

Govt resumes OMS of rice today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government today starts its nationwide open market sales (OMS) to stabilise rice prices ahead of the month of Ramadan.

The market price for coarse rice yesterday was Tk 32-34 per kilogram, while through the OMS programme rice will be sold at the subsidised rate of Tk 28 per kilogram.

A consumer can buy a maximum of three kilograms of rice under OMS at a time from the 925 OMS outlets and 25 truck stalls in the capital's 90 municipal wards.

Each truck is allocated 3000

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Graft trial caught in HC tangle

**ANTI-GRAFT
DRIVE-1**

JULFIKAR ALI MANIK

The military-backed caretaker government has won all cases so far in the fast-track special courts but failed to cross the next hurdle when top graft convicts challenged the verdicts in the High Court.

Though the prosecution is happy over quick disposal of cases and the success rate it is equally

disappointed with the pace appeal petitions are being handled at the HC.

The HC has received around a dozen appeals, none of which could be heard yet thanks to severe case backlog.

Even in some cases, the 90-day time stipulated for disposal of appeals has expired. Many believe trial of top graft-suspects is going to meet the same fate like thousands of other appeals pending with the HC for years.

Set up last year for quick disposal of cases, 10 special courts at the MP Hostel in National Parliament Complex received 204 corruption cases until end of June this year.

Of those, 105 cases filed against 154 people, mostly politicians and their family members, have been disposed of with verdicts in favour of the prosecution. Five co-accused in different cases could not be brought to trial due to HC stay.

As allegations against them could not be proved, 19 co-accused

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Thai Airways, Biman avert accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Passengers and crew of two aircraft—a Thai Airways Boeing 777 and a Biman DC 10—were unhurt when tyres of the planes burst while landing at Zia International Airport (ZIA) in Dhaka and Shah Amanat International Airport in Chittagong yesterday.

The Boeing with around 300 passengers and crew on board burst one of its tyres at ZIA on arrival from Bangkok, Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd sources said.

"One of the tyres of the aircraft burst soon after it touched down at Zia

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AL seeks urgent talks over polls

Sends letter to CA, CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Awami League (AL) yesterday sought appointments with the chief adviser and chief election commissioner (CEC) for immediate talks on holding of the parliamentary elections and upazila polls to "clear growing confusion over the polls".

AL policymakers believe that the talks will help break the stalemate in talks between the caretaker administration and political parties over holding upazila parishad

elections before the parliamentary poll and lifting of the state of emergency.

They gave hints that if the government and the Election Commission (EC) stick to their position to hold upazila polls before the parliamentary ones, they would propose holding polls to only 50-60 upazilas instead of 300 out of 482.

If the government agrees, the polls to the remaining upazila parishads will be held immediately

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12 more govt staff seek to confess graft

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twelve more government officials have applied for the Anti-Corruption Commission's (ACC) permission to seek exemption from prosecution in return for confession of corruption to the Truth and Accountability Commission (TAC).

With them, the number of applicants accused of graft or served with notices to submit wealth statements now stands at 29.

Contacted, officials at the anti-graft body declined to divulge identity of the applicants.

ACC sources said most of

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An overcrowded train trundles on the lines between Gandaria Railway Station and Jurain Bazar in the capital yesterday. The entire area along with the train lines there is waterlogged due to poor drainage system.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Landslide zones in Ctg to be marked

ABDULLAH AL MAHMUD, Ctg

The government initiated the process to mark hillsides and valleys, where landslides are possible, as "Red Zones", evacuate people living in those areas and bring those areas under afforestation.

The move comes a day after 11 people died in a mudslide at Matirhama in Chittagong city.

Commerce and Education Adviser Zillur Rahman gave the necessary directives to authorities concerned in this regard during a meeting in Chittagong yesterday. The meeting was held at the local circuit house following Monday's rain-induced mudslide that killed 11 people.

At the meeting Bangladesh Railway, Chittagong Wasa, Public

Works Department and the Police Department, which own most of these vulnerable lands, were instructed to manage their lands and hills following a low-cost protection plan, said the adviser while talking to journalists later.

A Technical Protection Committee was formed headed by the Chittagong Development Authority (CDA) chairman to prepare a low-cost sustainable protection plan for management of hills and vulnerable lands applying geotechnical methods, he said.

The authorities concerned were directed to file cases against those erecting illegal slums on such lands and charging them specifically to help speed up disposal of cases.

The adviser said a case was

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Harris, family charged with amassing Tk 85cr wealth illegally

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday pressed charges against Harris Chowdhury, political secretary to former premier Khaleda Zia, his family members and five others in a case filed for amassing wealth worth Tk 85.88 crore illegally.

The other charge-sheeted accused include Harris' wife Josne Ara Chowdhury, son Naim Shafi Chowdhury, daughter Samira Tanjil, brother Selim Chowdhury, sister-in-law Jahanara Chowdhury, nephew Tareq Shams, Harris' friend Mosharraf Hossain Thakur, and private secretary Ziaul Islam, Akhlaur Nahar and Yunus Ali.

ACC Deputy Assistant Director Abul Kashem, also the investigation officer (IO) of the case, submitted the charge sheet to the Dhaka Chief Metropolitan Magistrate's Court, showing 45 people as prosecution witnesses.

The IO dropped the name of Harris' brother-in-law Masum Ahmed from the charge sheet as the charges brought against him were not proved.

In the charge sheet, the IO said Harris had amassed wealth worth about Tk 85.88 crore illegally.

The other accused abetted Harris in acquiring the ill-gotten wealth.

The IO prayed for issuing arrest

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Commentary

Musharraf's exit: Lessons for them and us

MAHFUZ ANAM

The most obvious and truly heartening meaning of Pervez Musharraf's ouster is that democracy is the best form of government and it is the only one that people prefer. There have often been talks of this or that country, or people not being ready for democracy. Such views are archaic, self-serving

and devoid of all lessons of history. People everywhere prefer freedom and the political system that has been found, over and over again, to fulfill that irrepressible aspiration of the people is democracy. However, flawed democracy was and remains the best option for people everywhere. A lesson that we in Bangladesh have learnt the hard way and one that we are deter-

mined to preserve under all circumstances.

The other meaning, and of far reaching consequence for people everywhere is that military dictatorship cannot deliver and is not a sustainable option for countries anywhere in the world. Pakistan has proven once again, if proof was at all necessary, that military rulers

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HAMID MIR
From Pakistan

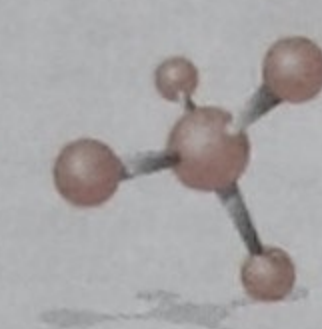
First day of Musharraf without office

August 19th was a unique day in the life of Musharraf. It was his first day without power after nine years.

The day started with a breakfast with his family. He was in a relaxed mood because there was no hurry to go to office on time. He doesn't have any office after 44 years but he

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