



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

Your Right to Know

SHABAN 17, 1438 HURI



REGD. NO. DA 781 | Vol. XXVII No. 118 | BAISHAKH 31, 1424 BS | 24 PAGES PRICE : Tk 12.00

Govt goes for rice-fix

Production hit hard by climate fallouts; allows import for first time in 5 years

REAZ AHMAD

Amidst a major Boro crop loss, Bangladesh for the first time in five years is going to the international market to buy rice with the aim of reining in the soaring prices of the staple.

Hard on the heels of 10 lakh tonnes of flash flood-induced projected Boro loss in north-eastern Bangladesh and further crop loss due to widespread fungi attack (rice blast), the government floated first of a series of international import tenders on Tuesday amounting to 50,000 tonnes.

Food Ministry sources said the government would allow up to six lakh tonnes of rice import this year with the Directorate General of Food getting ready to float the second tender in the series (for 50,000 tonnes) this week.

After a sustained growth in farm output for the last several years, the government took the import decision when the prices of the staple showed an upward trend with allegations that a section of millers and middlemen were deliberately supplying the market less rice to put pressure on the government to lift the 25 percent import duty.

According to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), over the last two weeks, the upper band of coarse rice price rose to Tk 45 a kg from Tk 42.

Earlier, a food ministry monitoring report also showed that the retail prices of rice rose by 3.7 percent in Dhaka.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Hazera knows how it feels not to have mother's love since she lost her mother at an early age. She now runs "Shishuder Jonno Amra" in Dhaka's Adabar, which 40 children call their home. The children call her Amma as she cares for them like their mother. The photo was taken yesterday.

Of a mother of 40 children

WASIM BIN HABIB and SHADMA MALIK

A mother she is of 40 children. She has not given birth to them but that doesn't make any less satisfactory the motherhood she tastes when she prepares food for them, gets them ready for school, holds them with affection as they fall sick and tells them stories in bed before sleep.

The children also reciprocate with love that is all Hazera Begum now preserves in life, having been through the cruellest form of familial and social injustices.

The 46-year-old's memory of her own mother is blurred as she lost her at a very early age. Tortured by the step mother, she left home, when she was only eight, and got lost. Street was her home where she begged to survive hunger.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

SCAN THE QR CODE TO WATCH VIDEO
Star LIVE



PHOTO: COLLECTED/FILE

Boro paddy affected by rice blast (a fungal disease), top. A farmer collecting paddy from his submerged field, bottom, to use the plant as fodder in Moulvibazar last month.



Essentials to be kept out of VAT net

Agro products, life-saving drugs to be exempted too, top NBR officials tell The Daily Star roundtable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Essential commodities, agricultural products and life-saving drugs are going to be exempted from value-added tax under the new VAT law that takes effect in July.

A list of VAT-free products would be made public and hung in front of shops so that unscrupulous traders can't charge higher prices for commodities on the excuse of imposition of a uniform 15-percent VAT.

A number of top revenue officials shared this at a roundtable titled "The New VAT Law: Implication on the Economy and Consumers" organised by The Daily Star yesterday.

There are concerns about price spiral of many goods and services due to introduction of the new VAT system.

At the roundtable at The Daily Star Centre, most of the participants voiced worries, saying the uniform VAT would push up living costs.

Revenue officials, however, said prices of most of the commodities would not increase, as businesses would get rebate which many of them can't claim now because of reduced VAT rates at various stages of the supply chain.

"We have identified essential commodities for waiver so that living costs don't rise," said Jahangir Hossain, member of VAT Policy of the National Board of Revenue.

The Daily Star Editor and Publisher Mahfuz Anam moderated the discussion.

It was attended by Consumers Association of Bangladesh President Ghulam Rahman, and representatives of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI), Foreign Investors' Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB), superstores and local fashion brands.

Jahangir said the prices of goods except

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Govt to take no fee

REMITTANCE

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

Bangladeshi migrant workers will be able to send home their hard-earned money free of cost likely from July as the government has made a move to boost the remittance inflow.

In the next budget, Tk 500 crore to TK 700 crore might be allocated to bear the cost of remittance transfer, according to finance ministry officials.

As remittance fell drastically recently, the government is taking initiatives to encourage expatriates to send money through banking channels.

From a meeting at the finance ministry on Thursday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued a set of directives on providing incentives to expatriate Bangladeshis.

Finance Minister AMA Muhith and top officials of the ministry participated in the meeting for discussing the next national budget.

Yesterday, at a pre-budget view-exchange meeting with economic reporters at his secretariat office, Muhith said the prime minister had directed the ministry to ensure that the expatriate Bangladeshis do not have to pay for sending money home.

As per the PM's directives, the ministry will take initiatives in the next budget, he added.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5



TOP QUOTE

"Our market is dominated by pirated software. However, we are very fortunate that this time nothing serious happened."

SUMON AHMED SABIR
CHIEF STRATEGY OFFICER OF
FIBRE@HOME, ABOUT THE RECENT
GLOBAL CYBERATTACK



Happy Mother's Day

WHO ELSE CAN ADORE MORE THAN MOTHER?

Mothers are like magicians. It's wondrous how they understand what their children need. In every step of our life their invisible hand selflessly protects us. On this International Mother's Day, Savlon shows respect and love to the unseen selfless protection.

Savlon