

OMS to start to keep prices tolerable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is going to launch Open Market Sale (OMS) on September 9 for one month to keep prices of essentials at a tolerable level during Ramadan.

Moreover, it is starting programmes like vulnerable group feeding (VGF), vulnerable group development (VGD), test relief (TR) and food for work this month to ease the post flood situation. These will continue till November.

The measures are being taken in general, particularly the poor, across the country continue to bear the brunt of price hike of essential commodities.

The inter-ministerial committee on price control of essential commodities at a meeting yesterday decided to launch the programmes.

The meeting held the secretariat was chaired by Golam Mustakim, additional secretary of commerce ministry, and attended by representatives of the ministries concerned and army and BDR personnel.

Talking to newsmen, Mustakim said the meeting discussed the effectiveness of market monitoring by law enforcers.

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

Edible oil prices shoot through roof

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

In a bizarre phenomenon yesterday, prices of edible oils shot up by Tk 10 a litre within hours in the capital due to an acute shortage of the essential commodity on wholesale markets, which is likely to have an immediate effect on the rest of the country.

On retail markets a litre of soybean oil was selling for Tk 90 to Tk 92 yesterday which had been Tk 80 to Tk 82 on Tuesday. On wholesale markets on Tuesday morning a litre of soybean oil was selling for Tk 76 to Tk 77 until it suddenly shot up to Tk 86 to Tk 87 at noon.

A litre of palm oil was selling for Tk 86 to Tk 90 on retail markets in the capital yesterday, the price of which had been Tk 76 to Tk 78 a litre the day before.

An actual shortage of edible oil coupled with an artificial shortage created by some unscrupulous businessmen is responsible for such an unusual hike in edible oil prices, said oil traders. In the last few months, prices of edible oils shot up several times.

Due to the unusual and sudden rise in the price of soybean oil, shoppers at different kitchen markets yesterday were seen having

heated exchanges with retailers. Ratri Chowdhry, a grocery

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1



PHOTO: STAR

Supply shortage led to a staggering rise in the price of edible oil by Tk 10 per litre within hours yesterday.

Businesses for effective steps to keep food prices stable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Immediate and effective actions are required to keep prices of basic food grains at an affordable level to help the flood-hit poor to survive and restart their livelihood activities, top business leaders observed yesterday.

If food prices continue its present upward trend, general people especially the vulnerable group will confront extreme hardship to meet their daily minimum requirement, they said in a press statement.

The statement said, "Impending decision by BKB and RAKUB to charge higher interest rates on agricultural loans reportedly under pressure from the World Bank will boomerang and is likely to create havoc in the government to overcome the current damage to food grain production."

Charging higher interest rates at this critical juncture will increase the cost of food production and add fuel further to the already rising rate of inflation, observed the business leaders.

"The Bretton Woods prescriptions for upper adjustment of gas

SEE PAGE 2 COL 7

Khaleda's role in Niko, Asia Energy deals under probe

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Intelligence agencies are investigating into allegations that former prime minister Khaleda Zia played dubious roles in realising compensation for the Magurchhara blowout, awarding gas fields to Niko Resources and leasing out Phulbari coal zone to Asia Energy.

There are allegations that Khaleda's actions in these matters violated law while the country incurred huge financial losses at the expense of benefiting some individuals.

An investigation report on the Magurchhara blowout on June 14, 1997, which was caused by negligence of US oil company Occidental, says the process of awarding of the gas blocks to Occidental itself was irregular.

The blowout caused damage worth Tk 3,900 crore, which was never compensated by Occidental and the bid to recover this compensation was limited within filing of some letters.

The report points out that Occidental expressed its interest in

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

POST-FLOOD REBUILDING Hiked interest rate on farm loan suspended

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In line with the government's post-flood rehabilitation programme, Bangladesh Krishi Bank (BKB) has suspended its increased interest rate on agriculture loans considering the financial situation of small and marginal farmers.

Instead of the increased rate, the bank will now charge the previous 8 percent interest on agriculture loans, according to a BKB press statement.

The BKB raised the interest to 11 percent on July 1.

The bank suspended the increased interest rate on agriculture loans following directives from

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

TAX EVASION CASES

Siraj's daughter-in-law jailed for 6yrs

Property of Obaidul Quader's wife to be attached

STAR REPORT

A special court for dealing graft cases yesterday sentenced Farzana Khan, daughter-in-law of former BNP minister Shajahan Siraj, to six years' imprisonment for committing two offences including evasion of taxes.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday ordered attachment of all moveable and immovable property of Isratunnesa, wife of detained

Awami League (AL) Joint General Secretary Obaidul Quader in a tax evasion case.

In the meantime, a Chittagong court yesterday acquitted CCC Mayor ABM Mohiuddin Chowdhury and three others of charges in a graft case, reports UNB.

Judge Ashraf Hossain of the fifth Special Court at the MP Hostel in capital's national parliament complex also fined Farzana Tk

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed, left, and President Iajuddin Ahmed visit the grave of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to pay tribute to the father of the nation yesterday.



PHOTO: FOCUS BANGLA

Nation pays homage to Bangabandhu

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The nation yesterday paid effusive tribute to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the father of the nation, to mark the 32nd anniversary of his bloody assassination.

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed placed floral wreaths separately at the grave of Bangabandhu at Tungipara in Copalganj, paying homage to the great leader who along with most of his family members was brutally killed by a splinter group of the army on August 15 in 1975.

They stood in solemn silence for a few minutes. Later, they accompanied by senior civil and military officials offered special prayers there seeking divine blessings for the departed soul of Bangabandhu and for the continued peace, progress and prosperity of the country.

Army chief Gen Moeen U Ahmed, Navy chief Vice Admiral Sarwar Jahan Nizam and Air Force chief Air Marshal SM Ziaur Rahman also paid respect to Bangabandhu. They offered special prayers for the salvation of the departed soul of the father of the nation.

Iajuddin Ahmed placed wreath at

10:30am while Fakhruddin at 11:30am.

During their placing of wreaths, guards of honour were given by a smartly turned out contingent from three services of the Armed Forces.

The president and the chief adviser wrote remarks in the condolence book kept at the grave.

BANGABANDHU MEMORIAL MUSEUM

In Dhaka, thousands of mourners thronged the Bangabandhu Memorial Museum premises on Dhanmondi Road 32 where the great leader was assassinated.

Although the government had set conditions on how the Awami League (AL) would be allowed to observe the day, including one that no more than 20 people be allowed to place wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu and at Banani graveyard, police could not control the crowd as hundreds of people from all walks of life rushed to Bangabandhu Bhaban to pay their tributes.

They stood in long queues to place floral wreaths and bouquets at Bangabandhu's portrait amid

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

CA, president pay glowing tributes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Iajuddin Ahmed and Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed yesterday paid glowing tributes to father of the nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as they placed wreaths at the grave of the great leader and signed the condolence book kept there.

"Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is a bright star in the national life of Bangladesh. This great leader's contribution is invaluable in establishing Bangladesh as an independent and sovereign nation in the world stage," wrote Iajuddin in the condolence book.

This was the first visit of Iajuddin to the grave of Bangabandhu after assuming the office of the president.

"The nation will forever remember his contribution with respect," wrote the president. "On the 32nd anniversary of this great leader's martyrdom, I am paying deep respect to him on behalf of the nation and praying for the salvation of his departed soul in the court of Allah," he added.

Chief Adviser Fakhruddin Ahmed wrote, "On behalf of the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 6

Crowley for more US aid to flood-hit Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

US Congressman Joseph Crowley has urged the US government to aid Bangladesh in its flood recovery and to be a leader in encouraging other nations to donate generously to Bangladesh.

"The United States is the world's leading humanitarian nation, yet, to date, USAID has only provided approximately US\$135,000 through its partner agency CARE for the local purchase of survival pack rations," he said in a letter sent to US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice on August 13.

"By comparison, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has provided US\$50 million of aid to assist Bangladesh -- airlifting medical relief, and basic food and water requirements", said Crowley, also co-chair of Bangladesh Congressional Caucus.

"As a strong leader in the world, the United States must be at the forefront of providing emergency humanitarian aid to the affected nations," he said.

A copy of the letter was sent to

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3



PHOTO: SHAFIQ ALAM

A mother with her diarrhoea-affected kid on the lap heads for a hospital by boat. The photo was taken from the capital's low-lying suburb Trimohony now under floodwater.

Flood death toll nears 500

Number diarrhoeal patients spiral

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 38 people died due to flood-related causes in 24 hours till 1:00pm yesterday, raising the death toll to 481.

Among the dead, 33 died due to drowning, two died of diarrhoea and three died from snakebites, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) control room.

A total of 4,088 people were

diagnosed with diarrhoea in government hospitals and 1,045 were admitted to International Centre for Diarrhoeal Diseases and Research (ICDDR,B) in the capital.

"The rate of admission of diarrhoea patients at ICDDR,B has been between 900 and 1,000 in every 24 hours for the last one week. Almost all were admitted in a critical condition. So, we still can't say that the diarrhoea situation is

SEE PAGE 15 COL 1

4 of a family killed in Ctg road crash

CU CORRESPONDENT

Five persons, including four of a family, were killed when a speeding truck ploughed into an autorickshaw near City Gate area of Pahartali in the city yesterday.

The dead were identified as Hosne Ara Begum, 35, wife of one Siddique of Bhatiali in Sitakunda upazila, her daughters Rizvi, 2, Liza, 6 and Rita, 8 -- all travelling by the autorickshaw. A rickshawpuller was also killed in the accident.

Sources said the truck collided head-on with the three-wheeler,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

4 suicide bombings kill 200 in Iraq

Deputy oil minister kidnapped, 5 GIs die after chopper downed

AP, AFP, Baghdad

Four suicide bombers struck nearly simultaneously at communities of a small Kurdish sect in northwestern Iraq late Tuesday, killing more than 200 people and wounding 375 more, Iraqi military and local officials said.

The death toll was the highest in a concerted attack since Nov 23,

when 215 people were killed by mortar fire and five car bombs in Baghdad's Shia Muslim enclave of Sadr City. And it was most vicious attack yet against the Yazidis, an ancient religious community in the region whose members are considered infidels by some Muslims.

The bombings came as extremists staged other bold attacks: levelling a key bridge outside

Baghdad and abducting five officials from an Oil Ministry compound in the capital in a raid using gunmen dressed as security officers. Nine US soldiers also were reported killed, including five in a helicopter crash.

Gunmen dressed in Iraqi security uniforms kidnapped Deputy Oil Minister Abdel Jabar al-Wagaa

SEE PAGE 15 COL 7

Workers vandalise Ctg RMG factory for arrears

'Planned attack' by outsiders: BGMEA chief

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Workers of a garment and textile factory in the city's Nasirabad industrial area vandalised the unit yesterday allegedly demanding one month's arrear salary.

Sources alleged that law enforcers refrained from going into any action as a very small section of workers rampaged Sirina Garments and Textiles Ltd, a concern of Crown Group of Companies, on Bayezid Bostami Road.

Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) President Anwar-Ul Alam Chowdhury Parvez suspected that the attack was pre-planned and instigated by outsiders. He asked the government to handle the matter seriously.

Sources meanwhile said misbehaviour of a top official of the factory led to yesterday's incident.

They said some five workers went to the office room of Director (operation) Michael, who is a Sri Lankan national, around 2:30pm to claim their salary for the month of

July and overtime of three months.

A few minutes later, the workers came out of the room and informed a few others that the management refused to pay the salary and overtime. Witnesses said this prompted the workers to go on rampage.

The angry workers ransacked office rooms on the five-storey factory building and damaged computers, air conditioners, valuable machinery and equipment, glass windows and furniture. They also damaged two private cars and a microbus.

Witnesses said a group of only 40-50 workers took part in the rampage and some of them reportedly were actually outsiders. Majority of the workers stood helpless in the corners of the factory and on the ground floor premises.

A police team from Bayezid Bostami Police Station rushed to the spot around 3:00pm but they allegedly remained silent until the

SEE PAGE 15 COL 3

EC invites tenders again for equipment

Most of earlier bidders disqualified

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Election Commission (EC) invited tenders once again for supplying equipment to it, as earlier bids for most of the items for preparing the voter list with photographs had been disqualified, putting the commission in a predicament regarding completing the procurement on time.

According to the new tender schedule, sale of the tender forms and submission of the bids will be completed by the middle of the next

month, and then the Technical Evaluation Committee (TEC) will start evaluating the bids.

After evaluating the bids, selected companies will be awarded contracts for supplying the equipment within four to eight weeks of signing the contracts. If a procurement involves more than Tk 25 crore, approval from the cabinet purchase committee will be needed, according to the Public Procurement Rules 2003.

The EC in its electoral roadmap

SEE PAGE 15 COL 4

BNP's party fund unused in flood relief

Bhuiyan cites politics ban as reason

RAKIB HASNET SUMAN

Two groups of the BNP are conducting countrywide flood relief activities without using the party's relief fund.

"We have a relief fund...but this year we are distributing relief at our own effort because we do not want to use the fund as party activities are banned at the moment," BNP Secretary General Abdul Mannan Bhuiyan told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We also want to ensure transparency in using the party fund," he added.

BNP has a relief fund with Pubali Bank's Paltan branch in the capital to provide relief during the natural disasters, sources said. Two party leaders including Mannan Bhuiyan are authorised to operate the account.

According to sources, affluent people including businessmen and many organisations have donated money to the fund over the years.

But this year nobody donated money to help the flood victim,

SEE PAGE 15 COL 5