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Turning to mango for more profit



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ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

What is the point of sticking to paddy when mango is more profitable and easier to farm? What is the point of living in uncertainty and poverty?

This is what Saday Chandra Debnath thought before he quit paddy farming.

The 28-year-old farmer of Naogaon's Sapahar upazila was facing an overwhelming debt burden due to frequent losses caused by low paddy prices. Adding to his misery was the constant worry about where to find the irrigation water if it does not rain.

"We can't get profit from paddy. The price remains low in most seasons," Saday

said, talking to The Daily Star. "Irrigation water is scarce in our area, so we have to depend on rainfall. This is a permanent concern."

Two years ago, he did away with paddy farming and leased his land out to a mango grower who turned the fields into a commercial mango orchard.

Saday now earns more than he used to do from paddy cultivation.

He owns eight bighas of land. From each bigha, he would earn barely Tk 7,000 from paddy farming, which was lower than the production cost of Tk 8,000.

Now he gets Tk 12,000 annually for one bigha as the lease money, without having

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Protesters hold placards as they attend a demonstration demanding Hong Kong's leaders step down and withdraw the extradition bill in Hong Kong yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

ANTI-GOVT PROTESTS

Saudi youth spared from execution

CNN ONLINE

Murtaja Qureiris, the 18-year-old who had been facing the death penalty in Saudi Arabia, has been spared execution and sentenced to 12 years in prison, according to a source familiar with the matter.

The source told CNN that Qureiris, who was arrested at the age of 13 by Saudi authorities, could be released by 2022.

Qureiris's sentence includes time served since his arrest in 2014, with the four final years on probation, leaving him with three years left in prison.

A Saudi official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, confirmed that timeline to Reuters.

CNN has reached out to the Saudi government for comment.

International pressure had been mounting on the kingdom after CNN reported on Qureiris's case.

In Austria, the country's parliament, voted to close a Saudi-backed centre for



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BUDGET DISCUSSION

Opposition slams govt over paddy price

Also decries 'failure' to check money laundering, loan defaults, black money

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Opposition lawmakers yesterday came down heavily on the government for its failure to ensure fair price of paddy and check money laundering, soaring loan defaults and black money.

The BNP, Jatiya Party and Gonoforum lawmakers, while taking part in discussions on the supplementary budget for 2018-19 in parliament, also criticised the government for their failure to implement the budget and ensure good governance.

Ruling lawmakers, however, praised the development activities of the government, saying Bangladesh was in a very good economic position and on the right track to becoming a middle-income country.

Treasury bench members also censured those who criticised the budget by saying it was "ambitious" and had "impossible revenue collection target", among other remarks.

BNP lawmaker Harunur Rashid said farmers were not getting a fair price for their paddy. He said the government was importing rice, despite high domestic production.

"How much rice have you imported in the last 10 years... we are not self-sufficient in producing food," he added.

Harunur also said the EC had wasted money as they failed to hold a free, fair and credible election.

He urged the prime minister to remain alert against people who unnecessarily praise her.

"Neither the lower court nor the high court is independent. I will urge the prime minister to take necessary steps to restore good governance," he said.

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HALLMARK SCAM SC scraps HC bail order for Jasmine

Asks her to surrender

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday scrapped a High Court verdict that granted bail to Hallmark Group Chairman Jasmine Islam in a corruption case.

The apex court also ordered Jasmine to surrender to the trial court concerned in four weeks.

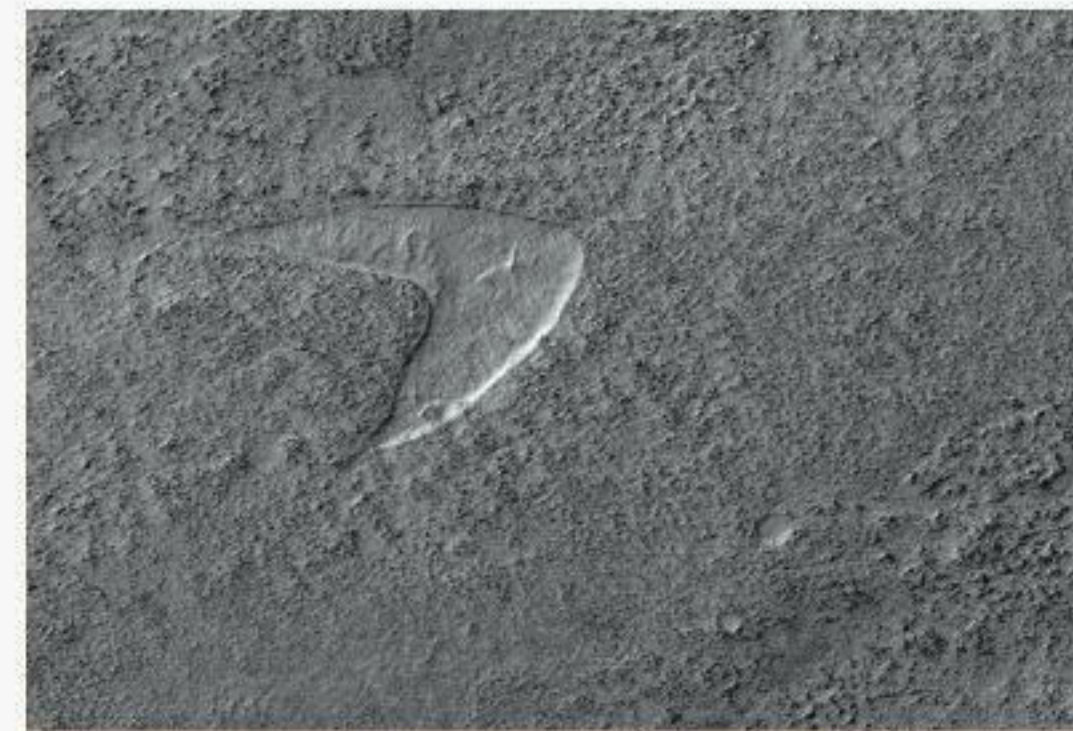
A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC, headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, passed the order after disposing of a leave to appeal filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission challenging the HC's bail order to Jasmine.

The trial court will send Jasmine to jail after she surrenders to it, ACC's lawyer Advocate Khurshid Alam Khan told The Daily Star.

On November 1, 2016, the ACC filed the

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'Star trek' symbol spotted on Mars



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa has spotted strange chevrons on Mars – and they look more than a little like an appropriate logo.

The curious shapes look remarkably like the famous logo from Star Trek and is carved into the surface of our nearby neighbour.

But the space agency is keen to stress that the icon has not been carved into the red planet by the Starfleet. "Enterprising viewers will make the discovery that these features look conspicuously like a famous logo: and you'd be right, but it's only a coincidence," it wrote.

Instead, it's a natural phenomenon that shows how Mars has developed over its history. The shapes – spotted on the Hellas Planitia plane on the south of Mars – were formed by a confluence of dunes, lava and wind that tell the story of the red

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Sugar, edible oil prices may rise

Says NBR chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Prices of some items such as sugar and edible oil may go up due to a spike in customs tariff and imposition of VAT for the fiscal 2019-20, Mosharraf Hossain Bhuiyan, chairman of the National Board of Revenue, said yesterday.

"We have calculated that prices of sugar will increase by Tk 5 each kilogram," he said at a seminar on "Salient features of Finance

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PRAYER TIMING JUNE 17

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-50 8-15
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-55 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

9th Wage Board Award for journos at final stage

To be announced soon, says Quader

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 9th Wage Board Award will be announced soon, after a meeting of the cabinet committee on the issue and once Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gives her consent, Obaidul Quader, road transport and bridges minister, said yesterday.

The committee, led by Quader, was formed to review the wage board award for journalists and employees of newspapers and news agencies.

The minister made the remarks after a meeting where all the relevant stakeholders, including representatives of the Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (Noab), journalist leaders, and employees of newspapers and news agencies, gave their statements on the wage board award.

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An extravagant display set up during the three-day National Fruit Festival organised by the agriculture ministry at the Krishibid Institution Bangladesh in the capital.

PHOTO: RASHED SUMON

64 BANGLADESHI MIGRANTS Still stranded in Mediterranean

Envoy goes to their boat to convince them to return home

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Ambassador to Libya Sheikh Sekander Ali made a journey to the Mediterranean Sea, around 10 kilometres off the Tunisian coast of Zarzis, to convince 64 Bangladeshi migrants to return to Bangladesh.

The migrants were rescued by an Egyptian boat on Tunisian waters on May 31.

Neither Tunisia nor any European country agreed to accept them.

Meanwhile, the Tunisian Red Crescent has been providing them food and medicine since then.

"Our ambassador is now on a boat and is trying to convince the migrants. We hope he will be able to do it and make the Bangladeshis return," Chiranjib Sarker, director general of the consular wing at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, told The Daily Star yesterday evening.

Sekander flew from Libya to Tunisia last Thursday and held a meeting with Tunisian officials the next day. The officials refused to allow the migrant boat to come to its shore, arguing that their migrant centres were overcrowded.

However, they allowed the Bangladesh ambassador to go to the boat, which was brought 10 kms closer off the coastal city of Zarzis.

Earlier, the boat was 25 kms off the coast.

Chiranjib said the migrants were not willing to return to Tunisia. Instead, they wanted to go to Europe -- a proposition that's not possible given Europe's strong stance against illegal migration, which has seen a sharp rise since Libya plunged into civil war after the ouster of Muammar

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