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Bigots battle with cop



1. Anti-Quran Law Resistance Committee activists hurl brickbats at police and chase them near Baitul Mukarram National Mosque yesterday. 2. Police counter chase them. 3. One of the activists attacks a policeman with bamboo stick. 4. A policeman helps Dhaka Metropolitan Police Assistant Commissioner Pankaj Roy who was injured in attacks made by the activists.

New US envoy arrives in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newly-appointed US Ambassador to Bangladesh James Francis Moriarty arrived yesterday, after the post was vacated by Patricia Butenis in last July.

"I look forward to learning more about Bangladesh and its people and helping Bangladeshis understand the United States better," said Moriarty in a prepared statement read out after his arrival at Zia International Airport.

Moriarty was accompanied by his wife Lauren, also a retired senior career diplomat.

Moriarty served as the US ambassador to Nepal between 2004 and 2007 and special assistant to the US president and senior director at the National Security Council (NSC). He has also held several positions, as an East Asia expert, specialising on China.

He joined the US foreign service in 1975 and is a graduate of Dartmouth College.

Food prices to remain high, more riots feared

Says FAO director general

PTI, New Delhi

The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Wednesday said global commodity prices were far from easing in the short term owing to tight supply-demand situation and warned of flare-ups over food shortage.

"The rise in prices of food commodities all over the world is not going to ease in the short term in view of supply-demand situation," FAO Director General Jacques Diouf told reporters after meeting India's Food Minister Sharad Pawar.

The FAO director general said

the world has four-five million tonnes (MT) of cereals stocks that can feed the global population for only 8-12 weeks.

"The world food situation is very serious... with food riots reported from many countries like Egypt, Cameroon, Haiti, Burkina Faso and Senegal. We fear that this may spread to other countries," he added.

Diouf noted that people in the developing countries spend 50-60 percent of their income on food and therefore any rise in the food prices affects them.

He attributed increasing demand from the developing

countries, particularly in China and India, and diversion of food grains towards production of biofuels for rising commodity prices across the world.

However, Pawar expressed confidence that India's food situation is comfortable with sufficient stock.

"We have over half a million tonnes of food grain surplus than the buffer norms as on April 1 this year," Pawar said.

According to the Food Corporation of India, the wheat stock as on April 1 is 5.5 MT against the buffer norm of four MT.

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GMG now says trouble-maker not mentally ill

RASHIDUL HASAN

GMG Airlines officials yesterday said Harun-ar-Rashid, for whom one of its flights had to make an emergency landing at a Thai airport Tuesday, is not mentally disturbed. GMG on Tuesday claimed he was mentally disturbed citing a doctor's opinion.

They now say he was just sad after losing his job in Malaysia and he did not know that carrying a knife on board a plane was illegal.

Flight ZS-042 heading for Dhaka from Kuala Lumpur made an emergency landing at Don Muang Airport in Bangkok Tuesday after Harun was seen cutting an apple with a knife.

After a three-hour drama at the airport, the flight finally made it to Zia International Airport around 2:30pm Tuesday.

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HIDING WEALTH

Charges pressed against ex-secy Zabiullah, wife

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against former environment secretary Ismail Zabiullah, and his wife Ayesha Zabiullah in a case for amassing wealth illegally and concealing information in the wealth statement submitted to the commission.

Meanwhile, the ACC also submitted charge sheet against former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Alhaz Mokbul Hossain's son

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Bangladesh face Pakistan in 2nd ODI today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh go into the second one-day international against Pakistan in Faisalabad today with a more acceptable combination in a desperate attempt to be competitive after the 152-run thrashing in the first game in Lahore on Tuesday.

The Tigers, who fielded three and a half bowlers in Lahore where the hosts piled up 322 despite an initial hiccup, were weighing an option of bringing back paceman Syed Rasel in place of young off-spinner Mahmudullah Riyad. Bangladesh were bundled out for

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

PROF AFTAB MURDER Emon reveals vital info, denies his involvement

STAR REPORT

Notorious criminal Sanjivul Islam Emon denied his involvement in the murder of former National University vice-chancellor Prof Aftab Ahmed but gave vital information in a confessional statement yesterday.

The details of the confessional statement will however not be made public following strict

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Nepal's king set to fall as nation votes

UN hails historic elections

AFP, Kathmandu

The troubled Himalayan kingdom of Nepal yesterday gave an historic vote of support for a peace process that is set to abolish an unpopular monarchy and reshape the impoverished country.

The United Nations peace mission said the elections for a 601-seat assembly, the climax of a peace process involving mainstream parties and Maoist rebels, had been met with a show of "overwhelming enthusiasm" across the roof of the world.

"Clearly there has been overwhelming enthusiasm on part of the people to come out and cast their vote," UN spokesman Kieran Dwyer told AFP as polling stations closed.

"There have been reports of incidents in some constituencies across the country, but so far in a relatively small number of areas," he said of the calmer-than-expected election day.

The final results are not expected for several weeks.

Security has been tight across the country, cars have been off the roads, and alcohol sales banned -- with authorities determined to prevent an escalation of the killings, bombings and reports of widespread voter intimidation that plagued the final days of campaigning.

paing.

Sporadic violence, including two deaths in the ethnically tense south, was reported -- but the incidents reported so far have been far less dramatic than the meltdown many had feared.

Police and election officials said voting had been halted in just a handful of 21,000 polling booths, many of which have been watched by an unprecedented army of international and local observers.

The elections are central to the 2006 peace deal that ended a decade-long Maoist insurgency -- a brutal war that led to at least 13,000 deaths -- and attempts by the country's unpopular King Gyanendra to assume absolute power.

The king, who took the throne in 2001 after much-loved former king Birendra and most of the rest of the family were massacred by a drunk and drugged crown prince, is expected to be sacked when the new constituent assembly is formed.

But he can still count on support from sections of the army and Hindu fundamentalists, who see him as an incarnation of a Hindu god, and analysts say the post-vote period will be another major test for the resilience of the peace process.

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Ershad reinstates Rawshan-backed expelled leaders

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiyo Party (JP) Chairman HM Ershad yesterday reinstated all expelled leaders of the Rawshan Ershad-led faction, 10 months after Rawshan revolted to oust Ershad leading to the break-up of the party.

The reconciliation of the two factions came after Ershad

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Maya's son Dipu gets 3yrs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A special court yesterday sentenced former state minister and Awami League leader Mofazzal Hossain Chowdhury Maya's son Sajedul Islam Chowdhury alias Dipu Chowdhury to 3 years' rigorous imprisonment for not submitting his wealth statement to the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

Judge Sirajul Islam of Special Judge's Court-7, set up on the Jatiya

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Prayer Timing

April 11

	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-35	5-10
Dhuhr	12-30	1-15
Asr	4-45	5-00
Maghrib	6-24	6-28
Esha	7-45	8-15

Source: Islamic Foundation



Bangladesh Railway start sale of tickets for Dhaka-Kolkata train at Kamalapur station yesterday as enthusiastic people queued at the counter to buy tickets following the signing of a treaty in this regard. Story on page 1.

No plan to introduce essentials' rationing

Mirza Aziz says it would create scopes for graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Finance Adviser Mirza Azizul Islam yesterday said the government does not have any plan to introduce rationing of essential items, as it would create scope for corruption.

"Non-price distribution is bound to create scope for corruption and misuse. Besides, there is a lack of delivery mechanism for rationing at present," said the finance adviser while exchanging views on the next budget with the members of Economic Reporters' Forum (ERF).

Citing his experience as a dep-

uty commissioner in the past, Mirza Azizul Islam said, "It is my observation that rationing of essential commodities creates scope for corruption due to poor delivery system."

He said it was found that many people mentioned the number of their family members higher than the real figure to get more rice and sold the extra rice in the market.

Replying to a query on foreign aid, he said, "If we can convince the donors, they don't put pressure to fulfil their conditions."

Bangladesh could convince the International Monetary Fund

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54 Myanmar migrants die in seafood container on way to Thailand

AFP, Bangkok

At least 54 Myanmar migrants suffocated to death in a cold storage container as they were being smuggled into Thailand to look for work, Thai police said Thursday.

The incident was the deadliest in a wave of recent tragedies as people flee economic collapse in the military-ruled state.

A total of 121 people were crammed inside a container just six metres (20 feet) long and 2.2 metres wide, said Colonel Kraithong Chanthongbai, local police commander in the border province of Ranong where the bodies were found late Wednesday.

Twenty one people were hospi-

talized suffering dehydration and lack of oxygen, he said, adding they appeared to be recovering after receiving intravenous fluids.

The airtight container was normally used to carry frozen seafood.

Kraithong said the migrants were supposed to pay a Thai smuggling ring some 5,000 baht (157 dollars) each to take them from the border to the nearby resort isle of Phuket.

Once there, they hoped to find work as day labourers, he said.

When the driver of the truck carrying the container realised some of the migrants had died, he parked by the side of the road,

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