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Potato growers across the country are already reeling from humiliatingly low prices. Deepening the crisis, two days of rain have submerged fields where they stored potatoes. Many in Gobindaganj of Gaibandha, Shibganj of Bogura, and Kalai of Joypurhat were seen unable to drain water. This photo shows farmers at Moslimganj in Kalai struggling after a tractor transporting potatoes got stuck in mud. PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

FIRE AT MALDIVES ISLAND 5 Bangladeshis killed, 2 hurt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Five Bangladeshi migrant workers in the Maldives were killed and two other fellow countrymen were critically injured in a fire that broke out at an expatriate accommodation block early yesterday morning on Dhigurah Island, about 100 kilometres from capital Malé.

The Bangladesh High Commission in Malé identified the victims as Taj Uddin Islam, Sadar Ali, Robin Molla, Shafiqul Islam, and Noor Nabi Sarkar, according to Md Sohel Parvez, first secretary at the mission.

"We are deeply saddened by this tragic incident. The high commission is closely monitoring the situation and is working with the Maldivian authorities to ensure that the bodies of the deceased are sent back to Bangladesh as soon as possible," he told The Daily Star.

The two other Bangladeshis who suffered "serious" injuries in the fire were identified as Jamal Uddin and Saddam Hossain, the official said, adding that they were receiving treatment at Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital in Malé.

Parvez said the high commission is maintaining constant communication with the hospital authorities and the victims for necessary support. "We are keeping a close watch on their condition," he said.

He further said that the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry and the foreign ministry are also keeping regular contact with the high commission while the Maldivian authorities are investigating the cause of the fire.

Meanwhile, the Human Rights Commission of the Maldives (HRCM) has initiated a formal investigation into the fire at the expatriate accommodation block, Maldivian media Sun MV reported.

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Lost page of Archimedes' text found

AFP, Paris

It all started off as a joke, a French researcher told AFP. But what the team found was a piece of history -- a long lost page from a legendary manuscript by ancient Greek mathematician Archimedes which had been languishing, forgotten, in the archives of a French museum.



Archimedes, considered one of history's greatest mathematicians and inventors, lived in the third century BC in the city of Syracuse. Among his many discoveries was the principle of buoyancy, which he struck while stepping out of a bath -- famously prompting him to shout "Eureka!"

This treatise and many others of his lasted down through the centuries on a manuscript called a palimpsest, which changed hands many times.

Victor Gysembergh, the researcher at France's CNRS research centre who found the missing page of Archimedes's palimpsest, told AFP it was a "treasure trove of lost texts from antiquity".

As well as Archimedes's mathematical breakthroughs, the manuscript contains his "philosophical, literary and religious" writings, Gysembergh enthused.

'India to hold off on US trade deal'

REUTERS, New Delhi

India will hold off on signing a trade deal with the US for several months, four Indian sources said, as fresh investigations by President Donald Trump's administration into what it calls excess industrial capacity among trading partners add new friction after an early understanding last month.

New Delhi had initially expected to sign an interim deal in March, followed by a full deal later, after Trump agreed in early February to cut punishing US tariffs on Indian imports in return for commitments, including halting Russian oil imports, lowering duties on US goods, and pledging to buy \$500 billion worth of American products.

That timeline could now slip by several months, the sources said, although US officials say they expect India to honour its commitments. The Indian sources, all government officials with direct knowledge of the matter or briefed on it, declined to be named because they were

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Prices of meat jump before Eid

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

With Eid-ul-Fitr around the corner, the prices of chicken, beef and several spices commonly used during the festival have gone up.

Retailers in Mirpur-11, Shewrapara, Kazipara, Ibrahimpur, Farmgate and

"Chicken prices have risen abnormally within a week," said Sakib Hossain, who came to Kawran Bazar from Tejagang to buy groceries.

The prices are rising because the demand has gone up ahead of Eid, said Mohammad Hanif, a chicken trader at Kawran Bazar.

"Since we are buying at a higher

| ITEM (PER KG) | PRICE (LAST WEEK) | PRICE (NOW) |
|-----------------|-------------------|-------------|
| BEEF | TK 750-800 | TK 780-820 |
| BROILER CHICKEN | TK 180-210 | TK 220-250 |
| SONALI CHICKEN | TK 260-300 | TK 310-350 |

Kawran Bazar blamed the price hike on the law of supply and demand kicking in ahead of the largest religious festival in Bangladesh, where 91 percent of the population is Muslim.

Eid-ul-Fitr is expected to be celebrated on March 20, with the government announcing a seven-day holiday for the festivities starting from March 18.

Subsequently, in just a week, the price of beef increased from Tk 750-800 per kilogram to Tk 780-820 a kg.

The prices of broiler and Sonali chickens have increased by Tk 40 to Tk 50 per kg over the past week to Tk 220 to Tk 250 per kg and Tk 310 to Tk 350 per kg respectively.

price, we are selling at a higher price. When wholesale prices fall, we also sell at lower prices," he said.

In a similar vein, Md Swapan, a meat seller at Shewrapara Bazar in Mirpur, said the prices of cattle weighing around 2.5 to 3 maunds at Gabtoli cattle market have increased by Tk 5,000 to Tk 10,000. As a result, beef sellers have had to adjust their prices by Tk 40 to Tk 50 per kg.

The prices of some spices widely used during Eid have gone up.

For instance, dried plum, commonly known as aloo bukhara, is now selling at Tk 1,250 to Tk 1,300 per kg, up from Tk 700 to Tk 750 at the beginning of

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Silence, sorrow blanket Shehla Buniya village

Locals bury 9 of a family after Thursday's crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A heavy cloud of shock and sorrow hung over Shehla Buniya village under Bagerhat's Mongla municipal area yesterday.

"We have never seen so many bodies together before. It is unbearable," said Rahim Baksh, a relative of the victims of a road crash that claimed 14 lives near Belai Bridge on the Khulna-Mongla highway on Thursday afternoon.

"This house was supposed to be filled with joy and celebration," Rahim said, referring to a wedding party from which the victims were returning home. "But now it is overwhelmed with grief," he said.

"Even, we don't have so many funeral cots in our village. We have to collect these from neighbouring areas to keep the bodies in a row," he added.

Grief gripped the house of Abdur Razzak where a large number of people gathered in silence.

Razzak and eight of his family members were killed as a bus of the Bangladesh Navy collided head-on with the microbus carrying them from the Naksha area of Khulna's Koyra upazila after the wedding ceremony of Razzak's son Ahadur Rahman Sabbir and Marzia Akhter Mitu. The newlywed couple were also among the victims.

Four others were from bride Mitu's side. They were buried in their village while the other one -- the microbus driver -- was laid to rest in Rampal.

At Razzak's house, his two other sons Saddam Sardar and Ashrafal Alam Jonny had no other family member left to share the grief.

"We pray that no other family has to go through such a tragic road accident as we did," said Saddam.

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WAR ON IRAN: Endgames and lessons for Bangladesh

WR3

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PRAYER TIMING MARCH 14

| Fazr | Zohr | Asr | Maghrib | Esha |
|-------------|-------|------|---------|------|
| AZAN 4:56 | 12:45 | 4:30 | 6:09 | 7:30 |
| JAMAAT 5:06 | 1:15 | 4:45 | 6:19 | 8:00 |

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

| RAMADAN | MAR | SEHRI | IFTAR |
|---------|-----|-------|-------|
| 24 | 14 | | 6:09 |
| 25 | 15 | 4:52 | 6:09 |
| 26 | 16 | 4:51 | 6:10 |

Pakistan strikes Kabul, border provinces

Afghan govt says six killed

AFP, Kabul

Afghan authorities said yesterday that Pakistan attacks on Kabul and border provinces killed four people in the capital and two in the east, the latest deadly clashes in the long-running conflict.

Pakistani security sources said four "terrorist camps and support infrastructure" were "targeted and destroyed" in Kabul and frontier provinces, as well as an oil storage facility at Kandahar airport.

Islamabad last month launched a military operation against its neighbour, targeting Islamist extremists following growing attacks in Pakistan.

The Taliban government has denied any involvement or the use of Afghan territory for militancy.

Kabul police spokesman Khalil Zadran said four people were killed and 15 wounded when homes were hit in the capital, with women and children among the victims.

His counterpart in the eastern province of Nangahar, Sayed Tayeed Hammad, told AFP that a woman and child were killed when a Pakistan mortar shell hit a house.

An AFP team in the Guzar area of Kabul saw one destroyed house and around a dozen others that were badly damaged, with collapsed roofs and walls.

There was a sizeable police presence in the area, and visibly shocked local residents were in the streets, including some with bandaged faces.



Pakistan players celebrate the dismissal of Bangladesh batter Tawhid Hridoy, who has his head bowed as he makes it back to the dressing room during the second ODI at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. Chasing a revised target of 243 in 32 overs following rain intervention, the hosts were bowled out for 114 runs in 23.3 overs, having a 128-run win to the visitors. The three-match series is tied 1-1, with the decider on Sunday. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED