

Essentials prices

FROM PAGE 1 vegetables come to the market," said a senior official at the Agribusiness Project of the Department of Agricultural Extension.

The parliamentary standing committee on commerce ministry on Sunday justified the unusual price spiral of essentials citing the recent floods and heavy rainfall.

Although the government do not have control over the market, chairman of the parliamentary body Redwan Ahmed told the meeting that the recent price hike of essentials was not abnormal. "The government has initiated different steps to reduce people's sufferings," he told The Daily Star on Sunday.

But the actual market price of most of the essentials especially the prices of -- rice, potato, soybean, green chilli, ginger and turmeric -- were higher than that mentioned in the commerce ministry report presented at the meeting.

Price Comparison
According to a market survey of Consumers Association of Bangladesh (Cab), the price of coarse rice rose to Tk 18 to 19 this month from Tk 13 to 14 in October 2001.

In the last three years, the price of flour increased by Tk 3 to 4 per kg, soybean oil by Tk 10, red pepper by Tk 20, beef by Tk 20, potato Tk 4, egg Tk 14 to 16 per dozen and ginger Tk 50 a kg, reveals the survey.

The Centre for Policy Dialogue, a local think tank, in an analysis said 40 percent of the low-income people in the rural areas spend 51.6 percent of their total household expenses for purchasing foodgrain and 6.9 percent for vegetables.

In the urban areas, the consumers spend 41.5 percent of their total expenses for foodgrain and 6.4 percent for vegetables.

Vegetable traders, however, said they are helpless as they have to buy the commodities at higher prices due to extortion, transport problems, floods and other natural calamities.

"We understand the customers plight but we are retailer and we have to sell the goods keeping profit," said a grocer at Karwanbazar vegetable market.

In the last one week, the prices of both fine and coarse rice rose by Tk 3 to 4 per kg while vegetable prices

never came down after the floods. Different varieties of pulses, which are largely used in Iftar item, also registered a slight rise. Lentil is selling at Tk 44 to Tk 45, khesari between Tk 35 and Tk 40, mug at Tk 48 a kg.

The price of onion rose to Tk 28 from Tk 22 last week. The prices of fish and meat remain stable -- beef is selling at Tk 100 and mutton Tk 150 per kg.

The prices of rice are on the rise largely due to hoarding by the wholesalers, traders say. "In the last 15 days, rice prices rose by Tk 100 per maund," said Nur Mohammed, a rice trader at Mohammadpur Krishi market.

River Jamuna overflows

UNB, Sirajganj

Overflowing Jamuna yesterday caused 800-metre wide breach in the flood protection embankment at Shimla in Sadar upazila.

Agriculture extension officials said surging water submerged newly planted aman seedlings and vegetables plants on about 30,000 hectares in Chouhali, Belkuchi, Shajadpur, Kazipur and Sadar upazilas.

About 150 houses were washed away by the strong current while more than 500 others were shifted to safer places.

Officials of the Water Development Board pleaded ignorance of breach in the flood protection embankment. Their negligence came under severe criticism by the affected people, who said timely action could save the embankment from the breach.

Deputy commissioner and other senior officials visited the spot.

Meanwhile, the sudden rise in water level of the Padma has disrupted ferry service on Daulatdia-Paturia route. The ferry ghats and the pontoons went under water.

BIWTC Engineer Nizamuddin said the water level rose by 16cm yesterday and the river was flowing above the danger level.

More than 200 transport vehicles including buses were stranded on both sides of the river causing immense sufferings to the passengers.

DCC bulldozes illegal flower shops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday pulled down several illegal makeshift flower shops in Shahbagh in the city.

The DCC Estate Department launched the drive as part of its regular eviction operations, said officials.

An Estate Department official said they are conducting the drive on the basis of written information by the public or any organisations about illegal structures.

Earlier, the department bulldozed illegal structures in Panthakunia public park near Pan Pacific Sonargaon Hotel and the shops occupying Osmani Udyan.

If informed, the DCC will always carry out such drives to remove illegal structures, the official added.



PHOTO: STAR

WHAT ARE THEY DOING? Dhaka City Corporation (DCC) yesterday evicted illegal flower shops at Shahbagh. But after bulldozers knocked down the structures, some DCC people were seen illegally taking away grills of the shops.

PM's speech a document of frustration Saber says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, political secretary to the leader of the opposition, yesterday said Prime Minister Khaleda Zia's speech to the nation lacked any way out to overcome the crises the nation is facing.

"The speech has nothing about unabated corruption, unbearable violence and frequent arms smuggling into the country which is a threat to national security... It has also failed to give any directive to eradicate poverty and halt price hike of essentials," Saber said in a statement.

He termed the speech 'a document of frustration'.

He said the prime minister tactfully avoided her government's failure to fulfil the electoral pledges, which proves they do not believe in accountability.

"The prime minister has no courage even to admit her failures," he said.

Referring to PM's doubt about the AL's victory in the next polls, Saber said, "People's mandate is the only way to get into power and such remarks of the prime minister bring the apprehension that the present government is trying to retain power by circumventing people's mandate through election engineering."

"The PM in her speech said nothing about the development of investigation into the August 21 incident," he said, adding, "Moreover, she avoided the fact that Sheikh Hasina was the prime target of the grenade attack."

"The Prime Minister's speech exposed her anti-democratic character as she made comments against democratic programmes like human shields. The prime minister also hinted at continuing mass arrests and other modes of repression on opposition people," said Saber.

Claiming that people have no confidence in the present government, Saber said, "Resignation of the present government and early polls is the only way to overcome the present crisis."

ALWC

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Dhanmondi office, starting from 12:00noon.

Sources said the AL is likely to draw up fresh agitation plans in the meeting as its weeklong ousting government programmes announced from the October 3 grand rally at Paltan Maidan ends today.

The main opposition and other parties including 11-party left alliance, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal and National Awami Party will observe today 'Anti-repression Day' to protest the violence by the BNP-Jamaat-led coalition.

The parties will stage separate demonstrations at all district and upazilla headquarters across the country.

Meanwhile, AL General Secretary Abdul Jalil in a press release yesterday urged all members of ALCWC to attend the meeting.

BSF

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Hossain, Basir Uddin, Sultan Ahmed and Nurul Huda of Kutubdia in Cox's Bazar, Kamrul Islam of Charfashon upazila in Bhola and Kalimullah of Ramgati in Laxmipur.

A fisherman alleged the BSF arrested them from Bangladesh territory in August 2000 when they were fishing in the Bay of Bengal. Since then, they had been detained in Alipur Central Jail, he added.

Assistant Sub-inspector Nazrul Islam of Shyamnagar Police Station said the BSF also released two trawlers, which have been returned to their owners.

Gen Mustafiz

FROM PAGE 1
statement. Immediately after the grenade attacks raised question about the source of the grenades used in the attacks on an Awami League rally on Bangabandhu Avenue that killed 21 people and wounded over 200. He also questioned the process of detonating the grenades seized from the spot.

The army headquarters later issued a statement refuting Mustafiz's views on the attack.

"The army headquarters in its statement unnecessarily resorted to relate my views to a political party. Neither I described my identity as a leader of a political party nor as a former chief of staff. I just spoke as a citizen of the country," Mustafiz said.

He said the army headquarters, by imposing a political identity on him, has itself got involved in politics. "By doing this, the army headquarters, which is an organ of the state, has turned into an organ of a political party," observed the former general.

About the detonation of the four grenades, Mustafiz said the evidence of such an incident can not be destroyed before investigation by the police.

"None has the right to pass order to destroy clues before investigation. Destroying evidence at an executive order is considered as wrongdoing," he said adding, even a presidential order to this effect

would not conform to law.

"Only court can ask to destroy evidence if those are proved as prima facie evidence after police investigation," the former army chief said. "After a criminal incident, the evidence belong to court, not the police or army," he added.

The former general said he as a citizen has the right to question why the grenades were detonated hurriedly. "That's why I asked the army chief few questions...." I thought my questions would help him identify the perpetrators of the heinous crime."

The former army chief said he did not make any provocative comment in his article or statement. "As people questioned whether the grenades had come from the cantonment, I just asked the army chief to check it," he claimed.

"But now there is no scope to check this as the grenades were detonated hurriedly," said.

On the recent meeting of the parliamentary standing committee on defence ministry that asked the government to initiate action against persons who tried to link army to the August 21 attack, Mustafiz, also a member of Awami League advisory council, said the issue of destroying clues of the attacks could be discussed in the meeting.

Saifur tells WB

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Court's (SC) directive on the separation of executive and judiciary, notably with the creation of new Judicial Service Commission to oversee the appointment of judges. It intends to create the new Bangladesh Judicial Service and set up a judicial pay commission by December, 2004," Saifur wrote to WB President James D Wolfensohn referring to the reform agendas that came up as conditions attached to the bank's Development Support Credit-II (DSC-II).

Bangladesh got the \$200 million credit in August this year. Another instalment, DSC-III amounting to \$300-350, million is expected by June next year.

"The government has made provision for the commission's budget and intends that it should be operational later this year," said Saifur with reference to operational launching of the much talked about anti-corruption commission.

Asked whether a separate pay commission like the one formed for public servants would be formed for judicial service when it is separated from the executive, a top government official told The Daily Star yesterday such a provision is already there but it is uncertain yet when such a commission would be formed.

Donors community in general and the WB in particular have been pressuring the government to improve upon the records on governance and rule of law and check corruption since the very beginning of releasing funds under DSC-I.

In the last aid club meeting in Dhaka earlier this year, donors sought a specific timeframe from the government on implementing some of its major commitments that would help improve governance and rule of law.

Against this backdrop, the finance minister's letter gave a specific timeframe and hinted that the WB would evaluate the progress prior to

releasing fresh credit under DSC-III sometime in the middle of next year.

A WB mission already discussed with the finance minister issues relating to DSC-III in Dhaka last month.

Since the SC gave its 12-point directive late in 1999, three successive governments -- one including a caretaker administration -- had secured time extension on 18 occasions from the court on different pretexts.

The SC on August 17 took the government to task after it failed to specify the time it needed to fully comply with its directives to separate the judiciary despite having the deadline extended 18 times.

A petition seeking time extension for the 9th time is due to be heard on November 9.

On August 18, Moudud said the government alone cannot accomplish the task and needs the court's cooperation. But on August 21, he said the judiciary cannot be separated from the executive just at the directive of the SC and both wings (of the government) need to work in a coordinated way to reach the goal.

Last week, Moudud said the judiciary will be separated this time.

Such remarks only show separation of the judiciary still hangs on the balance, observers note.

3 killed in city road crashes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three people were killed in separate road accidents in the city and Savar yesterday on the third day of ongoing Police Traffic Week.

Belal Hossain, 18, an employee of Sofia Fabrics, was crossing Banani Staff Road at around 8:30am when a bus ran over him. He died on the spot.

Police seized the bus but could not arrest its driver.

In Progati Sarani, a private car knocked Sukarna, 22, when he was crossing the road in the morning. He was rushed to a local clinic where he died after an hour.

Police seized the car and arrested its driver Nazim Hossain.

A truck in Savar bumped into a bus and ran over helper Shamsul Hoq, 18, who fell from his bus, leaving him dead on the spot.

Khoka discharged from 2 graft cases

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday discharged Khoka City Corporation (DCC) Mayor Sadeque Hossain Khoka from two graft cases.

Judge Rezaul Karim Khan of the Special Court for Dhaka Division issued the order after hearing of two discharge petitions filed earlier.

The court in the order said the DCC mayor was discharged from the cases since the charges brought against him were not proved.

The Bureau of Anti-corruption (Bac) filed the first case with Motiheel Police Station on August 24, 1998. The Bac accused Khoka, state minister for youth and sports during the previous BNP government, and seven others of embezzling public fund of Tk 3.2 lakh by showing forged documents of 14 clubs and organisations.

The investigation officer (IO) pressed charges against Khoka and the others on January 14, 2001.

The Bac filed a second case with the same police station on August 31, 1998, accusing Khoka and Syeda Arzuma Akhter, organiser of Khulna divisional youth and sports parishad, of the minister's promoting Arzuma as a deputy director without recommendation of the promotion committee.

The IO of the case pressed charges against Khoka and Arzuma on April 22, 2001.

GRENADE ATTACK 2 remanded again

COURT CORRESPONDENT

The Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (CMM) placed two youths arrested for their alleged involvement with the August 21 carnage on an Awami League (AL) rally on a three-day fresh remand yesterday.

Criminal Investigation Department (CID) produced the two -- Hasan alias Tushar and Zahir alias Liton -- before the CMM's court, Dhaka on completion of a three-day remand.

The Investigation Officer (IO) praying for a seven-day further remand, mentioned that he gathered important information from the two. They need to be questioned further to find out any possible link to the grenade attacks and whereabouts of their accomplices, the IO added.

After hearing, Metropolitan Magistrate Mir Ali Reza granted a three-day remand.

The CID on October 6 picked up the two from Ananda Bazar slum on Secretariat Road in the city.

Two other arrestees in this connection, Abdur Rahim and Walilullah alias Walin, were also produced before the same court on completion of a three-day remand. The IO prayed for keeping them in custody until his investigation completes. The court, however, ordered to send them to the Dhaka Central Jail.

The CID picked up Rahim, caretaker of a public toilet at Fulbaria Railway Super Market, on September 26, while Walin was arrested from Fulbaria Railway Colony two days back.

Eight people -- Tushar, Liton, Rahim, Walin, Abdur Rahman, Saibal Saha Partha, Habib alias Hannan and Badsha Miah -- have so far been shown arrested in the August 21 grenade attack case.

Norwegian, American

FROM PAGE 1
prices and spend more on wages when facing higher inflation.

"The laureates showed how such effects of expectations about future economic policy can give rise to a time consistency problem. If economic policy-makers lack the ability to commit in advance to a specific decision rule, they will often not implement the most desirable policy later on," the jury said.

They will share the prize sum of 10 million kronor (1.1 million euros, 1.4 million dollars).

The Nobel Economics Prize, the last of the six coveted prizes to be awarded this year, is the only one not originally included in the last will and testament from the creator of the awards, Swedish inventor Alfred Nobel.

It was created by the Swedish Central Bank in commemoration of its tercentenary in 1968, and was first awarded in 1969. It is also funded by the bank.

Last week, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to Kenyan ecologist Wangari Maathai for her

campaign to save Africa's forests, while the Literature Prize went to Austrian writer Elfriede Jelinek, the author of "The Piano Teacher", which was made into an acclaimed film by Michael Haneke in 2001.

The Chemistry Prize went to Aaron Ciechanover and Avram Hershko of Israel and Irwin Rose of the United States for groundbreaking biochemistry work that has major implications for the treatment of serious illnesses, especially cancer.

US scientists David Gross, David Politzer and Frank Wilczek won the Physics Prize for pioneering work in explaining quarks, nature's tiniest building blocks, while US research duo Richard Axel and Linda Buck won the Medicine Prize for their pioneering work on mammals' sense of smell.

Along with the other Nobel laureates, Kydland and Prescott will receive their prize from the hands of Sweden's King Carl XVI Gustaf at the official ceremony in Stockholm on December 10, the anniversary of the death in 1896 of Alfred Nobel.

Sadr militias

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for a lasting truce in one of the major flashpoints of the Iraq insurgency.

A deal would shore up one flank for the US and Iraqi forces in the run-up to national polls planned for January, allowing them to concentrate on Fallujah, the epicenter of the Sunni Muslim insurgency, and other trouble spots around central Iraq.

In Sadr City, police, many of them Sadr supporters, told AFP they thought the militiamen mistrusted the Iraqi government and the US military and feared the other side might take advantage of the truce to crush their movement.

Under the terms of the deal, described as a loose verbal pact, there is a five-day test period for the weapons surrender after which the Iraqi army will move in and patrol Sadr City, where the Shia militia has ruled by the gun for months, while the government has offered to free some detained Sadr supporters.

Intermediaries handed in weapons at one of three police stations serving as drop-off centres which had been cordoned off by police and Iraqi national guard. US army troops were also present at the sites.

At one station in the heart of the teeming district, about a dozen machine guns, 12 mortar rounds, 38 mortar launchers and a sniper rifle were handed in.

Sadr City, home to 2.5 million people, has been devastated by six months of fighting between the US army and Sadr's militia. Intense air strikes and street skirmishes are believed to have sharply reduced the militia's ranks from more than 10,000 followers to less than 2,000 since April, the US military says.

US battalion commander for Sadr City, Lieutenant-Colonel Gary Volesky, warned that his men reserved the right to carry out raids and arrests despite the five-day test period for Sadr's men to relinquish heavy and medium weapons.

"There has been no ceasefire agreement. The freedom of our movement has not been limited in any way. If we get the intel (intelligence) to support doing a search or raid on a target we have that flexibility to do it," he said.

Iraqi national security advisor Kassem Daoud hailed the agreement Sunday and said the government had more than 500 million dollars to rebuild Sadr City, with 150 million dollars coming from the Americans.

Iraqi police and national guard will patrol Sadr City, and "the multinational force will intervene whenever is necessary," Daoud said. However, the Mehdi Army has insisted searches were not included in the deal.

If the Mehdi Army complies,

JS session

FROM PAGE 1
parliament from the 13th session in last September in protest against refusal of their demand for holding discussions on the August 21 grenade attack adjourning the House's regular business.

"We will take decision about joining the session reviewing all other aspects at the parliamentary party meeting," Opposition Deputy Leader Abdul Hamid told The Daily Star yesterday.

Pakistan PM

FROM PAGE 1
The Pakistan prime minister will have a meeting with his Bangladesh counterpart Khaleda Zia.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister M Moshed Khan will visit the Saarc countries as a special envoy to Prime Minister Khaleda Zia to hand over her letter of invitation to the heads of state and government of the member countries of the regional body to attend the summit.

He will visit New Delhi on October 20 on the first leg of his visit to Saarc countries. Khan is expected to visit Sri Lanka and Bhutan during the month of Ramadan while the Maldives and Pakistan after Eid, the sources said.

Daoud said Iraq will offer amnesty to militia members not wanted on criminal charges and release Sadr followers from detention centres.

The US military announced it had freed least 154 detainees from the notorious Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad and Camp Bucca in southern Iraq but said the releases were not linked to the Sadr initiative.

Elsewhere, two US soldiers were killed and five wounded in a rocket attack in the south of Baghdad, raising the number of soldiers killed in Iraq since the 2003 invasion to 1,067.

In the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, a suicide car bomb struck a US army convoy, killing two Iraqis and wounding 18, hospital sources said. The blast rattled the city and blew a deep crater in the road and helmets lay on the ground from US soldiers, an AFP correspondent said.

Mosul, in the Sunni Muslim heartland, is the scene of frequent attacks on US and Iraqi security forces, along with civilians and political officials thought to back efforts to forge a democratic Iraq.

Another two Iraqis were killed in a firefight between insurgents and US marines in the rebel hotbed of Ramadi.

Eyeing January's high stakes elections, US Defense Secretary Rumsfeld made an unannounced trip Sunday to Baghdad and the Al-Asad airbase in Fallujah's restive province of Al-Anbar for talks with Iraqi officials and US commanders.

Rumsfeld predicted a surge of violence ahead of Iraq's election, but hoped the polls would stabilise Iraq and allow a scaling back of US troops in its aftermath.

Meanwhile, militants loyal to Zarqawi -- the Jordanian Islamist wanted for a string of deadly attacks and beheadings of hostages in Iraq -- threatened in a video broadcast on Dubai's Al-Arabiya television to kill a Turkish hostage.

The group demanded the "release of all Iraqi prisoners and the departure of all Turkish nationals from Iraq" and threatened to "behead the hostage in three days if our demands are not met."

Three armed and masked men appeared in the video, with the hostage held on the floor in front of them.

On Sunday, another Islamist group announced it had released 10 Turkish hostages after their company pulled out of the country, Al-Jazeera television reported.

Child labourers

FROM PAGE 1
informed the Ecneec meeting that the current demand for condoms is 225 million pieces a year, of which 115 million pieces would be produced by the Khulna factory.

A project worth Tk 40 crore was also approved for Dhaka city road repairs.

Key accused

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(CPA), came under attack at city's Muradpur Road when he along with five others was going to KEPZ in a microbus at around 11:00am on the day. He died at a hospital in Bangkok on April 24.

Engineer Naser surrendered to the tribunal at around 11:00am and sought bail. Judge M Hasan Imam rejected the bail petition and sent him to jail. The tribunal fixed the next date of hearing on October 16.

Eight people, including Abu Naser Chowdhury and KEPZ Security Manager Humayun Kabir, were accused in the chargesheet. Of them, five accused, including Naser, are now in jail custody while Humayun Kabir and two others -- Bilal Saiful and Noor Hossain -- are still at large.

The tribunal also ordered attachment of movable property of Noor Hossain.

Ex-CJ, German envoy

FROM PAGE 1
why are the women in France not allowed to wear hijab? They (France and Germany) have no moral right to discuss religious militancy in our country. The countries of the region are mature enough to take care of their own issues."

Responding to Kamal's remarks immediately, the German ambassador said, "We want to increase understanding and dialogue between cultures and countries... We are always open to questions about the state of minorities in our society."

On questions of foreign concern over regional issues, Andreas mentioned the recent series of bomb attacks in Bangladesh and said, "No culprit has been found, no one has been brought to justice. Some questions can of course be thrown in that direction."

Another session held in the afternoon was on "South Asian Countries' Response to War on Terrorism and its Fallout on Regional Security," where renowned scholars from Pakistan, Germany and France presented papers.

French scholar Jean-Luc Racine observed difference between religious militancy and religious activists is blurring where groups holding extremist views are turning militant.

Other speakers said a danger also lies in simplistically branding parties, groups and communities as fundamentalist or militant.

ERRATUM:
In our report headlined "German

18 Indians nabbed

FROM PAGE 1
Jogesh Member, from nearby Tira village, at around 8:00am.

Storming into the house, the BDR men found all the Indians