



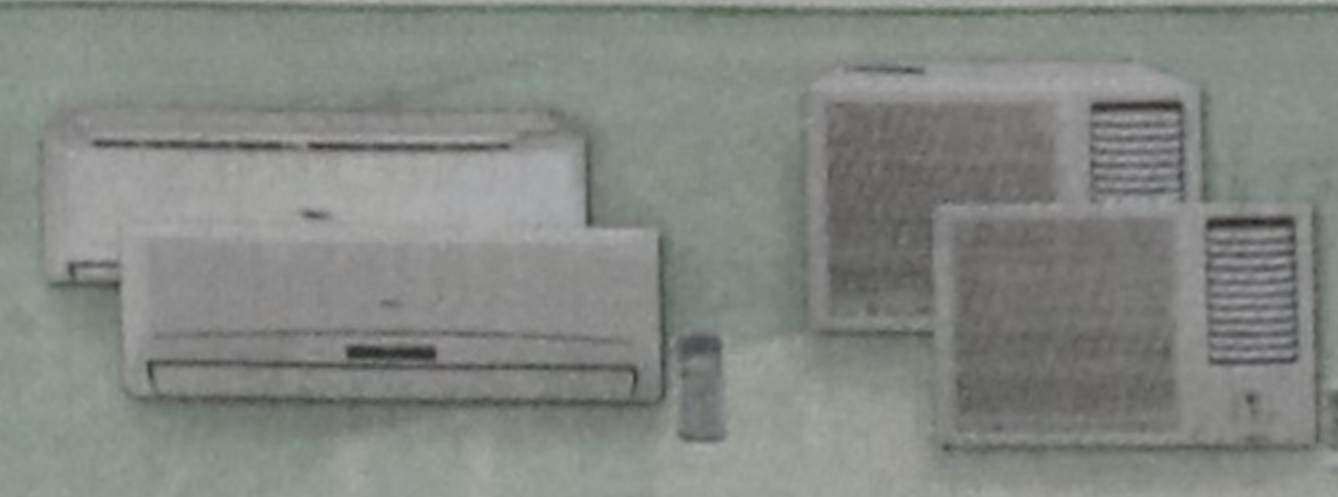
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# Biofuels backlash in US as food costs hit home

AFP, Washington

A biofuels backlash has erupted in major ethanol producer the United States, as lawmakers and experts debate the merits of converting food to fuel to support America's age-old love affair with the automobile.

With gasoline at record prices at US pumps, and soaring corn, rice and wheat costs sparking a global food crisis this year with deadly riots in several nations, some have questioned the wisdom of President George W. Bush's call for higher US biofuel mandates that divert US crops, like corn, to fuel production.

"Why are we putting food in our

gas tanks instead of our stomachs?" Richard Reinwald, owner of Reinwald's Bakery in Huntington, New York, asked members of Congress at a hearing last week on skyrocketing food costs.

Biofuels are derived from foodstuffs such as corn, soybeans and sugarcane, and plants like switch grass and their cellulosic waste.

Touted just months ago as an answer to spiking gas prices, biofuels are enduring closer scrutiny by US lawmakers alarmed by the high cost of food staples and how they are sapping millions of American households.

Members of Bush's own Republican party are turning on him, including Senator Kay Bailey

Hutchison, who called on Congress to undo "America's ethanol mistake."

"In recent weeks, the correlation between government biofuel mandates and rapidly rising food prices has become undeniable," Hutchison said in a statement on her website.

"At a time when the US economy is facing recession, Congress needs to reform its food-to-fuel policies and look at alternatives to strengthen energy security."

Hutchison is due to introduce legislation to Congress that would freeze biofuel mandates at current levels.

Biofuels are refined to produce fuel similar to those made from

petroleum, but their growing use has been cited along with poor harvests due to drought, surging demand in Asia as living standards have risen, higher transport costs and trade restrictions for the rapid rise in food prices.

Joachim von Braun, head of the US-based International Food Policy Research Institute, said a moratorium on biofuels from food grains in 2008 would lower corn prices by 20 percent and wheat prices by 10 percent in 2009 and 2010.

Renowned US economist Jeffrey Sachs has also leveled heavy biofuels criticism.

"What should be abandoned is

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

## 600 businesses in Bogra use corrosive acids without licence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Bogra

More than 600 businesses in Bogra are using nitric and other corrosive acids without any licence, contributing to rising acid violence in the district.

A senior police official said due to the availability of acid, acid violence in Bogra is higher than in other districts.

At least five acid-throwing cases have been filed in the last four months. Two such cases were registered in the fourth quarter of last year, said the official preferring anonymity.

The deputy commissioner said the district administration will soon take action against illegal acid trade and use through mobile courts. He said the administration has already asked the businesses

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5

## Criminals commit crimes in guise of cops

### Poor monitoring of sale of uniforms, other items

KAILASH SARKAR

Criminals continue to cheat people using uniforms, caps, handcuffs and other accessories used by law enforcers due to lack of proper mechanism for monitoring the sale of these items.

They often commit crimes disguising themselves as law enforcers in the capital and other parts in the country.

Terming the misuse of these items by criminals 'a matter of concern', Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) Commissioner Naim Ahmed told The Daily Star, "It's true

that there is no restrictions on the sale of uniforms and other items used by the law enforcement agencies."

"There are chances that police uniforms and other items might be misused. Now we are trying to find a solution to it," he said.

He also said these items are sold at several markets from where the law enforcers buy uniforms and other necessary items.

A youth wearing police uniform attempted to snatch the rifle of a policeman in the city's Kafrul area on April 18. But, locals caught him foiling his attempt.

Fazlul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Kafrul Police Station, told The Daily Star that the youth bought the police uniform from Polwel Market in the capital.

Four other criminals in police uniform were arrested in the city's Paltan area while extorting money from vendors last year.

Police Welfare Society runs the Polwel Market, where around 35 shops sell these items. Besides, these are sold in two small markets in Kochukhet and Rajarbagh.

Uniforms and other items of police, ansars, jail guards and

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

## Wrong response aggravates Asia food crisis

Says ADB report

AFP, Manila

Asia's response to tightening global grain supplies has aggravated food price inflation and uncertainty, according to an Asian Development Bank report released here yesterday.

Export bans and price floors imposed by grain exporters including China, Pakistan, Vietnam and India "have increased price volatility and uncertainty in the international rice markets," reducing supplies.

These have been "contributing significantly to the surge in rice price especially since the end of 2007," the Manila-based lender said.

Among the importers, "precautionary demand for food stocks in many countries is contributing to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 8

## Drug admin ineffective for poor manpower, lack of testing laboratories

MAHBUBA ZANNAT

The Drug Administration (DA), the country's drug regulatory authority, is failing to foster and oversee the country's Tk 6,000-crore drug industry due to inadequate workforce, testing laboratories and equipment.

The regulatory body is tasked with monitoring and enforcing the implementation of drug regulations in the country as well as regulating production, pricing, sales, export, import of all sorts of drugs in the country. The DA also supervises the procurement of raw and packaging materials by drug manufacturers.

Although the DA is supposed to have a 214-strong workforce, it is administering the enormous task with only 174 employees as the rest of the positions remain unfilled for a long time.

The DA currently has only 37 drug supervisors to monitor drug markets in 64 districts across the country.

Since 1984, the DA's workload has increased at least 20 times and the industry grew much larger, said sources at the DA adding that despite this fact and the retirement of 30 to 40 of its employees, no step was taken to increase the size of its workforce and no one was recruited in the last eight to ten

years.

A DA official seeking anonymity said, "In 2002, we placed a proposal to the government for recruitment of manpower and for turning the administration into Directorate General of Drug Administration to have an effective control over the drug sector. However, the government is yet to take any decision regarding this."

After studying the proposal, the health ministry approved it and a few years ago forwarded it to the establishment ministry where it is still awaiting approval, he added.

Aside from manpower, the activities of the DA also get bogged

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## Onion prices up, ploy to hike edible oil prices

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of local and Indian onion went up in the city's kitchen markets in the last two days while retailers and edible oil refiners are making a ploy to hike the edible oil prices.

Meanwhile, the Open Market Sale (OMS) programme of the Food Directorate ends today in five metropolises and 36 districts across the country.

Locally-produced onion was sold yesterday at Tk 24-26 per kg while Indian onion at Tk 18-20.

Traders said the price of local and Indian onion rose by Tk 6 and Tk 3 in the last two weeks.

Abdul Latif Mia, president of Karwan Bazar Arat Malik (wholesalers) Samity, told The Daily Star that farmers are expecting to sell

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

## Golden Jubilee of Faujdarhat Cadet College

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Former and current students of Faujdarhat Cadet College yesterday celebrated the institution's golden jubilee on campus with enthusiasm.

College Principal Sheikh Bazlur Rashid and Old Faujians Association (OFA) Chittagong chapter President Saiful Islam jointly inaugurated the ceremony releasing balloons and pigeons in the afternoon.

Current and former cadets earlier brought out a colourful procession on campus.

The organisers arranged a friendly basketball match between the former and current cadets. Prizes were also given to the winners of essay writing and drawing competitions held on the occasion for the cadets.

OFA Chittagong Vice-president Mahtab Uddin Hasan, General Secretary Mezbah Uddin Ahmed and Treasurer Sarwar Ahmed were also present among others.

The institution was founded on

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## Buddha statue worth Tk 1cr recovered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) recovered a statue of Lord Buddha worth around Tk 1 crore from Cox's Bazar town on Thursday night.

The statue made of marble weighs around 88 kilograms, sources said.

Acting on a tip off, a team of Rab-7 in the guise of buyers negotiated with a group of smugglers over cellphone in the afternoon to buy the statue and fixed the price at Tk 1.20 lakh per kilogram, sources in the Rab-7 headquarters said.

Rab men went to Hazi Jafar Ahmed Mills area at Islampur Dhamer Chhara in the town on Thursday night to see the statue, but the smugglers fled the scene sensing the presence of the elite force, they added.

Later, they (Rab men) raided the area and found the statue abandoned.

Rab officials said the smugglers might have brought the statue from Myanmar to smuggle through Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

## UN halts aid to Myanmar as junta seizes supplies

### Myanmar 'not ready' to let in foreign aid workers

AFP, AP, Yangon

Myanmar said yesterday it was not ready to let in foreign aid workers, rejecting international pressure to allow experts into the isolated nation where disease and starvation are stalking cyclone survivors.

The United Nations blasted Myanmar's military junta yesterday, calling its refusal to let in foreign aid workers "unprecedented" as survivors of a devastating cyclone waited for food, shelter and medicine.

A UN official says the World Food Programme is suspending cyclone aid to Myanmar because

its government seized supplies flown into the country.

He says the WFP has no choice but to suspend the shipments until the matter is resolved.

WFP spokesman Paul Risley said yesterday that all "the food aid and equipment that we managed to get in has been confiscated." The shipment included 38 tons of high-energy biscuits.

Risley said it is not clear why the material was seized.

The junta said in a statement yesterday it was grateful to the international community for its assistance which has included 11 chartered planes loaded with aid

supplies but the best way to help was just to send in material rather than personnel.

One week after the devastating storm killed tens of thousands, Myanmar's ruling generals -- deeply suspicious of the outside world -- said the country needed outside aid for those still alive, but would deliver it themselves.

The foreign ministry announcement came as a top UN official warned time was running out to move in disaster experts and supplies to prevent diseases that could claim even more victims.

Instead, the ministry said some

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

## Khulna Rabindra Complex project gathering dust for 13 years

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The project file for the construction of Rabindra Complex at Dakkhindhi in the district has been gathering dust for nearly 13 years.

The project was decided on November 14, 1995 after a two-storey building of poet Rabindranath Tagore's father-in-law Beni Madhab Roy Chowdhury in Dakkhindhi village of Phultola upazila was recovered from land grabbers on September 7.

But no positive move has so far been made to implement the project to renovate the 114-year-old building for the proposed Rabindra Complex and a stage named Mrinalini Mancha.

Beni Madhab Roy Chowdhury was born in Dakkhindhi village, 19km from Khulna city.

The district administration that played a vital role in recovering the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

The 114-year-old two-storey building of Rabindranath Tagore's father-in-law at Dakkhindhi in Phultola upazila of Khulna remains uncared for.

## DMCH employee murdered

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) employee was stabbed to death and his body was found at Kawran Bazar in the city early yesterday.

The dead was identified as Habibur Rahman Litton, 32, who, according to DMCH sources, was suspended from service last year on medicine-lifting charges. He was also accused in a number of cases filed with different police stations.

Litton's wife Rowshan Jahan Poly said one of his acquaintances

SEE PAGE 15 COL 2

## Lebanon on the brink of all-out civil war

### Hezbollah overruns W Beirut, 11 killed in fighting

AFP, Beirut

Hezbollah fighters, their guns blazing, seized control of west Beirut yesterday after three days of street battles with pro-government forces pushed Lebanon dangerously close to all-out civil war.

The sectarian fighting had eased by early afternoon and the army and police moved across areas now in the hands of Iranian-backed Shia opposition forces who routed Sunni militants loyal to the Western-backed government.

"There are no clashes anymore because no one is standing in the way of the opposition forces," a security official said as convoys of gunmen firing celebratory shots into the air and flashing the victory

sign took to the streets.

But as foreigners scrambled to leave the troubled nation, it was unclear what the immediate future would hold, amid fears the protracted political feud could plunge Lebanon back to the dark days of the 1975-1990 civil war.

"All those who believe in democracy and pluralism are under siege in Beirut," said Social Affairs Minister Nayla Moawad.

Terrified residents cowered inside early Friday as the rattle of gunfire and the thump of exploding rocket-propelled grenades rang out across mainly Muslim west Beirut.

Sunni government loyalists fought running battles with Shia gunmen, routing them from their

strongholds and forcing the closure of the media outlets run by the family of parliamentary majority leader Saad Hariri.

At least 11 people have been killed and dozens wounded in three days of fighting that dramatically escalated on Thursday after Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah said a government crackdown on his powerful militant group was a declaration of war.

Christian opposition leader Michel Aoun, a Hezbollah ally, hailed Friday's events in the besieged capital as a "victory for Lebanon."

The unrest triggered urgent international appeals for calm, while Arab nations led by regional

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

Prayer Timing		
May 10		
	Azan	Jamaat
Fajr	4-10	4-45
Zohr	12-45	1-15
Asr	5-00	5-15
Maghrib	6-36	6-40
Esha	8-00	8-30
Source: Islamic Foundation		