



THE LITTLE MAHARAJA

A 12-year-old has been crowned head of Jaipur royal family

PAGE 7

A COMMUNITY INITIATIVE

Locals are building a brick road on their own to facilitate easy commute for school goers in a Tangail village

PAGE 9

BYE SHERATON

Sheraton finally pulls out from Bangladesh hospitality after a long stay of 27 years

PAGE B1



Food import highest ever

Govt efforts on to ensure solid stock for booming population

REAZ AHMAD

The country's food import this fiscal year will be the highest ever despite the prospect of a good domestic grain output.

"The volume of import [of food grains] is expected to stand at 5.5 million tonnes by June (end of fiscal 2010-11)," Director General of Food Ahmed Hossain Khan told The Daily Star yesterday.

The previous record of food import -- 5.2 million tonnes -- was in fiscal 1998-99 when domestic production was largely affected due to a great deluge, food ministry officials said.

The ministry's import statistics show never in the past the country had to depend so much on food import as in the current fiscal year.

Food Minister Abdur Razzaque attributed this to a sharp rise in the demand for food as a result of rapid growth of population.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Wholesalers are buying aman rice at Singra upazila in Natore on Wednesday. The northern region of the country has produced more rice this year compared with the last year's harvest, and farmers are getting better prices.

PHOTO: HASIBUR RAHMAN BILU

Standard & Poor's too sees stable outlook

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Standard & Poor's Ratings Services affirmed Bangladesh "BB-" sovereign credit rating with a stable outlook, Bangladesh Bank and the rating firm said yesterday. Bangladesh got the same rating and outlook from the firm in 2010.

With this rating, the country will be able to borrow more efficiently at lower interest rates from international lenders. But it did not do so in the last year.

S&P said strong and stable economic growth and ongoing substantial donor engagement, which support continued

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

No top parties want to free lawmakers in JS

AL mum on article 70 in constitution; JS body's bid for change stumbles

SHAKHAWAT LITON

Ruling Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina's stance that existing article 70 of the constitution should not be changed, runs counter to her party's electoral manifesto that promised more freedom for lawmakers.

The existing article 70 bars MPs from going against their parties' decisions in the House even if they do not agree with those. Any lawmaker in violation of article 70 will lose his or her parliament membership.

Participating in the talks on con-

stitutional amendment with the parliamentary special committee on Wednesday, Hasina, also the premier, refrained from proposing amendment to the article.

At a post talks media briefing she said, "Article-70 will remain unchanged, otherwise the government will not have stability. Therefore, we do not want any amendment to this article."

The restriction put on MPs by article 70 is largely blamed for giving birth to a culture of flunkeyism in politics, in which ruling party MPs are quite often found blindly appre-

ciating the performance of the executive branch of the state instead of discharging their oversight functions.

It has also been used as a major weapon by opposition political parties in continuing with their wholesale boycott of the House, since according to the article, if a party decides not to join the parliament proceedings, all of its lawmakers must follow suit to retain their memberships in the parliament.

The original article 70 of the 1972 constitution had imposed lesser

SEE PAGE 19 COL 5

No corruption

Insists WB, pledges govt as \$1.2b loan deal for Padma Bridge signed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Managing Director of World Bank Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala yesterday again sought commitment from the government to maintain the highest level of transparency and have zero tolerance for corruption in the construction of the \$2.9 billion Padma Multipurpose Bridge.

She was addressing a press brief-

ing after the signing of the \$1.2 billion loan deal between the government and the World Bank for the bridge construction. The World Bank is the lead financier of the project.

"This is a new World Bank. Our conditions here are to ensure the highest quality of construction and corruption-free use of the fund," she

said, responding to a question on the WB's conditions on giving the loan.

She said the bridge will transform millions of lives in the south-west region and is a long overdue investment in the development of the country. She said the bridge will improve connectivity with other

SEE PAGE 6 COL 6



PHOTO: STAR

World Bank Country Director Ellen Goldstein and Economic Relations Division Secretary Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan sign the agreement for \$1.2 billion loan for the Padma Bridge project on a ferry at Mawa on the river Padma yesterday.

CONSTITUTION TALKS Intellectuals, journalists to be invited

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A parliamentary special committee will invite eminent journalists and intellectuals for talks to have their opinion on constitutional amendments, said co-chair of the committee Suranjit Sengupta yesterday.

Suranjit, spokesman for the special committee on constitutional amendment, during a press

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

CG can hold polls in 90 days easily

Says CEC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda said yesterday that a caretaker government will not have any problem in arranging parliamentary elections within 90 days since a voters list with photograph is already in place.

The CEC made the comment while talking to

SEE PAGE 19 COL 1

All set for royal wedding today

William, Kate 'moved by affection'

BBC ONLINE

Prince William and Kate Middleton, due to marry today, say they have been "incredibly moved" by the affection shown to them since they announced their engagement.

In a message in their official wedding programme they thanked "everyone most sincerely for their kindness".

During today's Westminster Abbey ceremony Miss Middleton will vow to "love, comfort, honour and keep" but not obey Prince William.

The service will be the epitome of "Britishness", St James's Palace said. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office

SEE PAGE 19 COL 2 MORE ON PAGE 7



PHOTO: AFP

A pair of coloured brick murals featuring the faces of Britain's Prince William and his fiancée Catherine Middleton near Sydney yesterday.

WAR CRIMES Sayedee to be quizzed at safe home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The International Crimes Tribunal yesterday permitted investigators to quiz detained Jamaat-e-Islami leader Delwar Hossain Sayedee at a "safe home" at Dhanmondi in the capital in connection with crimes against humanity in 1971.

The three-judge panel, headed by its Chairman Justice Nizamul Huq, passed the order in response to a petition by the prosecution. Sayedee will be

SEE PAGE 19 COL 4

AJ Heights
 15 storied ultra modern luxury office space
Space for Rent [4500-45000 sft.]
 ONLY 5 FLOORS REMAINING
 Present Tenants: Two Commercial Banks, Multinational Telecom Company, Multinational Fashion Retailers Rep. Office
 Location: Gulshan-1, Gulshan-2, American Embassy, Pragati Sharani, Baridhara
 Corporate Office: AJ Heights: 72/1/D, Pragati Sharani, Dhaka-1212
 Contact: Mr. Sabbir, 01730728930, 01712061590
 Phone: 8814750, 8818601, 8814757, 8821480
 Email: eccl@elegant.com.bd Web: www.elegant.com.bd