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PADDY PROCUREMENT

# Fair price still eludes haor farmers

MINTU DESHWARA, back from Sunamganj

Despite different initiatives, most of the paddy farmers in Sunamganj are not benefitting from the government's ongoing food procurement programme because of middlemen and lack of monitoring.

While only a minority of farmers (less than seven percent of the total number) are eligible to sell paddy, many middlemen are using fake farmer cards or allegedly resorting to foul play, depriving genuine farmers. But nobody is watching this, the farmers alleged.

This year the government is buying one maund of paddy for Tk 1,040. But most farmers are not in the government list. As a result, they are being forced to sell their produce in the open market at Tk 520-650.

To ensure the fair price, the government came up with different initiatives including announcing a 20 percent incentive on rice export so that businessmen buy more paddy from farmers and export more. In addition, the government raised its paddy procurement target from 1.5 lakh tonnes to 4 lakh tonnes from across the country.

Still most farmers do not get the benefit.

In Sunamganj district, 3.84 lakh farmers have produced 13.18 lakh tonnes of paddy this boro season, but the government will procure only 17,353 tonnes from 25,000 farmers, according to the district food office and Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

The government will also buy 31,977 tonnes of rice

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Some farmers stuffing paddy into sacks to sell it to middlemen in a haor area of Sunamganj's Bishwambhapur upazila recently. These middlemen are using farmer cards to supply paddy to the local food office, depriving the marginalised growers in the haor area of fair prices for their produce.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

## Indian FM flies in

Talks with Momen today

UNB, Dhaka

Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar arrived in Dhaka last night,

aiming to further strengthen the relations between Bangladesh and India.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen received his Indian counterpart at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 9:15pm, said a Bangladesh foreign ministry official.

Indian High Commissioner in Dhaka Riva Ganguly Das was present, among others.

Though Momen described Jaishankar's maiden visit (as minister) to Bangladesh as a "courtesy trip", the two sides are likely to touch upon the matters relating to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's upcoming visit to India, connectivity, water issues and Rohingya crisis during talks.

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## MINNI'S STATEMENT

### Submit report on Barguna SP's briefing

HC asks authorities

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know in details about a briefing of Barguna SP on Minni's confessional statement in her husband Rifat's murder.

A HC bench comprising Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mustafizur Rahman directed the authorities concerned to submit a detailed report on whether the superintendent of police held the briefing before or after the statement was given.

At one point of a hearing on a bail petition from Minni, the bench asked her lawyer ZI Khan Panna to submit a supplementary application with details in this regard within 2:00pm today.

The HC also asked to include in the application in details about quizzing Minni at the police lines, showing her arrest, producing her to court the

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## Schools re-open in Kashmir

Most classrooms empty as parents fear more unrest; Pakistan extends military chief's tenure

AGENCIES

Schools reopened in Indian Kashmir's main city yesterday but most classrooms were empty as parents kept their children home, fearing unrest over the government's decision two weeks ago to revoke the region's autonomy.

The authorities said that they were re-opening 190 primary schools in the city yet few children could be seen at half a dozen places visited by AFP. Parents said their children would stay home until cellular networks are restored and they can be in contact with them.

"How can we risk the lives of our children?" said Gulzar Ahmad, a father of two who are enrolled in a school in the city's Batamallo district where protests have occurred.

"Troops have arrested minor children in the last two weeks and several children were injured in clashes," he said. "Our children are safe inside their homes. If they go to school who can guarantee their safety?"

Authorities were not immediately available for comment, but have previously denied reports of mass arrests.

Meanwhile, Pakistan's army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, was handed a three-year extension yesterday as tension with neighbouring India flared over the disputed territory of Kashmir, the prime minister's office said.

"The decision has been taken in view of the regional security environment," the prime minister's office said in a statement announcing the decision.

Bajwa's tenure was due to end in November but analysts have long predicted the extension.

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## VP Nur alleges repression from ruling party men

Claims his stance against wrongdoing irked them

DU CORRESPONDENT

Ducus Vice-president Nurul Haque Nur yesterday alleged that he and activists of his organisation faced the wrath of ruling party men frequently for protesting their wrongdoings and irregularities.

At a press conference at Dhaka University's Madhur Canteen, he also alleged that Awami League men and members of law enforcement agencies threatened him that he might have to face the fate of BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia if he opposed the government.

On Wednesday, Nur and his several friends were beaten up allegedly by local Chhatra League and Jubo League activists at Ullania Bazar in Patuakhali's Galachipa while they were going to Nur's sister's home in Dashmina upazila. The attackers also confined them to a shop.

Nur is the joint convener of Bangladesh Sadharan Chhatra Adhikar Sangrakkhan Parishad, the platform spearheading the quota reform movement.

"I did not commit any crime. The activists of my organisation and I

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## British man sets new cycling speed record



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A daredevil set a new cycling speed record of over 174mph as he was released from the back of a Porsche and hurtled down a runway.

Architect Neil Campbell used a £15,000 bike to break the previous record of 167mph.

The elongated, custom-built bike is based on the design of a tandem.

He achieved the fastest bicycle speed in a male slipstream record at Elvington Airfield in North Yorkshire on Saturday, beating the previous mark set by a Dutch rider in 1995.

Campbell, from Little Horkeley, Essex, was pulled along the two-mile track by the powerful Porsche Cayenne, then released so he went through the timing gate under his own power.

He was timed at 174.33mph after going through the 200-metre speed trap on the machine, built

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## KAMALAPUR STATION

### Girl's body found at abandoned carriage

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railway police recovered the body of a 18-year-old girl from the toilet of an abandoned carriage at Kamalapur Railway Station yesterday morning.

Asma Akhtar was the student of a madrasa in Panchagarh, police said, quoting family members.

Police also found her birth certificate near the body and contacted her family members, Sub-inspector Rusko Banik of Dhaka Railway Police Station said.

There were injury marks on the body, officers said.

It appears to be a homicide, the SI said, adding that the body was sent to Dhaka Medical College morgue for autopsy.

Asma's father Abdur Razzaq of Panchagarh

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## ACC arrests land owner of FR Tower

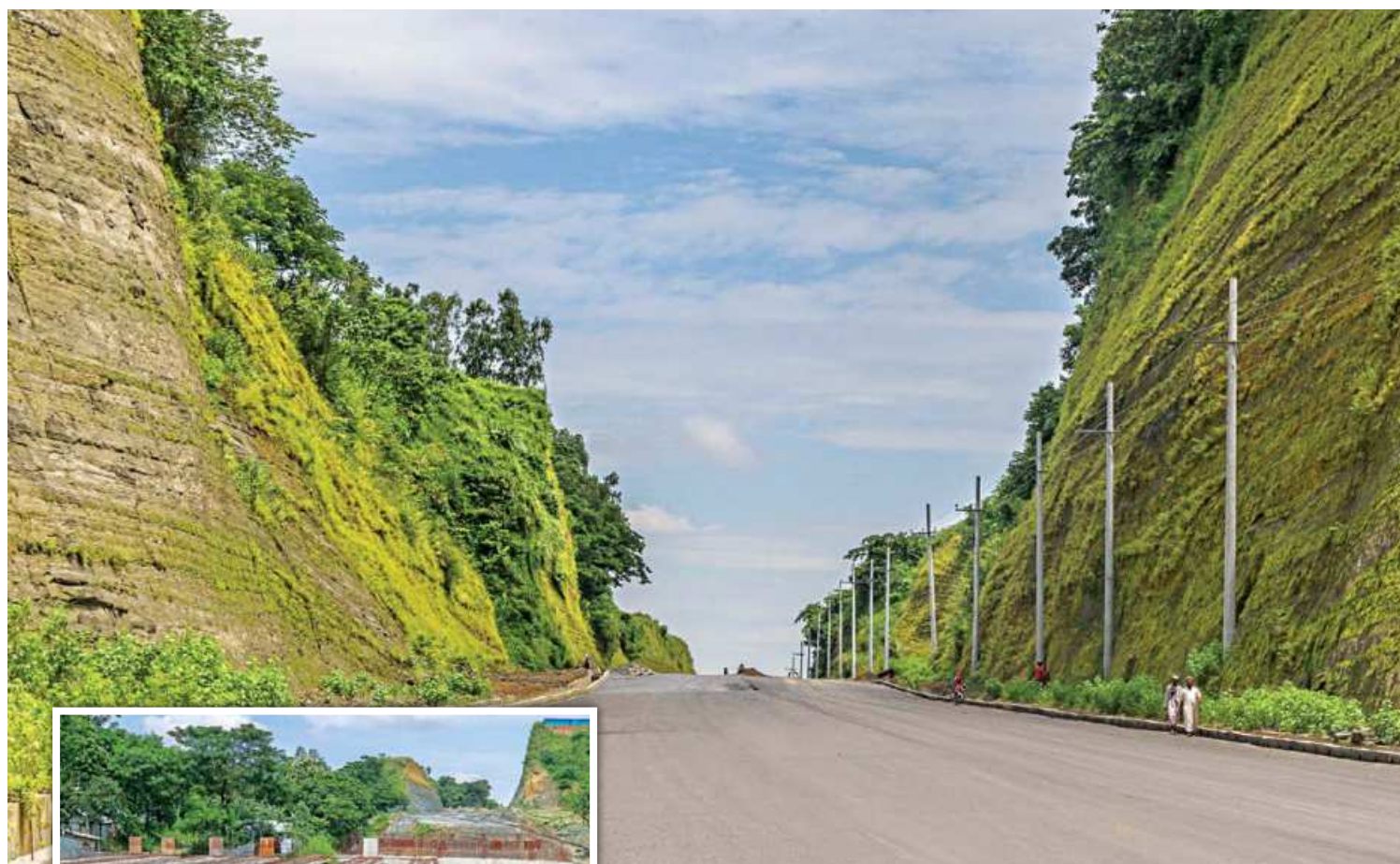
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) yesterday arrested the land owner of Banani FR Tower SMHI Faruque in two separate cases filed over his alleged involvement in illegally extending the building.

An ACC team led by its Deputy Director Abu Bakar Siddique arrested Faruque from the capital's Gulshan area around 1:30pm, said Pranab Kumar Bhattacharya, public relations officer of ACC.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka

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The construction of this road connecting Chattogram's Bayezid Bostami Road with Faujdarhat is at the final stage. Once built, the six-kilometre road will allow people from north Chattogram, Rangamati and Khagrachhari to travel to Dhaka without having to cross the port city, saving travel time. Inset, an under-construction bridge on the road. The photos were taken in Sitakunda on Sunday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## Crackdown will harm trade talks

Trump warns China as HK pro-democracy activists gear up for further protests

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump has warned China that carrying out a Tiananmen Square-style crackdown on Hong Kong pro-democracy protests would harm trade talks between the two countries, in comments that followed a huge, defiant march through the streets of the global finance hub.

Hong Kong has been rocked by more than two months of protests and clashes between police and hardcore activists who fear the semi-autonomous city's freedoms are under threat from Beijing.

Pro-democracy activists are gearing up for further protests this week after hundreds of thousands of anti-government demonstrators braved heavy rain to rally peacefully on Sunday, marking a change to what have often been violent clashes.

Sunday's massive turnout, which organisers put at 1.7 million, showed that the movement still has widespread support despite chaotic scenes last week when protesters occupied the Chinese-ruled city's airport.

The American president cautioned that any violent effort by China to quell the unprecedented protests would damage trade negotiations.

"I think it'd be very hard to deal if they do violence, I mean, if it's another Tiananmen Square," Trump told reporters in New Jersey on Sunday. "I think it's a very hard thing to do if there's violence."

Trump's comments came as Washington and Beijing look to revive pivotal high-level talks aimed at ending their trade war.

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**PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 20**

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha	
4:25	12:45	4:45	6:38	8:00	
JAMAAT	5:00	1:15	5:00	6:41	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION