

## Govt to buy

FROM PAGE 1  
None of the import consignments, however, has reached the country yet.

The government is now seeking to import more rice from Thailand and India to ensure the staple's availability in the market as the flood situation is worsening and the prospect of the upcoming rice season seems uncertain.

A two-member official team comprising one official each from the food ministry and food directorate left for Bangkok on Wednesday to look into the possibility of purchasing rice from Thailand under the G2G arrangement.

"We're also expecting a team from India to visit Bangladesh soon. We'll try to buy rice from India as well," Food Minister Qamrul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday.

He, however, insisted that he would not say at this stage how much rice the government was intending to buy from the two countries.

In addition to floating international tenders seeking to buy 1.5 lakh tonnes of parboiled (Shiddo) and white (Atap) rice, the food department would also open bids for importing 50,000 tonnes of more parboiled rice this week.

Tender is also being floated to buy 50,000 tonnes of wheat from the international market to replenish the depleting food reserve. This was the first public sector wheat tender since October last year. In 2016-17, Bangladesh imported over 58 lakh tonnes of wheat. Over 80 percent of that wheat was brought in by private importers.

Early flashfloods this season completely washed away 10 lakh tonnes of rice in the northeastern areas while fungal attack blast also caused losses of Boro crops in 19 districts, said the agricultural extension department.

A prolonged flood in the northeast and northwestern regions is also being feared to have some bearings on the productions of this year's two remaining rice crops -- Aus and Aman.

## Trump

FROM PAGE 16  
relations were established."

Putin said he was positive about repairing US-Russian relations, which plunged during the era of president Barack Obama.

"There is every reason to believe that we will be able to at least partially re-establish the level of cooperation that we need," Putin told a news conference.

"I very much hope (for an improvement in relations) and it seems to me that some basis for this has already been created," Putin said.

Putin said that in particular the US appeared to be less rigid on the war on Syria, where Moscow backs President Bashar al-Assad and Washington has sided with rebel groups.

"It seems to me that the US position (on Syria) has become more pragmatic. There is a comprehension that if we combine our efforts, we can achieve a lot," the Russian president said.

Russia and the US have agreed to a memorandum of understanding on creating a de-escalation zone in southwest Syria from midday Sunday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday.

Lavrov said the ceasefire set to begin Sunday would be supervised by Russian military police "in coordination with the Jordanians and Americans".

- Meddling -

Regarding allegations that Russia meddled in the US presidential election in 2016, Putin said that Trump in their meeting had accepted the Russian's denials.

"Trump asked a lot of questions (on the issue) and I answered him. It seems to me that he acknowledged and accepted (the answers)," Putin said.

Trump has not spoken about the meeting other than to say earlier yesterday that it was "tremendous".

According to US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, who was present in the two-and-a-quarter-hour meeting, Putin and Trump had a "very robust and lengthy exchange on the subject".

Asked as he was leaving the news conference if Trump had accepted Putin's denials, Tillerson did not answer, noting only that the two leaders "connected very quickly" and there was a "very clear positive chemistry between the two".

"There are so many issues on the table... Just about everything got touched upon... Neither one of them wanted to stop," he said.

"I believe they even sent in the (US) First Lady at one point to see if she could get us out of there, but that didn't work either... We did another hour. Clearly she failed."

Trump's wife Melania sat next to Putin at Friday's G20 gala dinner, and photos gave the impression that the two appeared to hit it off.

## Stalker stabs

FROM PAGE 2  
yesterday she went to JS Dental Point in Kadinapara where she works. Tanvir, infuriated by her family informing his family about the harassment, ambushed her outside the clinic near Kali Bari intersection.

Witness Sumon said he heard a girl screaming around 3:30pm and saw a young man running away. Sumon found seriously injured Sonia and took her to a hospital.

Doctor Sakhawat Hossain of the hospital said Sonia's condition was serious. She was bleeding heavily and they referred her to DMCH for better treatment.



Fire engines and fire-fighters at work to douse a blaze in Medlar Apparels Ltd in Ashulia last night. No casualties were reported in the fire, but eight to 10 workers were hurt trying to rush out of the nine-storey building. Police arrested one person in connection with arson.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## 11 judges sent abroad

FROM PAGE 1  
will take steps about sending the rest of the 540 officers after the return of the 43 judges.

He expressed confidence that the training would enhance the judges' skills and competence which would have a very good impact on the judiciary.

The SC authorities on May 22 issued a circular imposing travel restriction on 17 judicial officials. It said the apex court was not consulted about sending the judges abroad.

The circular added that if the 17 travel to Australia without the apex court's permission, they will be charged with violation of discipline.

Under the SC's directives in the judgment of Masdar Hossain case, popularly known as the separation of judiciary from the executive branch, it is mandatory for the government to take the apex court's advice before sending lower court judges abroad, read the circular.

On May 25, the law ministry issued a statement saying that the SC's circular has no effectiveness as there is no need to take permission from it to send judicial officials, on deputation to different offices, abroad as per the president's decision.

The law ministry official last month told The Daily Star that the president issued an order last year in this regard.

## City stung by chikungunya

FROM PAGE 1  
infection, according to health experts.

Doctors advise people to not panic and recommend keeping their surroundings clean so that mosquitoes cannot find places to breed.

"There is no mortality record from the disease," said Prof Sabrina, adding people did not die because of contracting chikungunya alone.

She further said that recently the IEDCR conducted a survey on 4,000 dwellers in the capital to determine chikungunya cases.

The institute is analysing the cases, she added.

Earlier a survey conducted between April 1 and May 17 this year by the institute found a positive 86 out of 139 chikungunya cases in the capital.

Most of the patients with symptoms were from Kalabagan, Kathalbagan and Hatirpool areas where an outbreak of the virus occurred last December.

People who were recorded succumbing to the disease in India last year were found, in further analysis, to have been carrying other diseases or infections alongside chikungunya, Sabrina told a press briefing at IEDCR in May.

The Directorate General of Health Services has started awareness building

The ministry concerned has to take permission from the SC about sending judicial officials, who work at courts as full time judge, abroad as per the presidential order, he added.

Contacted, SC Registrar General Syed Aminul Islam refused to make any comment on the issue.

### LAW MINISTRY PROJECT

The law ministry last year took up a project named "Capacity Building of Law and Justice Division for Strengthening Subordinate Judiciary Management" to send judges to Australia for training.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council allocated Tk 40 crore for the project.

A memorandum of understanding between the law ministry and Western Sidney University was signed on March 28 in Dhaka for arranging the training.

Law and Justice Division Secretary ASSM Zahirul Haque and Vice Chancellor of Western Sidney University Barney Glover signed the MoU. The law minister and the Supreme Court registrar general were present, among others.

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programmes across the country and in the capital to control the disease.

Symptoms of chikungunya are fever, muscle pain, headache, nausea, fatigue, rash and these are often accompanied by a very debilitating joint pain which can last for days. Aedes aegypti mosquito is the carrier of both chikungunya and dengue viruses.

According to World Health Organisation (WHO), there is no specific antiviral drug treatment or vaccine for chikungunya.

Treatment is directed primarily at relieving the symptoms, including the joint pain using antipyretics, optimal analgesics and fluids.

Health experts said if a person suddenly gets a fever, mild or otherwise, feels pain and swelling in joints, and has rashes, then it can be suspected that they have chikungunya.

If the pain is in the muscles and is accompanied with a high fever, it can also indicate that the patient may have dengue, they said.

Laboratory tests are needed for confirmation.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka South City Corporation yesterday conducted special "larviciding and fogging" activities and held awareness building campaigns among school children, says a DSCC press release.

French human rights lawyer William Bourdon instigated the investigation in 2007 by making a formal complaint on behalf of the pressure group Transparency International France (TIF).

## Missing teen

FROM PAGE 2  
Madrasa when he left us," his mother Monwara Begum told The Daily Star at his house yesterday.

Sohel is fourth among his five brothers and five sisters.

His sister Rahima Khatun said they looked for him in many places but to no avail.

Investigators said JMB's bomb expert Zahidul Islam alias Boma Mizan groomed Sohel after observing his interest in explosives. Boma Mizan was snatched from police custody in a militant assault on a prison van in Trishal on February 23, 2015.

"He [Sohel] got primary training at the house of one Yusuf in Bogra along with some other JMB activists," said an investigator, adding that Sohel later moved to Chapainawabganj where he got married to the daughter of a JMB operative.

Sohel crossed the border and went to West Bengal, India, to evade police drives in the area. During his stay in India, he inspired some Indian militants and they formed a new branch of JMB in West Bengal.

He declared himself the ameer of the unit and remained in West Bengal until he returned to Bangladesh in December 2014.

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Using such a powerful explosive in belts is a new phenomenon. An advantage of using the surgical belts is that people are likely to mistake a suicide bomber for a patient.

As smuggling detonators from India became difficult since police arrested a group of "Neo JMB" men, who supplied the explosives used in Holey Artisan Bakery, a couple of months ago, the militants learnt how to make plastic detonators by using a syringe in suicide belts, explosive experts believe.

Huge stashes of explosive materials including TATP and plastic detonators were found in recently busted dens in Jhenidah and Chapainawabganj.

"Mother of Satan"

Palestinian insurgents in the 1980s nicknamed TATP "the mother of Satan" because it can be easily detonated, reports Reuters.

Our staff correspondent in Rajshahi Anwar Ali contributed to this report.

Photo: AP

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