

## Veggie prices

FROM PAGE 3  
uncomfortable with the price hike," he said. Saifur Rahman Chowdhury Sujan, general secretary of the Karwan Bazar Brihattar Paikari Kancha Bazar Arot Byabshayi Malik Samiti, said over the past seven to 10 days, the supply of vegetables to the capital's markets has slightly declined.

As a result, the prices of several items have increased over the week, he added.

He further said that during the winter, both production and supply of vegetables were sufficient, which kept prices at a tolerable level in the capital's markets.

Saifur also said the supply of potatoes to the capital's markets remains smooth, which has helped keep their prices low.

However, despite satisfactory onion production, many people are hoarding this essential cooking ingredient, which has reduced its supply compared to the demand in the markets, he also said.

As a result, onion prices have increased in the capital's markets, he added.

## Water crisis

FROM PAGE 5  
Tofazzal Sohel, general secretary of the Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon Habiganj unit, said deforestation is the main cause of water shortages.

He said during the last rainy season, large amounts of soil eroded and filled up the streams in the forest, drastically reducing their capacity for water retention.

Zahangir Alam, divisional forest officer in Sylhet, said not only wild boars, but also barking deer, monkeys, porcupines, and snakes, are coming to drink from the artificial reservoir.

"We are now taking swift steps to build a large pond in a quieter area inside the forest," he added.



SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Bangladesh's first MINISO Blind Box Store was launched at Ventura Mall in Gulshan-2 recently. The event drew fans of all ages, eager to explore surprise-packed collectibles featuring popular characters like Pokémon, Doraemon, and One Piece.

PHOTO: COURTESY

## Farmers rush to harvest boro amid pest attack



A pest infested boro field in Kalmakanda upazila, Netrakona. PHOTO: STAR

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Netrakona

Boro rice fields in several areas of Kalmakanda upazila in Netrakona have been infested by brown planthoppers, locally known as "current polka", raising serious concerns among farmers over harvesting their ripened crops.

To limit losses, many farmers have started harvesting their paddy before it fully ripens, while others are applying pesticides as advised by the Department of Agricultural Extension.

During visits to various areas of Nazirpur and Lengura unions recently, half-ripe Boro paddy fields were seen swaying in the breeze, their stalks bent under the weight of the grain. In some patches, the plants had already withered. Several farmers were seen spraying pesticides.

According to the Kalmakanda Upazila Agriculture Office, Boro rice has been cultivated on 21,065 hectares of land this year, 4,630 hectares in haor (wetland) areas and 16,435 hectares in non-haor areas.

So far, 85 percent of the haor fields and 30 percent of the non-haor fields have been harvested.

Abdul Hakim, a farmer from Nazirpur, said he grew Boro rice on six acres of land this year. Planthoppers attacked two acres before the paddy fully ripened, forcing him to begin harvesting early.

He is now applying pesticides to the greener, less mature areas of his field.

Saiful Islam, upazila agriculture officer, said the pest generally targets fields with poor light and air circulation.

"At an early stage, the planthopper can be controlled by spraying insecticides," he mentioned.

Only a small portion of fields in the upazila have been affected so far, he added.

He said the agriculture office is continuing to guide farmers, and 45 percent of the total Boro crop in the upazila, both haor and non-haor, has already been harvested.

Farmers have been urged to harvest the remaining ripe crops without delay, he said.

## Take action against

FROM PAGE 3  
women's rights are ensured? Are they not part of this society?" the statement read.

"They want to abolish the entire commission without offering any argument. Why this evil conspiracy? Is it truly a reflection of religious belief? Not at all. All religions preach equality," the statement continued.

"We believe their hatred and violence toward women have become evident. By portraying women in a degrading manner through their speeches, they reveal their personal mindset, consciousness, and political narrowness. They even dream of running the state while holding such disrespectful views about women," said the signatories.

"They fail to realise how absurd it is to imagine governing a country while excluding or marginalising 51 percent of its population."

The women professionals added, "These individuals lack the wisdom, generosity, tolerance, and respect needed for political leadership. Shouting cannot make one acceptable to the people."

"If they have the courage, they should attend a dialogue with the women's commission and explain the

reasons for their objections and prove their capability," the statement said.

The 22 signatories are -- Syeda Ratna, environmental and cultural activist; Sultana Begum, garment workers' movement organiser; Ishrat Jahan Prachi, human rights activist and lawyer; Nazifa Tasnim Khanam Tisha, theatre activist; Layeka Bashir, teacher and cultural activist; anthropologist Dr Nasrin Siraj; Barrister Tabassum Mehnaz, lawyer and rights activist; journalist Syeda Gulruk; Hama Shams Ahmed, researcher and rights activist; anthropologist Nasrin Khandaker; photographer Jannatul Mawa; Adiba Raisa, development officer; Kavya Kritika, researcher and teacher; Syeda Noor-E-Raihan, independent contractor; Arunima Tahsin, researcher and activist; Amina Sultana Sonia, activist and development worker; artist Tarannum Nibir; Uzma Tashrian, rights activist; Barrister Nusrat Meraj; Trishia Nashtar, feminist organiser and futurist; Samina Luthfa, professor of Dhaka University; and Mirza Taslima Sultana, professor of anthropology at Jahangirnagar University.



## IKRIMIKRI hosting 6-day exhibition

CITY DESK

IKRIMIKRI is hosting a six-day exhibition of picture-based books and illustrations at the Alliance Française gallery, said a press release.

Starting on May 2, the event will continue till May 7.

The event showcases a range of picture books published by IKRIMIKRI, highlighting their visual storytelling and handcrafted illustrations aimed at children and adults alike.

The exhibition features original artworks, alphabet displays, and photography exploring river themes.

Visitors can attend puppet shows, theater performances, storytelling sessions, and hands-on drawing activities. Interactive workshops will also be held for children, teenagers, and university students interested in illustration and book-making. IKRIMIKRI's team of writers, illustrators, and publishers aim to inspire creativity, curiosity, and a love for reading through their collaborative work. The exhibition celebrates the role of picture books in developing empathy, imagination, and early literacy skills.

## Ensure safety

FROM PAGE 3

He also said the media in Bangladesh is operating with unprecedented freedom. "Media outlets are writing whatever they wish."

Addressing the Digital Security Act (DSA), he said, "Many spread false information through digital platforms, often targeting women and children. The previous government tried to gag the entire nation through the DSA under the guise of stopping such abuse. We have scrapped that and are enacting a new law. I assure all of you that it will protect everyone's rights."

Shafiqul Alam also accused sections of the media of justifying enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

"We've seen how enforced disappearances

and killings have been justified. These are among the gravest crimes in the world," he said.

"When someone is abducted or killed in a so-called crossfire, others fall silent in fear. The purpose of disappearances is to envelop society in fear. Journalists have echoed the government's narrative on these issues," he also said.

### Star journo

FROM PAGE 3

Syed Sultan Uddin Ahmed, and International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Director in Bangladesh Tuomo Poutiainen spoke.

Sushanta Sinha of Ekator TV won the award in the electronic media category, while Md Imdad Ullah of Khoborpotro (Cumilla) won in the still photography category.

and other factories; and establish daycare centres at workplaces with 50 or more female employees.

In addition, they demanded the creation of a "Women Worker Protection and Response Cell" under the labour ministry and called for regular monitoring.

To the Expatriates' Welfare Ministry, the organisations demanded making it mandatory to formulate "self-guidelines" and establish "complaint committees" at every workplace.

They also urged the labour ministry to ensure gender equality in wages, promotions, and leave policies; ensure safe resting rooms, hygienic toilets, and maternity benefits for women workers; appoint welfare officers in garment

## Rain sparks fresh

FROM PAGE 3  
control units across the country and treat dengue as an endemic threat.

"A specialised department involving entomologists and epidemiologists must be formed without delay. Without proactive steps, the burden of dengue could soon become unbearable," he warned.

He also pointed out that while last year's mosquito control efforts by city corporations were poorly coordinated, there has been some improvement this year, though still far

## Redefining engineering

FROM PAGE 3

when two strong, value-driven organisations come together," added Akberali. "We believe that this school and partnership will serve as a platform for nurturing the next generation of engineers - young minds who will be equipped not only with technical knowledge, but with strong moral values, a sense of responsibility, and a passion to serve the nation."

Tamara Hasan Abed, chairperson of the Board of Trustees, BRAC University, added, "Today, as we inaugurate the BSRM School of Engineering, we reaffirm that education must be a force for dignity, justice, and opportunity."

"We commit to fostering an environment where curiosity is celebrated, where diversity is cherished, and where every student believes they can be a driver of positive change," she said.

Professor Syed Ferhat Anwar, vice chancellor, BRAC University, said, "I believe that this partnership will ensure that knowledge of the industry is put together in a meaningful way by the academia and shared with the entire world."

"This partnership is an example for Bangladesh and, hopefully, for the global South," he added. "This is what the BRAC and BRAC University synergy is about, and it reflects how BSRM not only does business but also focuses on safety for humanity."

Following the speeches by the guests, an experience sharing session was held where alumni, faculty members, and students talked about their experiences at the School of Engineering.

from adequate.

"Early detection of Aedes hotspots is vital. Once the rains begin, immediate action is needed to eliminate breeding grounds and larvae. Preventive measures now are key to avoiding a major outbreak," he said.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka South City Corporation has started a special mosquito control and cleanliness drive.

DSCC Administrator Md Shahjahan Mia said such drives will be held across all DSCC zones to combat the dengue outbreak ahead of the monsoon season. The campaign officially began in Dhanmondi.

The DNCC is also continuing its regular drives in this regard, said officials.

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