

## BTTC wants duty free rice imports

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Trade and Tariff Commission (BTTC) has requested the government to temporarily withdraw import duty on rice to increase the supply and, in turn, contain the price of this staple food in the local markets.

To this end, the BTTC sent a report to the commerce ministry, food ministry, and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) yesterday.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, food inflation has remained above 10 percent for six consecutive months since April this year.

Although the price of fine rice remained unchanged over the last month, medium and coarse varieties, which are consumed the most, saw a 1.74 percent and 1.9 percent increase, respectively, over the same period, said the BTTC report.

A reason for the increase can be attributed to the back-to-back floods and inclement weather that have caused damage to standing paddy crops across the country.

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A Palestinian boy cries as he carries the body of a child, who was killed in Israeli strikes, at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## ACC chairman, 2 commissioners quit their jobs

DIPAN NANDY and MD ABBAS

Chairman and two commissioners of the Anti-Corruption Commission resigned yesterday.

ACC Chairman Moinuddin Abdullah, commissioners Asia Khatoun and Zahirul Haque stepped down, citing personal reasons, said sources at the anti-graft body.

This development came roughly a month after the interim government formed the Anti-Corruption Reform Commission, led by Transparency International Bangladesh Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman.

The commission has been tasked with proposing essential reforms to enhance the effectiveness, independence, and impartiality of the ACC.

According to section 10 of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act 2004, the commission members submit their resignation letters to the president through the Cabinet Division, Aktarul Islam, ACC deputy director and public relations officer, told journalists.

Under the ACC Act, any member wishing to resign must submit a letter of resignation to the president at least one month in advance.

The resignations of the Moinuddin-led commission have raised a question about how the commission will function until the reform commission submits its report.

There had been allegations against the commission that it failed to hold politically influential people involved in money laundering and corruption accountable.

Contacted, Iftekharuzzaman, chief of the ACC Reform

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## Trump courts religious voters

Harris talks jobs as millions vote early

REUTERS, Atlanta

Republican Donald Trump on Monday evening appealed to religious voters in the southern swing state of Georgia as his campaign distanced itself from racist remarks by supporters that could alienate key voter groups.

Millions of Americans have already cast their vote before the November 5 election, which national polls including the latest one from Reuters/Ipsos, and surveys in swing states, show is a close race between Trump and his Democratic rival Kamala Harris.

In Georgia, where in-person early voting ahead of Election Day is expected to total up to 70 percent of ballots, Trump courted religious voters during a National Faith Advisory Board event.

"I think this is a country that needs religion," Trump said. "They're trying to stymie you, this new administration, this new radical left group of people."

But he faces pressure over his rally in New York on Sunday, where a comedian called Puerto Rico a "floating island of garbage," prompting a backlash from Latino celebrities and criticism from both Republican and Democratic politicians. The Trump campaign has said the joke did not reflect their views.

Some 46 million Americans have voted already, according to the Election Lab at the University of Florida, including some 2.8 million people in Georgia and 1.9 million

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## AL govt put finance adviser, BB governor in legal trouble

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SUKANTA HALDER

The immediate past Awami League government's failure to settle an international arbitration claim has left Bangladesh in a legal tangle in the US, leading to a surprise judicial order against two top officials of the interim government during their official visit to Washington last week.

The judicial order for Finance Adviser Salehuddin Ahmed and Bangladesh Bank Governor Ahsan H Mansur to appear before a US court to testify has since been recalled following an appeal by the Bangladesh government.

The issue goes back to the first tenure of the Awami League government led by Sheikh Hasina. The dispute with Smith Cogeneration, a US power company, involves a \$1.5 million performance bond that was forfeited by the Bangladesh Power Development Board (PDB) two decades ago.

In 1999, the PDB forfeited the bond money after cancelling the contract with the company for setting up a 100MW barge-mounted power plant in Haripur, Narayanganj.

PDB officials justified the move. They said Smith Cogeneration, which was awarded the job on October 14, 1997, failed to start the construction work within the scheduled commercial operation date (COD).

The company had sought a revision of the deadline, but the PDB rejected the plea, cancelled the deal and forfeited the bond money.

"All the procedures were followed during the cancellation process," incumbent PDB Chairman Md Rezaul Karim told The Daily Star yesterday.

Smith Cogeneration failed to meet the deadline, he said, adding, "Even, no instruments or materials were found at the construction site at the time. There were no activities, which was why the deal was cancelled."

**On March 1, 1999, Smith filed a lawsuit at the International Court of Arbitration against the PDB and the government of Bangladesh, claiming \$35.02 million in damages.**

He said he came to know about the long saga only this month after taking office.

### THE ARBITRATION

On March 1, 1999, Smith filed a lawsuit at the International Court of Arbitration under International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) against the PDB and the government of Bangladesh. It claimed \$35.02 million from Bangladesh in damages.

The court, located in the UK, gave its verdict on October 30, 2003, after several hearings between 2002 and 2003. No representatives from Bangladesh attended the court proceedings.

The verdict said, "Smith has established a claim against the PDB for lost profits, lost development costs and lost fees in the sum of \$10.42 million. The Tribunal orders that the PDB shall pay costs of the arbitration assessed by the ICC at \$6.2 lakh and the sum of \$5.2 lakh toward the legal costs and disbursements incurred by Smith."

The court also slapped a 4 percent interest until the payment was completed. Since then, Smith Cogeneration tried multiple times to get the money in vain, leading to the current amount of \$31.9 million including interest.

The company also went to multiple courts in the US as well as the Court of Session in Scotland's Edinburgh to recognise and enforce the UK verdict.

Latest on October 16, it wrote to the PDB, asking the finance adviser and the BB governor by name to appear before a US court to testify on October 23.

The court on Thursday issued "bench warrants for the arrest" for the two officials, who were on an official visit there to attend annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group.

The warrants were subsequently stayed. Asked about latest letter, the PDB chief said, "Upon receiving the notice from Smith Cogeneration, we have appointed lawyers in the US but they could not prepare the documents before the hearing of October 23."

He said both the PDB and the previous Bangladesh governments decided to skip the court proceedings on instructions of

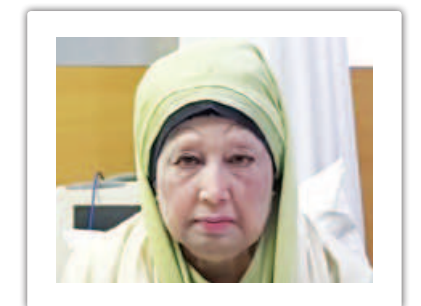
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## BETTER TREATMENT

### Khaleda, if able, to leave for London soon

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia will be taken to London first and then to another country for advanced treatment very soon, if her condition allows, her personal physician Prof AZM Zahid Hossain said yesterday.



"Considering her health, we have started preparations to take her to a multidisciplinary hospital abroad as quickly as possible," he said while talking to journalists.

"As part of the process, we are securing a long-haul specialised air ambulance and making necessary communications. She [Khaleda] will initially be flown to London, where, after a brief stopover, she will be taken to the country where there are multidisciplinary medical

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## Nasa finds 'green spots' on Mars

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa has found shocking "green spots" on Mars. On Earth, those spots can be a mark of the activity of microbes. Nasa cautioned that there is nothing to indicate the same is happening on Mars - but noted that it was an interesting and unexpected feature in the rock that could be an important find on the planet.



The discovery was made when the Perseverance rover scraped away at a bit of the rock on the Martian surface. The 5 centimetre patch that it left showed what Nasa called a "striking array" of colours in the rock, with white, black and green patches.

One of the biggest surprises was the dark green coloured spots that were found in the patch. They are made up of dark-toned parts with fuzzy and light-green rims around them.

On Earth, we have red rocks that are made that colour from oxidised iron, which is the colour of rust or the red in our blood. In similar rocks to those on Mars, green spots of this kind can be seen, and form when water runs through the sediment before it hardens into rock, which changes the chemical reaction and leaves behind a different, green colour chemical.



EYES ON THE PRIZE: Bangladesh captain Sabina Khatun and her Nepalese counterpart Anjila Tumbapo Subba pose for a photograph with the SAFF Women's Championship trophy at the Dasharath Stadium in Kathmandu on Tuesday as they gear up for today's grand finale. Bangladesh, the defending champions, will want to repeat their final victory against the same opposition at the same venue two years ago while the hosts will look to end their final jinx with a first-ever title.

PHOTO: SAFF

## Canada, UK, EU slap new sanctions on Myanmar

AFP, London

The EU, UK, and Canada yesterday announced fresh sanctions targeting the Myanmar junta's access to "military materiel, equipment and funds".

The new curbs, against entities supplying aviation fuel and equipment to Myanmar's military, were aimed at constraining its "ability to conduct airstrikes on civilians", according to Britain.

It said the month of August saw the highest number of airstrikes on record by the Myanmar military, killing dozens of civilians and amounting to "gross human rights violations".

The sanctions -- the latest by Western countries since a February 2021 military coup ousted Aung San Suu Kyi's government -- target six entities involved in providing aviation fuel or restricted goods to the junta.

They bolster several previous rounds of curbs against suppliers of aviation fuel to the military and arms

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