers enraged at the death of one of their co-workers.

Severe traffic jam choked the streets, especially during the morning rush hours, as the workers

occupied Rokeya Sarani at Sheorapara from 8:30am to 6:00pm.

The angry workers of SQ Sweaters alleged that the authorities forced a worker named Salma to work at night shift on December 30, 2007, although she was ill. As her condition deteriorated, she was taken home at around 3:00am and she died an hour later.

A post mortem was carried on her body at Dhaka Medical College morgue, but suspiciously, the management did not show the workers the report.

As the news of Salma's death spread among her colleagues, they

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## 2 cold waves this month

### Met Office forecast

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two cold spells are likely to sweep the country this month, especially the northern and central parts, a meteorological office forecast yesterday said.

The Met office issued the forecast following a meeting of experts.

"We're expecting a mild cold wave in the first half of the month and a severe bout in the month's end", Samarendra Karmakar, who chaired the meeting and is director of the Met office told The Daily Star yesterday.

Areas likely to be affected are Rajshahi and Sylhet divisions, and Jessore, Kushtia, Mymensingh, Tangail and Comilla regions where people may face temperatures

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

## Better foreign ties, remittance flow success of one year

Says Iftekhar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Improving foreign relations and record remittance figures are the highlights of a successful foreign policy adopted by the government in its first year, Foreign Adviser Iftekhar A Chowdhury yesterday said.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## ACC files case against ex-MP MA Mannan

A CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday filed a case against former lawmaker and BNP leader Prof MA Mannan, his wife and son in connection with accumulating wealth illegally and concealing

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



Workers of garment factories on and around Rokeya Sarani in the capital blockaded the street at Sheorapara for nearly 12 hours yesterday. They were protesting the closure of a factory and demanding trial of those responsible for allegedly forcing an ill female worker of the factory to work, which reportedly caused her death.

## Tapan antics spark sharp criticism

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Food Adviser Tapan Chowdhury's remarks on government's role in tackling the skyrocketing prices of rice have triggered sharp reaction both within and outside the government.

Contradicting his remarks, Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday said the government certainly has responsibility to rein in the soaring prices of rice.

"I do not agree that the government has nothing to do with the price hike. It must have responsibility in this regard. We are carrying out that task. The government is doing its best," Mirza Aziz told reporters after attending a seminar at Palli Karma Sahayak Foundation in the capital.

At a press briefing on Tuesday, Tapan Chowdhury said the government now has nothing to do with reducing the prices of rice.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## Delwar falls sick, admitted to Birdem Hospital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Khandaker Delwar Hossain, BNP secretary general appointed by party Chairperson Khaleda Zia, was admitted to Birdem hospital yesterday with several health-related complications, including heart disease.

Delwar, who is also a diabetic, has been kept in the intensive care unit (ICU) of the hospital's cardiology department.

Speaking to The Daily Star, BNP's acting Office Secretary Rizvi Ahmed yesterday urged the people to pray for Delwar's early recovery.

# Election in Pakistan now on Feb 18

## PPP and Sharif party to join; Govt invites foreign help in probing Benazir assassination

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan yesterday postponed general elections until February 18 following the assassination of opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, which sparked days of unrest that left dozens of people dead.

Pakistan President Pervez

Musharraf defended the postponement of elections following the killing of Benazir Bhutto, and invited Britain to help probe her death.

Benazir's party and others have opposed the delay but with many election offices wrecked in the unrest that convulsed the nation after her killing, election officials

said the delay was unavoidable.

"In the light of the circumstances, the new date for general elections is 18 February 2008 instead of January 8," Chief Election Commissioner Qazi Mohammad Farooq told a news conference.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## Govt open to sending Khaleda, Hasina abroad

### AL, BNP won't make any such proposal for better treatment

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The caretaker government would consider sending detained Awami League President Sheikh Hasina and BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia abroad for better treatment if it received formal proposals from their parties.

Both the parties however decided not to make any proposal to the government for sending their

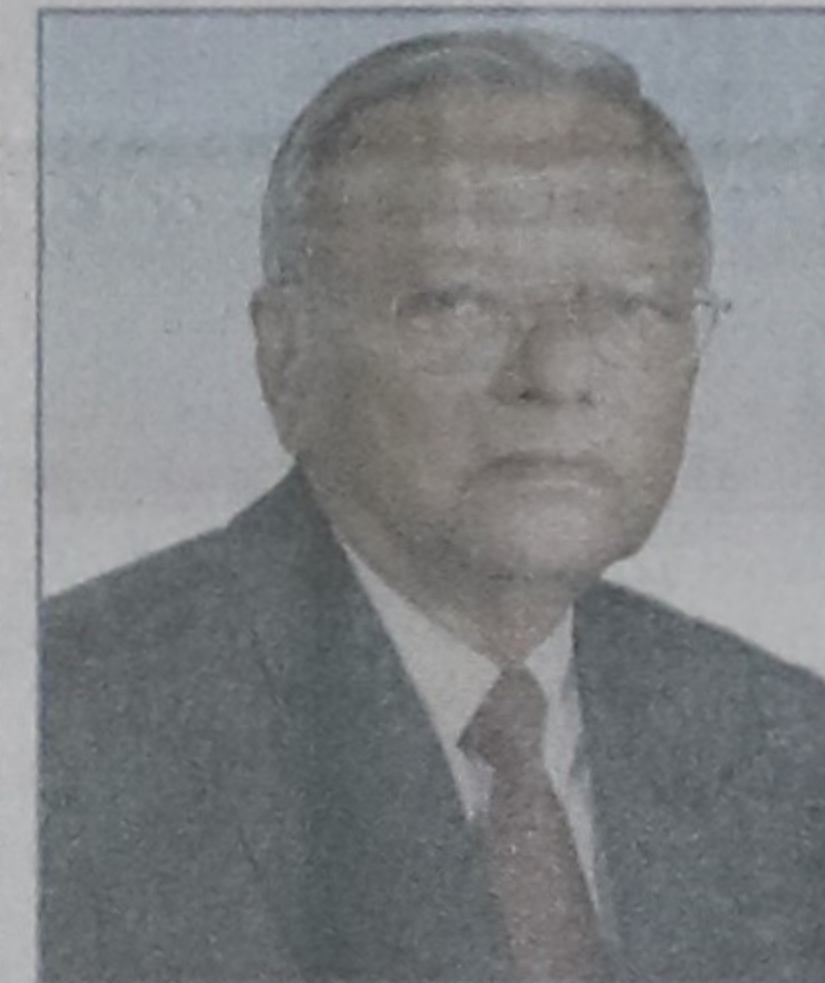
leaders abroad.

"I received no such proposals. The legal aspects of such proposals would be examined once we receive them," Law and Information Adviser Mainul Hossain told reporters at his office yesterday.

Asked about how the government would send the two former premiers abroad as they are

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## We are grieved



Respected Rev. Paul Munshi, founder of the Christian Service Society (CSS), passed away on January 2, 2008 at 3:25 AM. He was 79 years old.

Rev. Munshi was born on March 21, 1929, and went on to dedicate his whole life to service of the Lord, and the people of Bangladesh. His exemplary life will be forever a source of inspiration for us.

Funeral service will be held at

Shalom AG Church, 12 Rupsha Strand Road, Khulna

Friday, Jan 4, 2008, at 10:30 AM

A special service to honor the memory of Rev. Munshi, and to lay him to rest, will be held at

CSS, 82 Rupsha Strand Road, Khulna

Friday, Jan 4, 2008, at 02:30 PM

We the family of Rev. Paul Munshi, and the members of CSS, humbly request your presence on these occasions.

Respectfully,

CSS and the Munshi Family

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