

Food items go pricier

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for importing 3,000 tonne soyabean oil," TCB Director Mokhsur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday.

Of this, 2,500 tonne will be bought from the international market and 500 tonne from the local market.

"After completion of the import, we will launch OMS for soyabean oil through our dealers," the TCB director said. Oil prices will come down after the OMS starts, he added.

Earlier, the TCB floated tenders twice for importing soyabean oil but no one took part in those tenders.

Oil traders at the Moulavibazar wholesale oil market in the city, however, said oil prices will not decrease until the prices come down internationally.

"Two months ago, crude palm oil sold at US\$350 per metric tonne on the Malaysian market, but the price is \$587 at present," said Abdul Hashem, general secretary of Bangladesh Wholesale Edible Oil Merchants Association.

"The price of crude soyabean in Brazil or the US was \$515-520; the price has increased at present to \$800," he added.

"Oil supply to the market is also very low because importers are not opening LC [letters of credit] for

importing oil as the government is not taking decision whether or not to lessen the duty on oil import," Abdul Hashem said.

"We urged the government to curtail the amount of duty imposed on imported oil and to impose a specific duty," he said.

Soyabean oil sold at Tk 70.50 per litre yesterday, but the price was Tk 68.20 last week, said oil traders at Moulavibazar. Palm oil sold at Tk 62.20 per litre yesterday while the price was Tk 60.50 last week.

PRICES OF RICE AND OTHER ESSENTIALS INCREASE

Swarna rice sold at Tk 22 per kg at the Hatirpool kitchen market yesterday; the price was Tk 21 last week.

The prices of other types of rice also increased by Tk 1-2, said traders at the market.

Potato sold at Tk 17 per kg yesterday while the price was Tk 15 a week ago.

The price of green chilli increased by Tk 20-25 per kg while the prices of aubergine, okra, tomato, coarse flour also increased by Tk 1-2 per kg.

Sellers said the prices of the produce increased as there was a lack of supply ahead of the Bangla New Year.

Abbas taken to BSMMU prison cell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Detained former public works minister Mirza Abbas was admitted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) Hospital yesterday for diagnostic tests as his physical condition deteriorated.

Prison authorities took Mirza Abbas to BSMMU at around 11:00am and admitted him to the hospital's prison cell. Diagnostic tests will be conducted on him in the morning.

"He had been ill in the central jail for several days and earlier on April 8, he was taken to BSMMU for a few diagnostic tests. As his condition further deteriorated, he has been admitted to the hospital this time for more tests," said DIG (prison) Maj Shamsul Haider Siddiqui.

As his diabetes worsened and body parts got swelled up, prison doctors suggested admitting him to BSMMU.

NBR asks

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Syed Abdullah Mohammad Taher, his wife Habiba Akhtar Chowdhury, daughter Tasnia Jahan, and son Sayed Abdullah Mohammad Tasfir Hasan are also on the list.

Besides, the banks will have to provide the financial transaction reports of former APS to Sheikh Hasina, Rabiu Alami, Mohammad Obaidul Mukhtadir Chowdhury, his wife Fahima Khatun, and son Mahsina Farhad, Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA) leader Dr AZM Zahid Hossain, his wife Rifaat Hossain, brothers Kawsar Zahan and Dr Zakir Hossain, daughters Tasmin Tamanna, Tahmin Nuzhat, and Tanchil Tania, former communications secretary Ismail Zabillah, his wife Aysha Siddique and son Ahmed Ishtiaque Zabillah, ex-member of Public Service Commission (PSC) Prof Mahfuzur Rahman, his wife Firoza Begum and brother Mamunur Rashid, Awami Swachhasheba League President AFBM Baudhuddin Nasim, his wife Dr Sultana Shamima Chowdhury, brothers Jalaluddin Ahmed Yamin and Khalid Hossain Yaad, ex-chief engineer of Public Works Department AFM Manjurul Islam, his wife Akhtar Jahan, daughter Sabrina Manjur and son Tanvir Manjur, former additional Inspector General of Police Md Shahidullah Khan, his sons Yamin Khan, Yasir Khan and Imran Yamin Khan.

Also on the list are businessman Girdhar Lal Modi, his wife Koushal Modi, son Dilip Modi, and daughters Manju Khatan and Anju Khatan. AL leader Kamal Ahmed Majumder, his wife Shahida Kamal, and sons Ziauddin Ahmed Majumder and Shahed Ahmed Majumder, CBA leader of Desa Kazi Mosharraf Hossain, his wife Shahnaz Mosharraf, son Kazi Ferdous Hossain, daughters Kazi Rokshana Nasrin and Kazi Munmun Sharmin.

Bird flu-hit

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declared safe," said the adviser adding the government would also give chickens to the affected farms free of cost.

The government has also instructed banks and non-government organisations to provide financial assistance to the affected farm owners, he said.

EC goes all out

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within the 18-month time frame.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed in his address to the nation

Thursday said the ninth parliamentary election that was originally planned for January 22 would be held by the end of next year.

Earlier, in a press conference on April 5 the poll chief said no elections would be held in the next 18 months and the time was needed for simultaneous preparation of a voter list with photographs and national ID cards.

However, he yesterday said the voter-listing would take priority over other jobs, as it is absolutely necessary for the conduct of election.

"Preparing national ID cards will be by-product of the voter list project and so it is not mandatory to complete within 18 months. The project will be designed in a way so that making of the ID cards goes on over the next four to five years," he said.

Secretaries to the ministries of finance and planning, and science and information technology attended the meeting chaired by the CEC. Election commissioners Sohul Hossain and Brigadier General (retired) Sakhawat Hossain, EC Secretary Humayun Kabir and senior officials were also present.

CEC Huda said different countries have assured the EC of providing financial assistance. "We will now explore the options," he said.

The commission will need a huge number of computers, digital cameras, laptops and other equipment to implement the voter list project. "If we can secure financial aids from abroad, the cost won't have to be met out of the public purse," he said.

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) personnel arrested four suspected JMB members early Saturday morning after raiding two villages in Pabna, our Pabna correspondent reports.

The arrestees are Uzzal Hossain, 20, Mostak Ahmed, 20, Mahadi Hassan Chanchal, 23, and Aminul Islam Shetu, 22.

Among the arrestees Aminul Islam Shetu is allegedly a key leader of JMB in the region, Rab-12 sources said.

Rab sources claimed they received information that JMB militants were planning to attack the Pahela Baishakh celebrations in Pabna and they raided Gobinda and Laskpur villages under Pabna Sadar upazila.

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In another development, the ACC yesterday had a meeting with those inquiry officers who are yet to submit their inquiry reports to the commission, said the source.

Moudud remanded

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the influential ex-BNP minister.

Moudud is now under the custody of the joint forces, Gulshan police yesterday said.

The forwarding report that the Investigation Officer (IO) of the case placed before the court said the accused has committed crime as he possessed foreign liquor and beer and the case was filed to tarnish his image.

The prosecution said that information regarding the case would be revealed if the accused is placed on remand during the investigation.

After hearing both the sides, the magistrate rejected the petition for remand cancellation saying that it is a case under the Special Powers Act. He also directed the IO to arrange necessary medical treatment for Moudud.

The IO of the case Obaidul Haque who is also the officer-in-charge of Gulshan Police Station told The Daily Star yesterday that under interrogation, Moudud has started giving significant information. He however refused to divulge the information for the sake of investigation.

On March 25, the National Board of Revenue directed banks to freeze the accounts of Moudud Ahmed and his wife.

The defence lawyers submitted a petition seeking cancellation of the remand prayer. They argued that the accused is 70-year-old and sick and the case was filed to tarnish his image.

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Shamim Osman asked to appear in court

OUR CORRESPONDENT, N'ganj

A Narayanganj court yesterday directed former Awami League (AL) lawmaker Shamim Osman to appear before the court within three days as he failed to submit his wealth statement within the timeframe set by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC).

At the end of the three-day period, the court will start trial in his absence if he fails to appear before it.

Special Judge Abdul Quddus Mia passed the order in connection with a graft case filed by the ACC. The court fixed April 19 for the next hearing on the case.

Advocate Nabi Hossain, public prosecutor of the case, said police during the hearing told the court that they attached movable properties of Shamim Osman from his residence at Jamtola residential area on April 11 following a court order. They however could not arrest fugitive Shamim Osman.

Earlier on April 4, Benazir Ahmed, deputy director of ACC in Narayanganj, filed a graft case against Shamim Osman with a Narayanganj court.

Intelligence sources said Shamim Osman and his two elder brothers -- Selim Osman and Nasim Osman -- have been on the run.

Judge's family

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Asadul Islam Arif, who hails from Barisal, is still at large.

The killing of advocate Haider Hussein, who conducted the case as the public prosecutor (PP) of Jhalakathi, has made the family members worried about such retaliatory act by JMB that they find it difficult to continue normal movement, said Biswanath.

Biswanath sought security of his family members from the government.

Sultan Ahmed Khan, complainant of judges murder case, and driver of the bombed car Ibrahim Sardar, who is also a witness of the case, other witnesses, and officials related with the trial of the judges murder case, also expressed concerns about the JMB's possible revenge.

Aminul Islam, deputy inspector general of police of Barisal range, said special security arrangements with law enforcers both in uniform and plainclothes have been made for the family members of the judges and those connected with the case.

Iraqi and US troops have been pressing the offensive, known in English as Operation Imposing Law, since February 14 in a bid to win back the initiative from the insurgents and sectarian militias who terrorise the local population.

But every day insurgents continue to bomb heavily populated areas in a bid to undermine the crackdown, and they are striking increasingly outside the capital, melting away from the main thrust of the initiative.

Two British helicopters crashed in Iraq early on Sunday, killing two Britons and seriously wounded a third, although officials said the incident appeared to have been an accident rather than the result of hostile fire.

According to the prosecution, they housing and public works minister Mosharraf in collusion with the other accused directed the authorities concerned to allocate 11 shops situated on 10 decimal government land at Sutrapur area to Nisha Rani Devi. Due to the allocation, the government incurred a loss of Tk 5 crore.

Later on December 11 in 2001, Syed Tahsinul Haq of the now defunct Bureau of Anti-corruption (BAC) filed a graft case with Sutrapur Police Station accusing Mosharraf and five others.

Engr Mosharraf

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The court fixed April 26 for trial of the case and summoned the complainant and other witnesses to appear before the court on that day.

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Tapan

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reporting on Tata investment proposal terming it "very practical and realistic."

"We can start negotiation on the basis of that report and recommendation," he said.

The adviser said that he also heard that Tata proposal was sent to the Chief Adviser's Office for the decision, but said the advisers would give their decision when it would come for discussion.

Relying to another question, Tapan Chowdhury said the cabinet decided that Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation would not supply any petroleum fuel to the state-run Biman Bangladesh on credit.

The derailment of Thakurgaon-bound train occurred due to poor condition of railway tracks and sleepers, sources said.

The injured were given treatments at Thakurgaon Sadar Hospital.

Meanwhile, our Chittagong University (CU) correspondent reported that derailment of a compartment of a railway wagon snapped rail communication on Chittagong-CU and Chittagong-Nazirhat routes for several hours yesterday.

Sources said the derailment occurred at about 1:30pm near Sholoshahar Railway Station causing immense sufferings to thousands of city-bound students and others passengers.

Rail communication on the routes could not be restored till filing of report at 6:45pm.

Students were seen waiting on Chittagong-Rangamati road for vehicles while some of them were returning home by trucks and sitting on rooftop of buses risking their lives.

Police raid

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their wealth statements to it in person within a stipulated time.

He was one of the four suspects against whom the anti-graft body filed cases for non-submission of wealth statements.

The ACC also sought permission from courts to confiscate their movable and immovable properties.

Rajuk suspended the official temporarily following the arrest.

World Bank divided

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Department soon after he joined the World Bank in 2005.

"Having (made public) the facts the World Bank board has yet to complete its work," Benn said in a statement. "While this whole business has damaged the bank and should not have happened, we should respect the board's process. I'm sure these views will be shared by other governors who will also be giving their response."

He said the Wolfowitz controversy was distracting attention from the bank's agenda.

"This weekend ought to be about the bank's contribution to fighting poverty and I'm looking forward to discussing how we can increase aid, tackle climate change and get clean water to 1 billion human beings," said Benn.

Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson called Wolfowitz "a very dedicated public servant" and said he also believed the review process by the board should be allowed to proceed.

However, Paulson said waiting for this process to be completed should not be read "as any lessening of support for Paul" by the United States. The White House said President Bush has confidence in Wolfowitz, a former deputy defense secretary and one of the architects of Bush's Iraq war strategy.

A planned demonstration by bank employees calling for Wolfowitz to resign failed to materialize, but several dozen members of advocacy groups marched outside the bank headquarters calling for his ouster.

Some African officials attending the meetings expressed support, saying Wolfowitz has made the continent a greater priority to that.

"We have seen visionary leadership, steadfast progress under Mr. Wolfowitz," said Liberia's finance minister, Antoinette Sayeh. "We can only say that we look forward to that continuing."

German Development Minister Heide Marie Wieczorek-Zeul said Wolfowitz needs to do some soul-searching about whether he can continue to lead the bank.

They said an orderly reduction in the U.S. trade deficit and trade surpluses in Asia would benefit the world by defusing protectionist trade action.

"At this point it is my conclusion that he has to decide for himself whether in regard to this mistake, he can credibly fulfill his duties," she said.

Last week, Wolfowitz apologized for his involvement in securing Reza's job at the State Department. But the apology has failed to quell the concerns of many on the bank's board.