



**P3** Dhaka traffic goes haywire



**P6** How Mology met Sabrina



**P7** Ukraine downs two Russian command aircraft



**P9** What's next for US policy in Bangladesh?

## CURBING INFLATION, PRICE HIKE

# I want to see results of govt measures: PM

BAHARAM KHAN

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said she wants to see the fruit of the ministries' steps to lower the prices of essentials.

At the first meeting of the new cabinet, she also asked the ministries to make sure the prices do not rise again in Ramadan.

"Prices of essentials must come down. We should prevent the middlemen from manipulating the market," Hasina was quoted by a minister as saying.

The minister who attended the meeting at the Prime Minister's Office told The Daily Star that the PM wants an uninterrupted supply chain during Ramadan, which begins in the second week of March.

The PM's directive comes as prices of rice rose by Tk 2 to Tk 8 a kg depending on the variety over the last 10 days.

Winter vegetables that should have been in abundance in the market also got pricier last week, making it difficult for low- and limited-income people to make ends meet.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, inflation has been over 9 percent since March last year, while food price inflation was in double digits in October and November. It fell to 9.5 percent in December before rising again.



Local influential people are razing a hill in Chinipara of Bandarban's Chimbuk hill area to build a road to carry illegally felled trees. The logs are usually used by brick kilns and furniture shops. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MONG SING HAI MARMA



### PM'S DIRECTIVES

- ➔ Ensure a smooth supply of essentials during Ramadan
- ➔ Employ people to vacant posts in government
- ➔ Increase exports of leather, jute, agricultural products
- ➔ Ensure the needy get govt benefits

At yesterday's meeting, the PM reminded her colleagues of the government's zero tolerance for corruption in the public sector, particularly government procurement.

"I will not tolerate corruption and irregularity," she was quoted as saying by another minister.

Transparency and accountability must be ensured, she said.

Briefing reporters later, Cabinet Secretary Mahub Hossain said the PM ordered the ministries to make action plans in line with the Awami League's election manifesto.

The PM highlighted the importance of agricultural production and instructed making more food storage facilities to preserve farm produce, Mahub said.

Hasina then directed the officials concerned to quickly complete the projects that are at the final stages and asked them to take up projects that would directly benefit people.

The cabinet secretary said the PM directed ensuring that the social safety net programmes benefit the people who actually need it.

The PM also ordered filling the vacant posts through recruitment and taking steps to export leather and jute products and farm goods.

The premier directed the ministry concerned to take special initiatives to diversify exports.

The prime minister has asked to give more importance to information technology (ICT) education and to take various programmes to engage youths in sports and cultural activities so that they can refrain from drugs, terrorism, and militancy.

She also ordered dealing with arson and acts of sabotage in a coordinated manner, Mahub said.

The president's draft speech for the first session of the parliament was approved at the meeting.

## Rice prices spiralling once again

SHAHEEN MOLLAH AND NILIMA JAHAN

With the harvesting of Aman crops, the prices of BR-28, Paijam, Guti and aromatic rice were supposed to decrease. Instead, the rice prices have gone up by Tk 2-8 per kg in the last 10 days in Dhaka's kitchen markets.

Apart from the newly-harvested rice varieties, the prices of miniket and najirshail rice have also surged in the past three days.

According to the wholesalers, they are compelled to source rice at high prices, while the millers claim that the price of paddy has risen due to the high production costs.

Even though the newly-formed government announced arresting the price hike of daily commodities, the opposite happened, said a rice wholesaler in Kawran Bazar asking not to be named.

"We thought that the price would fall with the newly harvested rice -- we were not ready for such a hike," said Abu Raihan Joglu, proprietor of Matlab Rice Agency.

The rice wholesalers are yet to find out why the prices took a leap after the election on January 7, he said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4

## BNP had no backup plan for its anti-govt movement

Some grassroots leaders say; Rizvi says movement to continue

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

With the election now over and the new government formed, some grassroots BNP leaders think things would have been much different had the party high-ups had an alternative plan for their anti-government movement.

However, they believe that the key success of their movement is that most people boycotted the election despite government efforts to ensure high turnout.

According to them, the comparatively low turnout of 41.8 percent has raised questions about how participatory the January 7 election was.

The party enforced hartals,

blockades, and non-cooperation movements to press home its one-point demand but could not materialise the demand for installation of an interim administration to oversee the election.

**"Party leaders and activists are charged up and our movement will continue till the goal is achieved."**

Ruhul Kabir Rizvi  
BNP Senior Joint Secretary General

leaders and activists have been sent to jail since October 28 when the party's Dhaka rally was foiled by police.

"We lost the game on October 28  
SEE PAGE 2 JCOL 3

## EU, NDI, IRI teams ask EC about vote cast rate

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The technical team of European Union and the joint team NDI and IRI of the United States, during meetings with the Election Commission, have enquired about the rate of votes cast in the January 7 national polls.

The EU team as well as the joint team of National Democratic Institute and the International Republican Institute yesterday met EC officials separately, EC Additional Secretary Ashok Kumar Debnath told The Daily Star.

The teams monitored the 12th parliamentary polls.

During the meetings at the EC office in Dhaka, they asked questions including whether there is any issue with voter turnout, said officials present in the meetings.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## Ex-BNP leader hacked to death in Gafargaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A 55-year-old homoeopathy doctor and a former BNP leader was hacked to death in broad daylight yesterday in Pagla area of Gafargaon, Mymensingh.

Harunur Rashid was a former joint general secretary of Paithol union BNP.



Harunur Rashid

Masum Ahmed Bhuiyan, superintendent of police in Mymensingh, said a suspect named Rubel Mia was arrested, adding that the 35-year-old arrestee is an addict and mentally unstable person.

The assailant attacked the victim over personal matters that have nothing to do with politics, he added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2



A delivery man getting off a boat with containers of homemade lunch in Dhaka's Shoarighat yesterday. The food, prepared at the homes of shop employees, is delivered to their work in Old Dhaka's Chawkbazar and adjacent areas. A delivery person earns up to Tk 12,000 a month.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Did not take money to run in the election

Says JP chief about allegation raised by party colleagues

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader and Secretary General Mujibul Haque Chunu yesterday outright rejected allegations that they took money from the ruling party to run in the election.

The allegation was raised by JP leaders who staged demonstrations against the party chief.

GM Quader on Sunday night removed JP presidium member Shafiqul Islam and vice-chairman Yahya Chowdhury from all party posts, said Mahmud Alam, joint office secretary of JP.

The party also dissolved its Dhaka metropolitan north committee.

On Friday, the JP removed its co-chairman Kazi Firoz Rashid and presidium member Sunil Shuvo Roy from all party posts.

Several hundred JP leaders and activists on January 10 staged protests in front of the party chairman's Banani office demanding the ousting of GM Quader and Chunu holding them responsible for the party's debacle in the polls.

On Sunday, around 133 JP grassroots leaders, who ran



SEE PAGE 2 COL 1